



**Dealing with moral values in pluralistic working  
environments**

**by**

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**Abstract:**

The aim of this dissertation is to assist managers to deal with moral values in such a way that both the right of the individual to unique moral views, and the needs of the organization to create unity and cooperation among its members, are respected. In order to meet this challenge, a fundamental change is needed in the way diversity within pluralistic environments is understood. Diversity should not be understood as something that exists among distinct groups, but rather as something that exists among individuals and also within individuals. The individual, as moral *bricoleur*, draws on a variety of value-systems that form part of his or her unique distributed identity and is influenced by a wide variety of contextual factors. When dealing with moral values in the South African workplace, one needs an ethical approach that can accommodate the unique and contextual character of decisions made by *moral bricoleurs*. In evaluating existing approaches, it becomes clear that many of those commonly used cannot meet this challenge, because of its universalist, acontextual premises. This dissertation develops an alternative approach for dealing with moral values in pluralistic working environments by drawing on insights from twentieth century philosophy. In order to address the needs of contemporary organizations, these philosophical insights are used to inform the development of a framework for dealing with moral values in this specific context. The implications of this framework for contemporary South African organizations will be illustrated by discussing a few case studies in which Christian managers have to deal with moral values in pluralistic working environments.

### Opsomming:

Die doel van hierdie proefskrif is om bestuurders te help om morele waardes so te hanteer dat beide die reg van die individu op 'n eie morele standpunt, sowel as die behoefte van die organisasie om eenheid en samewerking te verseker, gerespekteer word. Ten einde hierdie doel te bereik, moet die verskynsel van diversiteit binne pluralistiese werksomgewings anders verstaan word as wat gebruiklik is in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Diversiteit bestaan nie soseer tussen unieke groepe nie, maar eerder tussen unieke individue en ook binne die unieke individu self. The individu, as morele *bricoleur*, put uit 'n verskeidenheid van waarde-stelsels wat deel uitmaak van sy of haar "verspreide identiteit" en word ook deur verskeie faktore beïnvloed. Wanneer dit dus gaan oor die hantering van morele waardes in die Suid-Afrikaanse werksplek, is 'n etiese benadering nodig wat voorsiening kan maak vir die eiesoortige en kontekstuele aard van die morele *bricoleur* se morele besluite. Indien bestaande etiese benaderings aan hierdie kriterium gemeet word, skiet dit dikwels te kort, vanweë die universalistiese, akontekstuele premisse daarvan. Hierdie proefskrif ontwikkel 'n alternatiewe benadering tot die hantering van morele waardes in pluralistiese werksomgewings deur te put uit insigte van die twintigste eeuse filosofie. Ten einde die behoeftes van kontemporêre organisasies aan te spreek, word hierdie insigte benut om 'n raamwerk daar te stel van die hantering van morele waardes in hierdie konteks. Die implikasies van hierdie raamwerk vir kontemporêre Suid-Afrikaanse organisasie sal geïllustreer word deur 'n bespreking van drie gevallestudies waarin Christen bestuurders gemoed is met die hantering van morele waardes in die werksplek.

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## Prologue:

A prologue is characteristically a space utilized to share joys, struggles and regrets encountered in the process of producing a text. I will start with the hardships and end with the joys, even though they can hardly be distinguished from one another completely.

A dissertation represents a site of struggle. It is a struggle where new literature, disciplines, and interpretations meet one's own horizon with brutal force. This struggle seemed more intense in this dissertation than in any of my other projects. This could be due to the scope of this study, or due to the fact that I wrote the greatest part of this text in a foreign country. But I suspect the struggle was so intense because of the nature of the discipline I engaged in. Business ethics and theology are indeed strange bedfellows. Since I now have the opportunity to present certain disclaimers, I would like to indicate how the encounter between these unique disciplines shaped the development of this text.

I wrote this text as a theologian and as a philosopher, which in itself is sometimes considered an odd combination. Business ethics however presented unique challenges to my theological and philosophical sensibilities. Business ethics does not belong to any one discipline, it draws on many, yet precisely because of this fact, it often confronts one with ambiguity. On the one hand, my philosophical background informed my conviction that essentialist groups and totalizing moral structures are outdated attempts at making morality predictable and controllable. I therefore never believed that something such as "A (uniform) Christian viewpoint" exists. Christian morality represents variations as diverse as the individuals adhering to the Christian faith. On the other hand, as a theologian, I would like to believe that my studies could inform the way in which Christians deal with moral issues in their workplaces. The places in which Christians work are characterized by diversity. But once again my philosophical background taught me that this diversity exists not only amongst groups, but among individuals, and even within individuals themselves - even within Christians themselves. I also strongly believe that Christians should engage in moral dialogue with Others, something that in the South African pluralistic environment, cannot be done solely along religious lines.

The result is a dissertation that is a unique combination of things. It attempts to marry philosophical insights with the contingencies of everyday business practice, in a way that would inform Christians about how moral values should be dealt with in the workplace. I could not write an honest dissertation in which I confidently develop "A Christian perspective" while I believe that no such thing exists. Furthermore, I thought the most valuable thing for Christians to learn is to acknowledge and respect difference within others and within themselves. The framework that I develop is one that wants to acknowledge the contingent character of moral truths, the network of moral values that infuse our moral decision-making, and the importance of valuing Otherness within our pluralistic working environments. I believe that Christian managers can fruitfully apply these insights, as will be illustrated in chapter 6.

The struggle did however bring many joys as well. One of the most precious gains was being able to spend ten months doing doctoral research in the U.S. Being able to spend time in The United States provided me with the necessary opportunity to reflect on our unique problems and gather invaluable international knowledge and perspectives. It also gave me exposure to concrete business ethics practices in the U.S. In this regard I want to thank Dr. Michael Hoffman and all the people at the Center for Business Ethics in Waltham, MA. for their incredible support during my stay in America. Not only did they embrace me, the Other, as friend and 'family', they also allowed me to become a colleague and associate in their projects.

I want to thank the Fulbright Commission for supporting my studies towards the Graduate Certificate in Business Ethics in the U.S. and for exposing me to the incredible "Fulbright experience". Further funding was provided by the NFR Doctoral Scholarship for research abroad and a Mellon Foundation Mentoring grant. No one scholarship could afford me enough time to finish this project - I am therefore indebted to these institutions for their combined support. A mentoring project is impossible without a mentor and I was fortunate to have Prof. Etienne de Villiers as mentor, father-figure and advisor. His criticism was relentless, but so was his ongoing support and encouragement. In combination these



elements contributed greatly to the completion of this project. I would also like to thank the managers who were interviewed as part of this study. Their generous help and valuable inputs made a considerable contribution to this dissertation.

Many have told me that writing a dissertation is the loneliest experience one will ever encounter. Spending hours on end writing cannot be a social affair. However, I was fortunate in having an incredible group of people cheering me on. In this regard, my parents, friends and colleagues all contributed much in terms of encouraging e-mails, conversation, and above all, their firm belief in my academic potential. Thank you.

The last bit of space of this prologue belongs to the person who with his incredible Otherness, created many of the why-questions that initiated this project. Through his endless support, conversation, editing and proof-reading, he also provided many of the hows. Arno, thank you for questioning with me, struggling with me and sticking by me.

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### 1.1. Problem analysis:

One of the most important challenges facing pluralistic organizations today is balancing individual differences and particularity with the collective interests and goals of groups, organizations and institutions. The liberal democracy attempts to uphold two very distinct precepts. On the one hand it tries to guarantee equal respect for every person and recognition of differences, whilst relying, on the other hand, on the idea of a social contract, which holds that the individuals' freedom and rights should somehow contribute to some collective good. In an increasingly pluralistic working environment, it has become very difficult to protect and guarantee individual freedoms and rights, whilst finding sufficient common ground to unite individuals in groups that can act collectively for the sake of shared interests and collective goals. In recent history we have witnessed many disastrous attempts at subordinating individual differences to some collective identity or group interest. Notable among these attempts was that of the Apartheid government of South Africa, whose narrow ideological ideals had moral consequences for both those belonging to the group in power and those excluded from power. It not only discriminated against certain groups of people on the basis of race and culture, but also created a limited narrative as to what is acceptable and desirable conduct, thereby seriously curtailing the conscience and freedom of many White South Africans. Many attempts at establishing group interests and collective goals, such as those collective interests defended by Apartheid, have had detrimental effects. The same dynamics are at work in various forms of extreme nationalism, gender bias, and discrimination based on sexuality.

Finding a balance between isolated individuals with subjective interests and its dangerous alternative, totalizing collective structures, is especially challenging when it comes to moral perspectives and decisions. In wanting to avoid another holocaust, more genocide, ethnic wars and hostile working environments, many philosophers opt to discard the ideal of group identities and goals in favor of radical individualism when it comes to making decisions on the good and the just. This reliance on the rational, objective individual subject of



transcendental philosophy has however become problematic in the face of a growing awareness that no individual ever makes impartial, disinterested and objective decisions. When one accepts this and acknowledges the fact that every individual is the product of many communities, power interests and institutions, one has to contend with the fact that the solution to moral discourse lies neither in disinterested rational individualism, nor in homogeneous group ideology. In a world that has become disillusioned with the possibility of absolute truth and justice, as defined and structured by those in power, the dangers of complete relativity and nihilism looms even larger. Furthermore, the complete detachment of individuals from groups and common interests undermines the possibility of cooperation and interaction on those things that we just have to do together. Group affiliation after all is a prerequisite for everyday things like living together in families, societies and nations, producing and selling these goods and services to make money, healthcare and caring for our environment. In order to be able to do this, we need find a way of balancing our individual interests and opinions with those interests and pursuits that form the basis of our group affiliation.

The problem that this study will address is how to deal with moral values<sup>1</sup> in a pluralistic<sup>2</sup> South African working environment in a way that would do justice to the need for moral unity and solidarity within the organization, as well as to the moral beliefs of employees and employers informed by a diversity of value-systems. In order to address this problem in the context of the South African work place, the next section will attempt to provide a description of how this problem is manifesting itself within the South African working environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Moral values will be defined in chapter 2

<sup>2</sup> According to Flew (1979:278), "pluralism" is the view that the world contains many kinds of existent, which in their uniqueness cannot be reduced to just one (monism) or two (dualism). This general, neutral meaning of pluralism can be distinguished from the approach "pluralism", which is normally used in the context of religious pluralism. The approach "pluralism" argues for the positive use of plurality. This ambiguity does not necessarily present a problem for the use of the word in this dissertation, since the connotation of the positive use of plurality is quite tenable in terms of this dissertation's argument that diversity should be redefined and positively employed in dealing with moral values in the workplace. An example of this understanding is that of Cox & Finley-Nickelson (1997:212) that interpret pluralism as the mode of acculturation in organizational cultures that strongly enforce pivotal values, but permit high tolerance for differences on peripheral behaviors.



## 1.2. National and international factors that influence the South African workplace:

Moral discourse in South Africa takes place within a very specific context. Since morality not only influences, but is also influenced by its environment, it is important to develop an understanding of the South African working environment. The South African workplace has undergone some significant changes over the last few decades. These changes were due, in a large part, to three important transformational processes: the changing nature and composition of the available workforce, globalization and technological innovation.

The political dispensation in South Africa has historically had a direct impact on the way the South African workforce was composed. Due to the systematic institutionalization of the ideology Apartheid since the late forties, racial segregation became a feature, not only of the South African society, but also of its workplace. Different jobs were allocated to specific groups on different levels of the organization through job reservation and other restrictions. Cultural homogeneity was protected by strict territorial segregation. People from diverse groups were not expected to interact. Recent political developments have however also influenced the workplace. The change that has swept South Africa over the last decade has transformed its workplace and also initiated a fundamental reevaluation of what being a pluralistic society means. In the first place, large urban organizations in particular are now faced with an extremely diverse workforce, representing many races, cultures, languages, religions, genders, and economic groups interacting on various levels of the organization. Secondly, even within groups and categories of people previously regarded as homogeneous, plurality and differences are surfacing. For the first time, South African are made more aware of the fact that diversity does not only exist among groups, but among individuals and within individuals as well.

South Africa's position in the broader global business community has also changed in recent times. Whereas South Africa has for four to five decades been isolated from the international community due to the economic sanctions imposed on its government in protest to its violation of human rights, multinational companies have now re-entered the South African business sphere. Renewed competition, differences in business culture and

practices and the influence of world markets have transformed the playing field for business in South Africa.

As has been the case in so many regions around the world, South African business has felt the effects of the so-called "global village" phenomena. Henderson (1999:3) describes the many problems and possibilities associated with the "global village". On the one hand, more problems and issues have now become global and can no longer be solved unilaterally by national governments. Climate change, cross-border pollution, de-certification, the loss of bio-diversity, space junk, weapons-trafficking, drugs trading, organized crime, nuclear and toxic wastes and epidemics, global terrorism, computer privacy and intellectual property issues are only some of the issues that call for international cooperation and participation. Many of these issues have a direct impact on companies that operate across borders and continents. The global village does however have its advantages. The networked society advances the spread of democracy and a culture of human rights all over the world, and has helped to engage people from all over the globe in debates about moral issues. Access to information empowers citizens, consumers, employees and socially responsive investors. It has also become much easier to share visions, ideas and expertise with regard to sustainable development, the maintenance of social justice and ecological awareness (Henderson 1999:4).

South Africa's inclusion in the global village is directly related to the third set of changes, namely that of the development of technology. Being a unique combination of third world and first world elements, South Africa has been experiencing great changes in terms of the development of technology in the past decade. Technological innovation has not only created new avenues and opportunities for business practice, it has also confronted us with a whole range of unprecedented problems. It changes the way in which businesses are structured. For instance it can rearrange or even abolish hierarchies, communication channels, and levels of command. Furthermore, it decreases the measure of control that managers and supervisors can exercise over their employees; it leaves much more room for individual discretion and therefore also for indiscretions. Technology makes the business world part of a global community in which there are no uniform sets of rules or regulations, and where

the speed of change and development makes strict regulation and controls virtually impossible.

All over the world the rapid development of information technology has posed some serious challenges to established companies. The demise of a centuries old company such as that of the Encyclopedia Britannica is a chilling example of how the development of new technology can cause the sales of a solid and successful company to collapse by over 80% in just a few years. Evans & Wurster (2000:3) indicates how a product of the late-twentieth century information revolution, the CD-ROM, blew away a company who by 1990 had reached its peak with sales of \$ 650 million per annum. This tale also indicates how a company's greatest assets can become its biggest liabilities. The history, myths, shared values, and unreflective presuppositions that define the strong corporate culture of these companies at times blind their leaders to events that do not fit into their collective mental framework. Furthermore, established businesses often face even more competitive disadvantages because they are incumbents who are saddled with legacy assets - such as mainframe systems, sales and distributions systems, bricks and mortar, brands and core competencies. Britannica's sales force, built over decades and up to 1990 viewed as the foundation of its competitive advantage, had become obsolete. Evans & Wurster (2000:5) shows how competing in the face of the new economics of information requires cannibalizing those precious, perhaps even destroying them. A lack of flexibility and a failure to adapt to the contingencies and realities of the new technologies can often have disastrous consequences.

The challenges of the new economics of information stretch further than companies strictly involved in the information business. In fact, Evans & Wurster (2000:9) argue that every business is an information business. Information flows across most of the activities of an organization, such as value and supply chains, management structures, and consumer relations. Information forms the glue that holds the organization together. However, for many companies, that glue may now be melting. The fundamental cause is the explosion in connectivity and in the information standards that are enabling the open and almost cost-free exchange of a widening universe of rich information. Evans & Wurster (200:14) describe this process as follows: *"The tidal wave of universal connectivity is melting the*

*glue bonding economic activities together. And it will separate, as nothing has separated before, the flow of information from the flow of physical things, allowing each to follow its own economics."*

When one compares the old economics of things to the new economics of information, it becomes clear that they operate according to very different logics. Things wear out, can only be replicated at considerable cost, have a specific location and is consistent with the operation of efficient market economies. Information never wears out (except for becoming obsolete or untrue), can be replicated limitlessly without cost, is nowhere and everywhere and actually requires imperfect markets, because originators of information must limit access to their product (through copyright, patents etc.) if they are to profit from it. Information technology also changes the rules by rendering the traditional trade-off made by companies between richness and reach obsolete. In the past a company would sacrifice reaching great numbers of people with its sales force because it chose to provide rich information to a selected market of customers. Information technology now makes it possible to reach endless numbers of people with equally rich information (Evans & Wurster 2000:29).

The information age has also changed the types of moral issues that businesses are confronted with. It limits an organization's ability to predict which moral dilemmas may arise and how its employees will respond to them. The IT environment has become a moral minefield. The flood of articles about the impact of new information technology on the workplace suggests that we haven't even begun to comprehend the moral dilemmas that new technology is bringing about. For instance, *The New York Times* dismissed a number of employees after e-mails with incriminating content fell into the wrong hands - or shall we say - into the wrong chips. In addition, the Double Click-controversy has raised concerns approaching the point of panic about privacy and the use of information on the net (Wall Street Journal March 3, 2000). Employers' monitoring capabilities has also developed far beyond what had ever been imagined possible before. Not only can employees constantly be monitored, but the installation of "keystroke software" on company computers now renders even deleted material open to scrutiny (Wall Street Journal March 7, 2000).

There have been various reactions to the changing circumstances that organizations face at the turn of the century. Some signs of the deconstruction of the traditional hierarchical organization are what Evans & Wurster (2000:202) depict as the deconstruction of ownership, risk bearing and control. Whereas the enterprise was previously owned by an individual or an individual family, ownership grew into partnerships and then into joint-stock companies, allowing multiple people to have a stake in the company without actually controlling it. This made corporate ownership liquid and allowed for many financing possibilities. Not only is ownership fragmented and risk disaggregated, but even the entrepreneurial function itself is contingent on the ability of management to justify its performance. These forms of deconstruction keep extending itself through factoring, leasing and the sale of receivables which allow companies to move whole classes of assets and risks off their balance sheets and onto those institutions better able to carry them. Deconstruction is also materializing in the deliberate breakup of integrated ownership. The recognition of a "conglomerate discount" led many companies to spin off unrelated businesses so that investors could own deconstructed "pure plays" (for example GM selling Hughes Electronics). A further example comes from the world of start-ups. The venture capitalist's portfolio is a deconstructed alternative to the corporate structure. In contrast to corporations, they see ownership as transient and in no sense the essence of their business. A successful investment is liquidated as soon as it becomes attractive to a corporate buyer or to the capital market (Evans & Wurster 2000:204).

The deconstruction of employment is a further illustration of the explosion in richness and reach. The spread of Internet connectivity and the proliferation of electronic marketplaces for jobs are beginning to impact the broader labor market, especially in the professional and managerial field. Rich information and easy access to it enable employees to easily and anonymously tract information about potential jobs that was previously very difficult to acquire. This resulted in the shift towards more continuously market-based relationships between employers and employees. Especially in booming economies such as America where jobs are readily available the cost of switching jobs is dropping as information asymmetries and the cost of searching drop. The glue between employer and employee is melting, and



fluid, collaborative networks substitute static hierarchies. In a country like South Africa the impact of this process can be seen in various ways. Greater connectivity and the development of universal standards for skills and competencies in certain professions make young professionals very mobile. In a country where the push factors such as crime, economic instability and affirmative action are strong, the pull of jobs available on the Net is indeed irresistible, resulting in the almost unavoidable "brain-drain". Those who stay, tend to exit their previously stable jobs, and quit the hierarchical corporate ladder permanently to sell their expert knowledge in the consultancy market. This leads to the infamous revolving door phenomenon, where skilled employees exit the organization and returns at double the price as consultant.

An interesting example of the deconstruction of the traditional form of organizational life can be found in America's Silicon Valley. Workers in the Valley are extraordinarily mobile. Most are electronic engineers, and the homogeneity in background and education facilitate labor force fluidity. Homogeneity and collocation also support community networking, which in turns leads to a high measure of transparency. Reputations are built across the entire community and reputation risk, as in Japanese corporations that guarantee lifetime employment, shapes behavior. One's competitor may in fact be your next colleague, the role of boss and subordinate become interchangeable and therefore a regional culture develops that balances competitive and collaborative values (Evans & Wurster 2000:210). The decentralized "corporation" of the Silicon Valley has eclipsed the traditional hierarchical corporation of Boston's Route 128 and has outperformed the aggressive and competent Japanese corporations without having a finance or human resource department or in fact a CEO. It could do so because of the skill intensity, homogeneity, trust and collaboration on projects of mutual interest. This causes executives to speculate about the possibilities of virtual teaming based on friendship, trust, moral obligation and the rich human connection of professional relationships built on respect. This possibility might not only make Silicon valley-type of economic sense, it may also be way of upholding certain moral standards in a global village.

But how do corporations that still display relatively "traditional" organizational structures deal with the changing environment? When one looks at the way in which organizations are responding to the new competitive challenges it seems as if they are mimicking many of the characteristics of the deconstructed organizational environments by exploiting connectivity and standards. Internally they support the fluid, self-organizing flows of talent, technology and capital and externally they use connectivity to exploit deep collaboration, shared competencies and common strategies. Among organizations alliances are proliferating, indicating that corporations find ways in which to engage in open-ended collaborations in research, design and logistics.

When one looks at the emerging cultural and managerial norms in contemporary organizations they are dominated by three characteristics, namely fluidity, flatness and trust. The hard-wired structure of conventional organizational hierarchies is giving way to soft-wired structures in which people can group and regroup into teams. They can merge for common purposes and then segregate, work on multiple projects simultaneously, and work out the rules and responsibilities of the team without managerial direction. The organization becomes self-organizing and adapting. It reviews, learns from and amends its own procedures and structure as it embarks upon new projects and as it encounters new challenges.

The characteristic of flatness is based on the fact that spans of controls are proportional to reach. Double the span of control, all else being equal, will mean that you need to halve the management layers need in the organization. This flattening in formal management structure goes hand in hand with the flattening of informal channels for sharing, reassuring, and coaching. Multiple informal interventions replace formal plans and reviews, and e-mails replace meetings. Because greater richness and reach imply greater symmetry in information, everyone's actions become more transparent, and therefore the importance of reputation risk increases. Reputation can therefore substitute formal mechanisms of review and control (Evans & Wurster 2000:218). This use of reputation can also be invaluable in dealing with moral issues in the organization, as will be indicated later in this dissertation.

### 1.3. Individual and collective responses to the South African context:

The current fluid social, political and technological developments in South Africa and in the broader international community have given a new urgency to issues of individual and collective identity. Just as past perceptions and definitions of identity impacted directly on South Africans' moral decision-making, so the renegotiations of individual and collective identity presents new opportunities for moral discourse. Various responses to the issue of identity exist. Some South Africans have come to regard their national citizenship very important. These people tend to down-play cultural differences and celebrating unity. On the other hand, ethnic conflict seems to be on the rise in certain areas, and a certain protective attitude towards culture and language is leading to increased demands for the rights of each community to associate and dissociate on their own terms. This process is especially interesting in the case of the White, Afrikaans speaking community, who had formerly held power in the Apartheid government. Diverse reactions to the new situation exist among members of this group. On the one hand, the liberals want to distance themselves from what they consider an ignominious group designation. They seek inclusion in wider, more inclusive group identity, claiming that they are also "Africans" ("Afrikane"). This use of African should be distinguished from the use of the word "African" that is often used to refer to black people. On the other hand some others are agitating to protect what they see as their unique language and culture by intense lobbying on issues such as first language education, and culture specific programming on state television. Some right wing radical conservatives even claim the right to a separate "homeland", where they can maintain their distinct identity isolated from the rest of pluralist South Africa. Since individual and group identity plays an important role in people's perception of the morally "good", these processes are key considerations in the practice of business ethics in South Africa.

Since the adoption of a new constitution in 1994, South Africans on every level has slowly begun to grapple with the implications of the liberal democracy. It seems as if the existence of common norms in terms of public and private concerns cannot be taken for granted. According to Van Zyl Slabbert (1999:90), a former liberal Afrikaner politician,



many seemingly conflicting value-systems currently exist alongside one another in the South Africa. Whilst South Africa's liberal democratic system is based on an acceptance of a strong human rights culture and democratically elected leadership, many of its citizens come from traditional black African communities where inherited autocratic leadership is the norm. Moreover, during the Apartheid struggle, socialist sentiments were added to the political mix. Democracy is based on the individual and his/her individual rights, whereas group identity is a very important notion in both traditional black African culture and, as I will argue later on, in Afrikaner culture. The socialist expectations of egalitarianism does not fit very well with the deregulated market economy, which South Africa has adopted along with the rest of the international business community. In addition, South Africa's ANC-led government has discovered how difficult it is to maintain law and order in a society based on a strong version of human rights.

The South African society seems to be struggling to find a balance between what appears to be a number of opposing notions: the individual versus the group, democracy versus autocracy, and socialism versus capitalism. This dissertation wants to argue that it is possible for people with different value-systems to work and live together in a moral way within the same society, business organization and social and religious institution. If it is not possible, South Africa faces a grim future.

We have to walk the tightrope between the many daunting extremes, use whatever we can in terms of possible theoretical approaches, and come up with a unique way of dealing with our particular contextual challenges.

#### **1.4. Understanding our present in terms of our past:**

If we are to create moral parameters amidst the diversity of viewpoints in South Africa, we have to understand the history that shaped us and impacted on our institutions in this country. This inevitably implies reconstructing some picture of where we come from out of the fragments of historical data and real-life experiences that we have at our disposal. I will attempt to provide some clues with regard to this process, without attempting any

clear-cut, neat metanarrative that explains all the variables in play. The main goal of the next section will be to sensitize the reader to the fact that knowledge systems and institutions embody certain power-interest, that in turn influence the development of moral selves.

Why has diversity been seen as a problem, rather than an advantage, within the South African working environment? Part of the problem, I believe, lies in our view that diversity is something that exists among distinct groups, rather than among and within unique individuals. This seems to create the perception that we can deal with diversity if we succeed in identifying, describing and predicting group behavior. Another approach would be to acknowledge the fact that power relations and knowledge structures influence individual selves, but to argue that the self can also be an ethical force that interacts with knowledge systems and power relations. The latter possibility can only be understood through an acknowledgment of the interaction between knowledge, power and self.

The legacy of South Africa's long history of complicated power relations, knowledge structures, moral languages and ethical approaches has imparted certain limitations, as well as possibilities, to our efforts to address moral diversity in the workplace. As a result of our history, our resources for addressing the moral challenges posed to current organizations are severely restricted. We have to take a critical look at why this is currently the case. When one refers to a plural or *pluralist* society it has the neutral connotation of variety and difference coexisting in the same environment, as defined earlier on in this chapter. In this dissertation, pluralistic serves as the adjective of plurality, retaining its neutral connotation. Yet, in some cases, when people describe a working environment as *pluralistic*, it indicates that diversity is seen as problematic. Pluralism is not always viewed as something neutral. In fact, diversity has for long been seen as something problematic in the South African context. Why has this been the case in South Africa?

Foucault's structure of genealogical interpretation provides a useful framework for analyzing the way in which diversity had been dealt with in South Africa since 1948 - the date of the rise of the Apartheid government. Foucault's (1994:262) genealogy includes

three possible domains: *"First, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to truth through which we constitute ourselves as subjects of knowledge; second, a historical ontology of ourselves in relation to the field of power through which we constitute ourselves as subjects acting on others; third, a historical ontology in relation to ethics through which we constitute ourselves as moral agents."*

Knowledge, Power and Self are the triple root of the problematization of thought. To think means to be embedded in the present-time stratum that serves as a limit: what can I see and what can I say today? Deleuze (1988:119) quotes Foucault as saying: *"Thought thinks its own history (the past), but in order to free itself from what it thinks (the present) and be able finally to think otherwise (the future)."* I suggest that we follow Foucault in this three-pronged thought exercise: thinking our past, pushing against the limits of how we think now and attempting to think otherwise in order to realize our potential as moral *bricoleurs*.

In order to analyze the genealogy and archeology of our thought systems and practices, we have to start with Foucault's analysis of **knowledge**. According to Deleuze (1988:51) Foucault helped us to understand that knowledge cannot be separated from the thresholds in which it is caught up, including even the experience of perception, the values of imagination, the prevailing ideas of commonly held beliefs. Foucault describes knowledge in terms of two elements of stratification: that which is articulable and that which is visible, which further implies a distinction between the discursive formations and the non-discursive formations, and between forms of expression and the forms of content (Deleuze 1988:49). He advocates the view that language has the character of a distributive unity, which originated from complex and ever-changing historical complexities. When we accept that each age has a particular way of putting language together, because of its specific groupings, we come to understand the historical being of language.

When analyzing the history of moral discourse in South Africa, we may want to use Foucault's strategy of archeology to help us understand how we constituted our reality in terms of knowledge systems. In South Africa the two elements of stratification: the articulable and the visible gave rise to discursive and non-discursive formations that became

the grid by which we ordered and understood the pluralist nature of our country. For example, cultural and racial differences as articulable and visible elements of the South African reality gave rise to categories and perceptions that influenced the interaction between people. The distributive unity of the language we used originated from the historical complexity of South African life. Let us look at how some of the historical events in the country since 1940 may have left its mark on how we interpret our identity and talk about one another.

The legacy of the Anglo-Boer war and sentiments like the strong desire for self-determination, the struggle for identity in terms of language and culture, and the fear of being outnumbered are some of the factors that may have had an effect in this regard. These factors may have contributed to certain knowledge structures. For instance, South African's pervasive tendency to categorize in terms of "us" versus "them" may be an example of such a knowledge structure. People who display this tendency typically talk about others in terms of salient features such as race and language. When this happens, race and culture become the distinguishing features of identity. This tendency is often accompanied by the notion that separateness or isolation offers the only realistic strategy for survival in a country full of diverse groups and value-systems. These patterns of thinking and talking about one another still influence the way in which moral discourse is being conducted in South Africa. There are many people who desperately try to uphold the "us" versus "them" dualism by simplistically characterizing cultures in terms of their most distinct characteristics. The whole issue of African versus Western values in the workplace is typical of this pursuit. Conservative groups try to isolate themselves from other groups in an effort to ensure self-determination and the preservation of the group as a distinct entity. The struggle for minority group rights is typical of groups that feel that the democratic system has left them outnumbered. As a last resort they organize themselves into strong interests groups and try to exert as much pressure on the government as possible.

Power, the second domain of Foucault's genealogy, has also contributed significantly to the way in which South Africans have dealt with diversity. Foucault does not see **power** as

necessarily repressive. It is practiced before it is possessed and it passes through the hands of the master no less than through the hands of the mastered. Foucault defines power in terms of the relation between forces. Force defines itself as the very power to affect other forces (to which it is related) and to be affected by other forces - it is never singular. Each force implies power relations and every field of forces distributes forces according to these relations and their variations. Spontaneity and receptivity now take on a new meaning: to affect and to be affected. The power to be affected is like a *matter* of force, and the power to affect is like a *function* of force. Categories of power are therefore unique to the 'particular' action and its particular meaning (Deleuze 1988:70-72).

Between power and knowledge there is a difference in nature or heterogeneity, but they also presuppose one another. The difference in their nature relates to the fact that power does not pass through forms, only through forces. Knowledge concerns formed matters (substances) and formalized functions. It is therefore stratified, archived, and endowed with a relatively rigid segmentarity. Power on the other hand, is diagrammatic and therefore mobilizes non-stratified matter and functions, and unfolds with a flexible segmentarity. These power-relations are local, unstable and diffuse and are therefore not "localized" at any given moment, but rather constitute a strategy, an exercise of the non-stratified. There is therefore no confusion between the affective categories of power (of the 'incite' and 'provoke' variety) and the formal categories of knowledge (such as to 'educate', 'look after', 'punish', etc). The latter passes through the seeing and speaking in order to actualize the former. It is for this reason that institutions have the capacity to integrate power-relations, by constituting various forms of knowledge, which actualize, modify and redistribute these relations (Deleuze 1988:77). Deleuze (1988:81) poses the question as to what primacy power has over knowledge, and power-relations over relations of knowledge. The answer is that the latter would have nothing to integrate if there were no differential power relations.

Power is not simply violence. It passes itself through categories that express the relation between two forces. Furthermore, in relation to knowledge, it produces truth, in so far as it makes us see and speak. Deleuze (1988:83) explains that the visible and the articulable



elements enter into duel. Their respective forms make up two types of 'multiplicity', neither of which can be reduced to a unity: statements only exist in a discursive multiplicity, and visibilities only in a non-discursive multiplicity. These two multiplicities open up a third, which is a multiplicity of relations between forces, a multiplicity of diffusion, which no longer splits into two and is free of any dualizable form. Deleuze (1988:84) describes Foucault's philosophy as a pragmatics of the multiple. This could be why Foucault never attached great importance to universal or eternal questions: they would have merely been massive or global effects arising out of a certain distribution of particular features, in a particular historical formation and a particular process of formalization (Deleuze 1988:90).

Within the South African context, the statement that power is not necessarily repressive might raise a few eyebrows from people who have been repressed for decades by a small minority. However, it is Foucault's insights about the interaction between power and knowledge that might help us understand how the majority of people in South Africa could have been repressed in the way they were, and how we might avoid it ever happening again. Knowledge and power presupposes one another, yet power-relations are supposed to remain flexible, unstable and ever changing. When knowledge systems arrest this free flow and institutionalize power relations in a rigid system, it not only localizes power relations but also stops the disruptive and the creative natural process of force. The nature of knowledge itself is also corrupted in the process. It has the effect of eroding the discursive and non-discursive multiplicity of knowledge systems in such a way that it becomes reified. Therefore it undermines multiplicity and instead a metanarrative, or a grand structure is created which rules out the ongoing search for truth in its specificity. In South Africa the reification of power-relations and the presentation of certain subjective knowledge-systems with regard to diversity as universal and everlasting truths, has allowed injustice to be presented as truth, while institutions of repression became the norm for stability and civilization. The Other was evaluated from the perspective of the norms of reified structures. Knowledge-systems that deviated from the Western norm, were branded "myths, fallacies, uncivilized, unjust, backward, irresponsible, unproductive, and not conducive to development". It became a vicious circle, the knowledge systems legitimizing the institutions and the institutions perpetuating the knowledge-system.

We now turn to the next domain of Foucault's genealogy, i.e. the self. Deleuze (1988:94) poses the question: If power constitutes truth, how can we conceive of a "power of truth" which would no longer be the truth of power, but a truth that would release transversal lines of resistance instead of integral lines of power? How do we "cross the line"? After his analysis of knowledge and power, Foucault seems to have found himself at an impasse -the impasse where power itself places us, in both our lives and our thoughts, as we run up against it in our smallest truths. We realize that all our truths and perceptions are only our own subjective grasps on a reality that on the one hand constitutes us, yet on the other hand constantly escapes us. This can be paralyzing, or liberating and empowering. Foucault proposes the latter.

In order to illustrate this, Foucault provides us with an analysis of some of the practices of the Greeks. Rather than ignoring interiority, individuality and subjectivity they invented the subject, but only as a derivative or the product of a "subjectivation". This is what they discover in the "aesthetic existence" - the doubling or relation with oneself, that which constitutes a free man. This relation to oneself, cannot be reduced to the power relations and relations between forms of knowledge that were the object of Foucault's previous work. He had to reorganize the whole system. Foucault indicates that just as power-relations can be affirmed only by being carried out, so the relation to oneself, which bends these power-relations, can only be affirmed by being carried out. The relation to oneself will not remain a zone independent of power-relations and relations of knowledge. It is not the withdrawn and reserved zone of the free man. Rather, it is to be understood in terms of power-relations and relations of knowledge. It will be reintegrated into these systems from which it was derived. The individual is coded or recorded within a "moral" knowledge, and becomes the stake in a power struggle. At the same time the individual is made subject to someone else by control and dependence, part of the processes of individuation and modulation which power installs, and the subject is also tied to his/ her own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. The self will always resist codes and powers, and yet be constituted by it because the self is one of the points through which the power-relations pass (Deleuze 1988:103).

If one accepts the fact that power increasingly informs our daily lives, our interiority and our individuality and if it is true that knowledge itself has become increasingly individuated, forming the hermeneutics and codification of the desiring subject, what remains of our subjectivity? It seems as if nothing ever "remains" of the subject, since she or he is in fact created on each occasion, like a focal point of resistance, on the basis of the folds that subjectivize knowledge and bend each power. Does this force us down a nihilist impasse? It seems that Foucault had something else in mind. He identifies two current forms of subjection that have to be resisted. The first form consists of individualizing ourselves on the basis of the constraints that power imposes on us, while the other involves attracting each individual to a known and recognized identity, which is then fixed once and for all. Foucault proposes that instead of submitting to these forms of subjection we should commit ourselves to a struggle for subjectivity as a right to difference, variation and metamorphosis. "Memory" is the real name of the relation to oneself, yet it is not the brief memory that is the opposite of forgetting, but the absolute memory that is one with forgetting, since it is in itself endlessly forgotten and reconstituted (Deleuze 1988:107).

In the South African context we can draw on Foucault's ideas about "the care for the self as the practice of freedom". It provides us with a perspective on our subjectivity and our relationship to ourselves that opens creative and innovative possibilities. We can hardly argue away from the fact that power informs our daily lives, or that it had done so destructively in the past. But power need not only function as repression. That is the hope that Foucault's later works offer us. The struggle for subjectivity as a right to metamorphosis allows us to accept our past and our present without despairing about the future. It requires that we accept the fact that our knowledge, and therefore all our attempts to reach truth, will always remain partial, limited and contextualized. Furthermore it reminds us that power relations passes through us and that we are therefore constituted by it and in interaction with it. We are both its subject and object, and we can therefore have the opportunity and ability to interact with it. We will never be the modern rational subject who creates the world in our own image, but we can expect to be part of the flux of force as it realizes itself in reality every day. The individual seems to be only one point in a



whole web of power-relations, but at the same time exercises his/ her freedom as a force in itself, which co-determines these power-relations.

What does this mean in South Africa today? If we are going to pursue Foucault's ideas on subjectivity and the care for the self, we will have to go beyond an understanding of where we come from. Yes, we will have to question what ideas, what *telos* and what ideals determined our moral reasoning in the past. But instead of constantly trying to break free from the past we can in fact utilize memory as a strategy of forgetting. This will imply opening up the clenched fists with which we grasped our reality in the past. We do this by opening ourselves to the forces of finitude. Knowledge of the finitude necessarily brings new possibilities.

Foucault's analysis of the self helps us understand how individual South Africans' moral sensibilities could have been manipulated in the way that it had been during the years of Apartheid discrimination. Perhaps, if there had been a greater appreciation of the interactive nature of the relationship between the moral self, power, and knowledge, more people would have recognized how the reified "truths" of Apartheid orthodoxy restricted our vision on truly moral solutions to our society's problems.

Present day South Africa has a new set of orthodoxies and power relations have shifted, but old forms of subjection continue unabated in the places where South Africans work and worship. Diversity is still seen as a problem and strategies to deal with it more often than not involve the subjection of the individual's moral self to some form of moral consensus. South Africans could benefit a great deal from the kind of resistance to subjection that Foucault envisioned. A possible strategy would be to allow individuals' moral selves to be constituted and influenced by relations of power and knowledge in our organizations, while at the same time helping to establish and reform it. It is the goal of this dissertation to explore and utilize exactly this possibility.

### 1.5. Hypothesis and development of the argument:

It is the conviction of this dissertation that it is as detrimental to meaningful moral discourse to force individual opinions into totalizing moral rules and procedures, as it is to allow individual opinion and whim to rule in the workplace. Moral discourse must be dealt with in such a way that it allows the individual to take part in the development and continual revision of value-systems in the work place. At the same time, this process of moral value-creation must bind the individual to the organization and facilitate the development of mutual trust, responsibility and dedication to the common good.

The legacy of modernism is one of the considerable hurdles that have to be cleared on the way to a truly non-totalizing moral discourse. This dissertation will argue that because of the rationalist assumptions of "objective" moral decision-making, the world was divided into categories, life-spheres, gender boundaries etc. in order to make it rationally comprehensible, manageable and predictable. In general, people are reluctant to let go of seemingly universal structures indicating the boundaries between public and private, fact and value, reason and emotion. In explaining why we can't seem to let go of these universalizing structures that Kant and the modernist philosophers provided us with, Mark Taylor (1997:7) indicates that we as humans do need something to aspire to. He however believes that these things that we need to aspire to are transitory, and in this transitory web ethics and business can come together in temporary unions that is renegotiated as business changes and develops. The web is neither subjective nor objective and yet constitutes the matrix in which all subjects and objects are formed, deformed and reformed. One can use these insights to understand the interaction between individuals (with their unique configuration of values and perceptions) and business structures or organizations that exemplifies certain shared goals or interests. I believe that in this transitory union business goals and ethics become part of the same web, because individuals involved in the workplace brings various value-systems and interests with them and these very personalized, individual interests coexist with the shared goals, business goals, that the individuals shared with each other.

The reality of South African life reflects a combination of strong community values, personified in the notion of "ubuntu" (you exist only in and through others) with strong individualist notions, personified in our rights-based constitution. The history of South African politics proves that there is no such thing as a value-free public sphere, or the "objective" pursuit of business goals. It is also clear that South Africans certainly do not fit the profile of the unencumbered "transcendental subject". Rather, South African moral agents must be understood as moral *bricoleurs*, who draw on a variety of value-systems when making moral decisions. This point will be argued in detail in chapter 2, when we will go into the notion of the nature of South Africans' identity and the variety of factors that influence their moral decision-making. The insights developed in chapter 2 also shed light on why certain ways of dealing with diversity have met with only limited success. Diversity is a phenomenon that exists not only among groups, but also among and within unique individuals.

In discussing possible ethical approaches, it will become clear that because of South Africa's unique contextual challenges, not all ethical approaches will serve South Africa well. Chapter 3 will evaluate various approaches, and also explore some combination of certain of the ethical approaches. For instance, the Integrative Social Contract Theory (ISCT) attempts to adjudicate certain interests within a contractualist model. This chapter will indicate that most of the traditional philosophical approaches to business ethics with their contextless emphasis on abstract principles and rational reasoning no longer offer adequate strategies for moral discourse in a pluralistic environment. Yet, one has to acknowledge that an either-or approach to dealing with the problems of moral discourse in the work place will not fare any better. What is needed in the current context of moral deliberation is a strategy that combines the best of what philosophy has to offer within a broad framework of a pragmatic strategy that marries the substantive with the procedural, fact with value and rational and emotive considerations.

To merely indicate the problematic nature of certain ethical approaches within the South African context will however not assist us in coming up with a contextualized alternative. Some alternative insights from postmodern literature may prove useful in developing a

pragmatic framework for finding moral unity amidst diversity in the work place. Therefore, Chapter 4 will be devoted to the exploration of some alternative approaches to the functioning of moral reasoning and how that might enable us to understand how individuals can function morally within broader systems without dissolving their individual moral beliefs. We will investigate the notions of openness and concern for the Other as developed in twentieth century French philosophy. Also included will be a number of interdisciplinary explorations into developments within the fields of 20th century American and Continental philosophy, 20th century physics and information technology and developments in the biological sciences.

These insights will provide a basis for the development of a very basic and preliminary framework for moral discourse in contemporary South African organizations in Chapter 5. It will also be indicated how this framework relates to other insights in the current business ethics debate. In doing so, reference will be made to the work of influential writers such as Frederick, Hoffman, Driscoll, Weaver and Trevino. Since such a framework has to be able to function within the constraints of the current organizational context, its viability will be assessed in terms of current trends within the "postmodernism and organizations" debate.

To illustrate the practical value of this theoretical framework for the process of moral deliberation in South African organizations, Chapter 6 will discuss case studies of three different South African organizations. Interviews were conducted with the Christian managers of these organizations to find out how they deal with moral values in the workplace. The way in which their approaches reflect the trends in contemporary organizational theory will be analyzed. Their strategies for dealing with moral values in the workplace will also be discussed in terms of the framework suggested in Chapter 5. Finally a number of practical suggestions as to how moral discourse in these organizations may be improved or enhanced will be provided.

## Chapter 2: How moral decision-making operates in the South African workplace

In a pluralistic working environment it is very important to understand why people disagree about moral values and why their moral decision-making processes are so complex and difficult to analyze and predict. In this chapter the way in which individual identity operates and influences individuals' moral decision-making in the workplace, will be examined. The ambiguities and uncertainties arising from complex identity configurations and the variety of factors influencing moral decision-making will be described in order to give us a clear picture of what the challenges will be regarding the creation of a meaningful moral discourse within a pluralistic working environment. The chapter will describe the individual as moral *bricoleur* operating in the context of various value-systems and very specific working environments. The variety of factors influencing moral decision-making will be discussed in terms of three broad categories of influences, i.e. individual factors, organizational factors and national and international factors. These complex value-configurations operating within the individual as *moral bricoleur*, complicate moral discourse in the workplace to such an extent that some of the more common strategies for dealing with moral values in the workplace are proving inadequate (as will be indicated in Chapter 3).

### 2.1. Individual identity and South Africans as moral *bricoleurs*:

Individual differences in moral reasoning in pluralistic organizations are often understood in terms of salient features such as culture, religion, gender and sexuality. These features supposedly designate distinct groups with distinct communal identities. It is my contention however that one should steer clear of explaining differences between people's moral values and behavior in terms of broad categories such as culture, religion, gender or sexuality. Instead I would argue that each individual is a unique configuration of various values that originate from a variety of diverse value-systems. The individual draws on this unique set of values when he or she or has to make a moral decision. This presupposes a view of identity that sees the individual as more than just the sum-total of the characteristics of group(s) that he or she belongs to.

Lötter (1998: 179) describes how people define, construct and change their personal identities to make themselves unique individuals. He views personal identity as a very individual configuration of diverse components. What make people unique are the diverse components that they can use in an endless variety of ways to construct their own identities. Components within these configurations relate to the person's perceptions and feelings about his/ her body, talents and abilities, cultural, communal and familial values, religion, developmental stage and age group. These components are also part and parcel of the unique way each individual makes moral decisions.

To elevate one of these components to the only or dominant narrative structure, within which identity is to be understood, would be to create a metanarrative that continuously subjects the "Other" to limited frames of reference. This can only lead to distortions. Each individual belongs to many episodic "communities", with various different discourses in which value-systems must be brought into play. Foucault provides us with a comprehensive critique of the limitations and dangers of categorizing people into rigid frameworks. These frameworks or frames of references are directly related to the power configurations operating in society and are therefore characteristics of our own prejudices, interests and fears. Once the limits and boundaries of our own interpretations of others become clear in terms of our own identity and prejudices, it becomes possible to reframe our own identities and those of others. This process of reframing allows for more than one set of characteristics or explanations when it comes to explaining moral behavior. For the moment though, Foucault's views on identity are also helpful in understanding diversity and its impact on morality.

Foucault's philosophical analyses corroborate the idea of individual identity as a complex set of temporary configurations. When explaining how individual identity operates, Foucault (1994:xxxix) is quoted as saying: *"I would like it to be an elaboration of the self by the self, a studious transformation, a slow and arduous transformation through a constant care for the truth."* In explaining the politics of identity Foucault (1994:166) says: *"If we are asked to relate to the question of identity, it must be an identity to our unique selves. But*



*the relationship we have to have with ourselves are not ones of identity, rather, they must be relationships of differentiation, of creation, of innovation.*" MacNay (1994:9) indicates that Foucault's ethics of the self is not oriented towards the recovery of an essential inner identity, but towards an exploration of a myriad of potential identities and ways of existing in the world. Foucault's critique of the constitutive subject of thought, developed during his archaeological phase, proclaims that there does not exist any prediscursive subject that can be located as the origin of meaning. The notion of a unified subject is an illusion generated through structural rules that govern discursive formations. The technique of archaeology - the disclosure of latent, deep-level structures that constitute the condition or possibility of all thought and speech - represents a powerful attack on the subjectivism of phenomenological and biographical approaches to intellectual history.

Van der Ven (1998:108) also pleads for the acknowledgement of the importance of what he calls the dialogical self. The dialogical self as he explains it embodies the voices that represent the various roles an individual plays in different social institutions, roles that may be associated with divergent and even antagonistic convictions, values and norms. This dialogical self can only be viewed as dangerous to the conception of a normal, well-adapted self if the ideal self is conceived of as a whole, united self, which holds its own substance, exists independently, and acts autonomously. If the substantialist conception of the self is replaced by what is called a "distributed self", [a self that is distributed, as it were over various situations, positions and roles], one acknowledges the fact that the self fashions many and varied stories about living and acting in these situations and roles and relates them to others and to itself. This self consists in the diversity and plurality of meaning in these practices, both cross-situational and longitudinal. In telling stories, this distributed self also narrates tensions and conflicts that are the results of various situations and roles the individual enters into, the dialogues it has with itself and with others, and the agreements it reaches with others and with itself. Van der Ven (1998:109) understands socialization as the socialization of the "dialogical self" or "distributed self" and moral socialization as the socialization of the "morally dialogical self" or "morally distributed self".

It seems however, that because of the restricted, substantialist conception we used to hold of identity and the self, we do not really allow ourselves and others to be "dialogical" or "distributed" selves. Instead, we tend to categorize people along binary oppositions. For instance, one of the problems inherent in the way men and women communicate with each other and work together, is the fact that we as humans tend to categorize ourselves and others in terms of restrictive conceptions of the self in an attempt to make the world and interaction between people more predictable.

The postmodern decentralization of the rational subject relativized the priority placed on unity, consistency and rationality as the norms for a well-functioning individual. In fact, feminists pointed out that many of our ideas were basically modeled on the male persona and therefore ruled out elements traditionally considered female, such as emotion, intuitiveness, responsibility and care (see the section on moral development later on in chapter 2 for more detail). Some female respondents in Mills' (1993:143) study on how women deal with gender expectations at work, indicated that they attempt to overcome traits traditionally considered female when entering a professional traditionally associated with males. On the other hand, some others see themselves as positive agents of change, for instance female lawyers improving the law through their female characteristics. Both these responses however indicate that stereotypical categories based on traditional traits and modes of behavior still very much define and guide the debate on gender in the workplace. It seems there is no real deconstruction of the stereotypical descriptions of gender differences in the workplace.

Many contemporary thinkers are challenging the use of gender categories to the core of its sexist assumptions, indicating how certain discourses have been isolated and subjugated in the past. Foucault (1994:41) indicates that the postmodern debate has led to the resurgence of various kinds of "subjugated knowledges". "Subjugated knowledges" refer to at least two things. In the first place it refers to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in functionalist coherence or formal systemization. Secondly, "subjugated knowledges" also refer to a whole set of knowledge that has been disqualified as inadequate to its task or insufficiently elaborated: naive knowledge, located low down on



the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. This involves popular knowledge, though it is far from general commonsense knowledge. On the contrary it is a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity. This knowledge are concerned with historical knowledge of struggles and the painful memories associated with it.

Mills (1993:137) describes how the language of organizational discourse is reinforced by a number of disciplinary practices through which youngsters are 'schooled' for their role as (gendered) organizational subjects. Schooling in the 20th century has primarily focused on the preparation of children for the world of work. These processes of gender socialization are particularly acute during adolescence. Intersecting discourses concerning sexuality, domestic location and organizational destination are part of developing a gender identity in that it assists the individual in coming to terms with such things as physical sexual maturity, relationships with the other sex, and future options with regard to vocation and marriage. For instance a distinction is made in the way that women are educated to "be", while men are educated to "do". Females are taught to "be" wives and mothers, but males are taught that there are numerous things they have to do if they are to earn and re-earn masculinity. Disciplinary practices can for instance support these stereotypes that correspond with traditional sexist organizational roles.

It has to be acknowledged however, that this type of analysis runs the very serious risk of supporting and affirming the very stereotypes it is trying to eradicate. It does so by stressing the differences between men and women in terms of familiar gender characteristics and categories, instead of superceding such sexual stereotypes. Mills (1993:146) argues that stressing "women's" rights might contribute to the essentialist notion of women. Feminists also depend partially on Enlightenment ideals in the way claims to and visions of gender justice have been formulated. Innate or essential human properties such as natural rights, due process, and equality form the basis of many of these arguments. Mills (1993:146) suggests that this problem should be dealt with by initiating the parallel processes of questioning political, personal and organizational agendas. One should develop

change strategies that challenges sexist and political bias while at the same time encouraging people to periodically interrogate their sense of gendered selves.

In terms of diversity in the workplace, mention is often made to the so-called glass ceiling that keeps women from achieving high-level management positions. I would like to argue that the glass ceiling is located first and foremost in us, in our own conceptions about the "Other", which is mostly revealed in terms of us-them terminology or as it is also called, binary oppositions. But are these binary oppositions not the cages that keep us captive from others, and even from ourselves? Even staunch feminists such as Carol Gilligan (1982) still resort to binary distinctions between male and female patterns of moral reasoning - men reason according to an ethics of justice, and women reason according to an ethics of care, the details of which will be dealt with in detail later on in this chapter. She does acknowledge the fact that both sexes use patterns of moral reasoning, but never goes further to question why it might be the case that girls *mostly* tend to favor the ethics of care perspective and men *mostly* favor the ethics of justice perspective. The terms of the "mostly", the specificity of the exceptions, are never pursued. Thus even she resorts to essentialism of "the way women are and think" and "the way men are and think". Much of these essentialisms are based on our perception and awareness of the physical differences between men and women. But we hardly ever question whether these physical differences have not prejudiced us in such a profound way that we built discrimination into the way we think, talk, act and perceive one another. For instance, the associations that stereotypical "feminine" characteristics such as sensitivity, emotionality, responsibility and care sometimes have may lead to women not being considered for managerial positions, because they are considered too weak, or too emotional, or too involved in personal relationships and responsibilities to focus on their work. Many young women are being denied the possibility of promotion because their employers fears that they may have children and become less committed to their work. One can hardly deny that there are definite differences between men and women and the world may just be a better place because of it. Yet, do we ever examine our most deep-seated prejudices in order to create real space for the "Other" in this world? Do we allow the "Other" to move between multiple identities, as Mary Gentile (1995:11) describes it, or in Van der Ven (1998) terms, to dialogically negotiate their beliefs

and opinions with others and with themselves, to associate and dissociate freely with groups, to realize all the potential that is seated in the "distributed self"?

My thesis is that because of the way in which identity operates, dealing with diversity in the workplace should not be limited to attempts to divide the workforce into distinct groups divided along cultural, language or gender lines. Rather, each individual should be acknowledged as a unique configuration of various value-systems. This will mean that it would be impossible to describe the moral values, assumptions or predisposition of a distinct group in order to predict behavior of the individual belonging to that group. Instead, one will have to contend with the fact that individuals may make unpredictable, even incommensurable decisions when faced with a moral dilemma because of the fact that he or she is a very unique configuration of various value-systems. Depending on the situation, the individual might even decide to reverse previous moral judgments or to incorporate some other perspectives into his or her moral reasoning. This means that the individual can never be depicted as a static or fixed identity, whose behavior will become predictable in due course. Under certain circumstances a young African, female employee might draw more strongly on certain traditional values in her evaluation of a moral dilemma, whereas in another situation, she might decide to override her traditional sentiments in favor of her professional ambitions, and career opportunities. In another phase of her life, she might decide that her gender and her desire to have children override her career ambitions, etc. One could refer to this process of drawing on various value-systems in various circumstances as "changing gears". The fact that individuals might "change gears" in the workplace leads to unpredictability and volatility, but also to creativity and innovation.

In a pluralistic workplace, where individuals with "distributed selves" or "dialogical selves" interact, moral dissensus is inevitable. However, plurality and diversity should be seen as a positive resource in dealing with moral issues in the workplace. Instead of overcoming the discomfort with differences by suppressing plurality, Streng (1993) argues that differences are significant and that the need to consider these differences informs the manner in which moral communities develop. As Streng (1993:93) puts it: *"Only by taking the present conflicts and differences seriously can we develop the character dispositions,*

*the "virtues," including the intellectual and emotional skills, to handle the "otherness" of other people.* "Because the information revolution has made us all neighbors in a shrinking world, we must deal with differences and conflicts through sensitivity instead of a dichotomizing flight-or-fight mentality. We must allow difference to infuse each situation and when consensus ensues episodically, we must refrain from embodying this temporary consensus into a new local consensus that must necessarily guide all the following episodes. The alternative to taking differences and concrete contexts seriously is to create abstract universal principles, which in fact in themselves also embody certain power relations and subjective interests, even though they are presented as timeless, value-free truths. This argument is supported by the analysis of traditional ways of dealing with business ethics in Chapter 3.

The dangers of abstract categories and binary oppositions become apparent in the way it influences our thinking about one another in the workplace. Iris Young (1990:171) speaks of the oppressive character of group difference if we define it as absolute otherness, mutual exclusion, and categorical opposition. In terms of this logic one group always occupies the position of the norm, against which all others are measured. An alternative to this approach of essentializing, stigmatizing and treating differences as oppositions, is to understand difference as specificity or variation. In this logic, group differences should be perceived of as relational rather than defined by substantive categories and attributes. In this relational understanding, the meaning of difference becomes contextualized. Group differences will be more or less salient depending on the situation.

This strategy of developing an understanding of the characteristics in play in a specific context, may enable us to actualize this relational understanding of difference. Young (1990:172) argues that what makes a group a group is a social process of interaction and differentiation in which some people come to have a certain affinity. My "affinity group" in a specific situation comprises those people with whom I feel most comfortable, who are more familiar. Affinity names the manner of sharing assumptions, affective bonding, and networking that differentiated groups from one another, but not according to some common

nature. The salient feature of a person's group affinities may shift according to the social situation or the changes in his or her life.

Pieterse (1996:55) indicates the immense contribution that the "politics of difference" of Young, Rutherford, Soja, Hooper etc. makes to the postmodern debate. An important aim of the "politics of difference" is the struggle for the broadening of numerous/multiple spaces to name, expose and challenge the socialized assumptions that enable certain groups or individuals to remain in power. Instead of claiming to have discovered identity or plurality politics, postmoderns indicate that "identities" are not fixed or static. As Pieterse (1996:57) puts it: *"Even the obvious ones (identities) such as race, gender and sexuality are profoundly ambiguous, unstable and fluid. Anti-essentialism in terms of identity politics is critical to avoid simplistic and dichotomous understandings about groups."* A postmodern approach to identity constitutes an attempt at transcending engraved essentialisms of modernist-identity politics. It visualizes a world in which multiple subjects with many, changeable identities are located in varying (also changeable) subject positions. Many critics find relativism and flux of this way of dealing with identity and truth unlivable. I do not agree. In my opinion this life-style and mind-set represents a very viable alternative for a pluralist society such as South Africa. As Pieterse (1996:61) argues - it will not only challenge Christians in South Africa to humility and modesty, but it will also enable all South Africans to become translators and negotiators.

What I would like to plead for at this stage is that we acknowledge that identity is constituted by the unique configurations of various traits, perceptions, assumptions and value-systems within the individual. We therefore have to allow the individual to draw upon the wealth of all the various value-systems within his/ her identity when making moral decisions. Stout (1988:293) describes a *moral bricoleur* as someone who makes a selective reappraisal and an eclectic reconfiguration of traditional linguistic elements in the hope of solving the moral issue at hand. Stout (1981) uses the Wittgensteinian family-concept in reference to various types of moral reasoning. Through engaging in dialogue with other moral traditions, we are enabled to recognize something of the relations of one family of moral language in another tradition. Often our moral language is made up of various



fragments. We, for instance, combine elements of our religious value-systems, such as obedience to God, with cultural and political value-systems such as an ethic of rights. Thus I would like to adopt Stout's designation of "the moral *bricoleur*" for the moral agent who, after being exposed to various value-systems and after being exposed to the "Other" through unapologetic dialogue, draws on the unique configuration of values that make up his/her web of beliefs. In my opinion morality in the workplace depends on this day-to-day discourse, which is the sphere in which an individual's configuration of values comes into interaction with other individuals' configuration. This intersubjectivity is like a turning kaleidoscope in which the moral *bricoleurs* unconsciously changes his/her configuration by episodically making use of all the various value systems that make up his/her configuration. In certain episodes the individual may for example make use of both western and African values, combining these with capitalist and feminist values to address the need of that specific episode. In another episode economic or political values will be underplayed whilst the cultural and the sexual may function stronger. This mix of values is what makes morality in the workplace interesting but also unavoidably difficult to predict.

The notion of the moral *bricoleur* should not be misunderstood as a return to radical individualism. In terms of our new liberal democracy, South Africa's post-Apartheid society has to determine what the role and place of the individual is going to be, and how this individual should relate to collective norms. In this process, we have to guard against notions of the individual transcendental subject with its claim to objective rationality and contextless freedom. A strong emphasis on human rights can lead to moral problems if it results in egoistic individualism. Alasdair MacIntyre (1988) describes the difficulties that often accompany individualism. He calls modern individuals "ghostly selves", since they lack any strong community context within which their moral value systems are grounded. He argues that moral discourse becomes incomprehensible, since the shared meanings and virtues of a community no longer affect the individuals who live in it significantly.

Robert Bellah's (1985) *Habits of the Heart* exposes how individualism functions within the American community. He identifies two versions of individualism in American society. The first is utilitarian individualism, which primarily focuses on maximizing the financial and



social self-interest of the individual as an end in itself. This form of individualism produces entrepreneurs that create wealth, and managers that try to ensure optimum production and progress for their companies, in order to maximize the financial self-interest of its shareholders. The second form of individualism is expressive individualism. This type of individualism represents another version of the pursuit of self-interest, namely that which allows the individual the freedom to pursue the lifestyle and associations that he or she chooses. This form of individualism produces therapists, whose prime task is to help the autonomous individual to choose the roles and commitments she/he will make, not on the basis of higher truths but according to the criteria of life-effectiveness as the individual judges it (Bellah 1985:47).

Because of these two forms of individualism sharp distinctions are created between the public and the private sphere. The public sphere is where one pursues profit. The private sphere is where one can express one's own preferences and liking in what Bellah calls "lifestyle enclaves". These enclaves supposedly compensate you for the time, effort and social interaction that one sacrifices in one's working life, by allowing one to choose one's "lifestyle", the community where one wants to live, the people one wants to associate with, and the social activities one wants to engage in. Two criteria of the "good" underlie these two forms of individualism. Both forms of individualism are however based on a cost-benefit analysis of individual gains. In the case of utilitarian individualism, the good is more external in nature, i.e. a good income and financial progress. Expressive individualism on the other hand, finds the good in the notion of "feeling good", or experiencing oneself as free, comfortable, and authentic.

Bellah (1985:154) considers individualism the "first language" of American moral life. The communities individuals participate in are described as "practices of commitment" which form their "second language". Where the cost-benefit analysis of individualism breaks down in explaining their behavior, Americans "invent" second languages out of the failing fragments of their first language. For instance, Bellah (1985:157) describes the case of a man who came to a point in his life at which he decided to put his marriage and family life before his career. When asked about the reason for his change of perspective, the

individual replied: *"Proceeding through all these stages in life together.... It makes life meaningful and gives me the opportunity to share with somebody, have an anchor, if you will, and understand where I am. That for me is a real relationship"*. According to Bellah (1985:157) the individual is struggling to express his marriage as a community of memory and hope, a place where he is not empty, but which essentially defines who he is.

According to Bellah (1985:79) the individuals he talked to used the term "values" to refer to those incomprehensible, rationally indefensible ideals they choose when they have thrown off the last vestiges of external influence to reach pure, contentless freedom. These ideals correspond with Michael Sandel's idea of the ideal self, which is "unencumbered" in its absolute freedom. Bellah (1985:80) considers the language of "values" as it is commonly used as self-contradictory precisely because it is not a language of value, or moral choice. It presumes the existence of an absolutely empty unencumbered and improvisational self. Bellah therefore chooses not to use the term "value" at all if possible.

The question that one should however ask is whether the American use of the term "value" is not precisely an indication of the grave problems associated with individualism and the type of cost-benefit analysis that supports it. When confronted with questions concerning their values, people can only offer individual preferences as to how to achieve the greatest wealth or the greatest personal satisfaction. This is indeed a sign of an impoverished moral culture. Bellah's analysis indicates that in the American society sharp divisions exist between the facts of the business world and the process of profit-generation, and the fuzzy world of values. It is clear that this exaggerated emphasis on the individual also supports other dualisms such as public versus private, and rational versus intuitive, which has important implications for ethical reasoning. In analyzing the South African workplace, this dissertation will argue that these dualisms does not correspond with the reality of South African life, and that it should therefore not be used as parameters within which employers and employees attempt to establish normative guidelines for the workplace. The strong distinction that is often made between the economic world and the private world of moral values is artificial and meaningless, since both are often operative within the same environment. Economic values, like moral values, attempt to mediate the best possible "good"

for all those involved. Cases which involve sacrificing the interest of one party for the sake of maximizing the interests of another, amounts not only to immorality, but also in the long run to bad business.

Why is it so important to realize that the moral *bricoleur* is not synonymous to the modernist individualist self? In the first place, the moral *bricoleur* needs precisely his or her connectedness to various value-systems to have something to draw on when making moral decisions. Secondly, radical individualism creates subjectivist closure, within which it becomes impossible for the self to meet the Other. It also becomes impossible to recognize and utilize ambivalences and difference within the self. An analogy can be drawn between Derrida's notion of the deconstruction of texts and the interaction between the various value-systems in play in the individuals and between individuals. Differing value-systems and deliberations about the "good" in a particular situation may lead to conflicts, either internally within a single individual, or in the interaction between individuals. This interaction can play a very valuable role in the process of developing the moral self.

Derrida's (1981) theory of **deconstruction** is helpful in understanding what can be achieved by unapologetic dialogue, in which parties freely put their current ideas and value-configurations on the table and allow other individuals to do the same. He (1981:12) describes the benefits of the "general strategy of deconstruction" as follows: "*The latter [the general strategy of deconstruction] is to avoid both simply neutralizing the binary oppositions of metaphysics and simply residing within the closed field of oppositions, thereby confirming it*". In the process of confrontation between different cultural and religious understandings of virtue, our own moral viewpoints must be put on the table unapologetically, but with the openness to allow other moral viewpoints to deconstruct our own. It is of course possible, indeed desirable, that this will be a process of mutual learning, understanding and renegotiation and that the other participants will also find themselves addressed and changed by the interaction. It should however not be the goal of participants within the moral discourse to polemically convince the other person (s) of his or her view. The goal is not to establish a single, mutually sanctioned truth, but to engage in a process of mutual understanding and learning. Deconstruction should also not be understood as the

total dismantling of our morality, but as an opportunity to understand the limited nature of all subjective value-systems, thereby making self-transcendence possible. What is required is the willingness to expose the depth of one's own convictions while recognizing the depth - if not accepting the formulations - of another person's convictions. In a global context authentic individual virtue is measured in terms of an individual's ability to learn, to cultivate "taste", to evaluate, and to place specific events in perspective. Streng (1993:100) indicates the value of this approach: *"The difference between this kind of cultivation and what we earlier called an 'imperial' incorporation of strangers into an essentialist normative tradition is that the skill development, the cultivation of character dispositions, requires multiple experiences within oneself and among people."*

The idea of the moral *bricoleur* implies a move away from foundationalism towards a neo-pragmatic way of dealing with moral decision-making. The main objection to neo-pragmatism is the perception that it promotes relativism. Reeder (1993:193) however argues that neo-pragmatism agrees with relativism that there are no ahistorical foundations, but that it insists, contrary to relativism, that the building blocks of moral systems are not arbitrary. Both foundationalism and relativism make the mistake of assuming that we reason solely from general principles or criteria to more specific judgments. On the neo-pragmatist account general principles or criteria do not require any justification independent of their relation to specific judgment, because justification consists of a dialectic between judgments in specific cases and the application of generalizations to new cases in the light of which the generalizations themselves are modified. The neo-pragmatist will also deny that moral systems are conceptual schemes into which we are locked to such an extent that it is impossible to translate or understand other moral systems. Reeder (1993:194) argues that given the possibility of the enrichment of our own moral language through the process of learning another scheme as a new language, it is always possible, although often difficult, to achieve understanding. Our hope does not lie in a moral Esperanto that will replace our diverse and particular moralities, but rather in partial agreements. The goal should not be to develop widely shared justifications. It is important to realize that neo-pragmatism does not rule out the search for grounds for our most general beliefs. It also allows for certain universals as a basis for understanding. Neo-pragmatism appreciates the degree to which we

live in particular and diverse webs of meaning. This is why neo-pragmatism is a helpful perspective as to how a *moral bricoleur* make moral decisions.

I would like to argue that in South Africa a moral agent could hardly be anything but a *moral bricoleur*. Not only are South Africans exposed to a great variety of diverse value-systems that infuse their identity, but they are also often exposed to a wide variety of unique circumstances. These influences, both inside and outside of the organization, play an important role in their moral reasoning. People often argue that economic considerations, political agendas, policy decisions and general business activities operate in a sphere quite distinct from one's private moral considerations. In this view, morality only refers to those behavioral guidelines provided by one's religion or culture and they mostly refer only to one's private interpersonal relationships. Public morality is guided by certain constitutional (legal) parameters and therefore has certain minimalist values built into a procedural system and seldom requires much substantive deliberation and evaluation. Modernist dichotomies between fact and value, and between public and private have not only been severely criticized from a philosophical point of view, it also ran into very concrete difficulties in our previous political dispensation. How many times did we not hear justifications of acts of violence and deceit in terms of these distinctions at the hearings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission? Individuals applying for amnesty were regularly making the claim that the immoral acts they were committing or required to commit as part of their professional or political life did not in any way influence their private lives, their relationships with family and friends, or their commitment to their religion.

## **2.2. Factors that influence moral decision-making in the workplace:**

When we speak about moral values we must constantly be asking ourselves the question: What considerations, relations and behavior is part of what we view as "morality". I would suggest the following parameters: Moral consideration is the process by which one tries to take into account what one's decisions, words, actions, or dispositions imply for the balance of one's own interest with those of other people, the environment, God or a supreme being. In determining this balance one has to take into account one's perception of the "good" and



how it can be realized. Moral values are those values that translate one's perception/ view of the *Good Life* into concrete opinions, words and actions. This definition excludes the Kantian view of moral values as universal constructs which proposes that one should be able to universalize one's moral beliefs to all similar situations. This critique of Kant's theory will be substantiated in detail in chapter 3. I believe in the singularity of the moment of moral decision-making. Moral values are specifically chosen priorities in accordance with which one weighs the interests of all the various parties involved in a concrete context or situation.

We get a glimpse as to what this may mean when we read that for Foucault as a thinker, the ethical substance, the prime material of moral conduct, is the "Will to truth". The will to truth is interpreted as "the way that the individual has to constitute this or that part of himself as the prime material of his moral conduct" (Rabinov 1994:xxix). Foucault hoped to reinvent a mode of subjectivation in which this ethos would be a practice of thought formed in direct contact with social and political realities. Rabinov (1994: xi) makes the following assertion as to the way in which Foucault viewed ethics: "*Norms are active states; error is a condition of truth*". If we accept the fact that norms should no longer be viewed in abstract, universal terms, but instead as part of an individual's search for truth in a specific situation, we should also acknowledge that various factors may influence the way in which the interests of various parties are weighed during moral decision-making. If this is the case, these factors are an integral part of all normative deliberations.

Within the context of moral deliberation in the workplace, I have identified the following relevant factors: **individual factors** including age, personality, education, career development and ambitions, moral reasoning patterns and moral character, financial position, social structure; culture, religion, and political alliance; **organizational factors** such as organizational structure and systems, culture and history, remuneration, career planning, skills development and training, and ethics and compliance programs; **national and international factors** such as political systems, trust in the government and public service, development issues, economic pressures, legacies and prejudices, civil society initiatives and business culture, North-South divisions, and globalization and multinationals.



These factors influence the way in which morality is concretely expressed through context specific interpretations of moral values. As such they are of pivotal importance in the process of moral consideration. For instance, someone whose financial position is such that it influences his or her ability to feed his or her children, may give priority to financial considerations in deciding whether or not to take bread from the shop where he or she works without permission. Financial considerations have very specific moral implications and could influence the way in which the individual defines honesty, justice, and loyalty in a specific situation. One could hardly argue against the fact that when one takes something, either secretly or by force, that does not belong to you, you are being dishonest. But when one tries to argue for the maxim of justice here one runs into difficulties: Justice for whom, to whom, against whom? Does justice say everyone who work should have the right to eat? But shouldn't it then also demand the right to work for everyone? Should one not be able to expect from justice the right to earn a living and provide for one's children? But could justice provide the conditions within which all of this would be possible? It is clear that there are no simple answers to these questions. The demands of loyalty display similar complications: To whom should one be loyal? Does loyalty to one's children legitimize disloyalty to one's employer? In the end one has to choose how to define justice and loyalty and whether honesty should be one's primary consideration. These concrete questions will determine the meaning of justice in any specific context. Abstract generalizations about the value and importance of justice have no real contextual moral meaning.

### 2.2.1. Individual factors:

- **Personality:**

Since this is not a psychological study, it will not go into too much detail about the influence of various personality traits on moral decision-making. Suffice to say that researchers have suggested that certain personality traits may influence ethical behavior. These traits include ego strength, Machiavellianism and locus of control. Socialization also plays a role in an individual's ethical behavior and co-determines his or her value-system and style of moral decision-making (Van Zyl & Lazenby 1999: 15). Fritzsche (1997:89) described a number of relevant personality variables in detail. He identifies three personality traits that acts as

moderators of an individual's personal values in decision-making activities. They are ego strength, field dependence, and locus of control. Ego strength is actually another term for self-confidence and is strongly associated with personal beliefs. A person with high ego strength relies more on his/ her own values and is therefore less likely to be influenced by others. Field dependence refers to the extent to which an individual tends to make use of information provided by others to clarify issues when situations are ambiguous. People with a high field-dependency may therefore make decisions in the workplace that are likely to deviate from similar decisions they would make outside the organization when they do not have access to others' information. Field independent persons are more likely to limit the information they use in making decisions to information they already own (Fritzsche 1997:91). Locus of control reflects people's understanding of the control they have over life's events. An "external" believes that destiny, fate or luck controls life's events. An "internal" believes that he/ she can control life's events by his/ her own actions. Persons with an internal locus of control are more likely to feel a sense of responsibility for results and are more inclined to rely on personal values to guide their behavior (Fritzsche 1997:91). These variables cannot explain an individual's moral decision-making on their own. They always function in interaction with a variety of other factors that influence the individual.

- **Moral development:**

Various theories on moral development have been formulated in various disciplines. Psychological, educational and cultural explanations abound. In order to illustrate the way in which moral development could influence individual moral decision-making, I am going to look at two theories concerning moral development. The first, by Kohlberg, is a linear theory that suggests a certain progression in the development of individual moral reasoning. The second, by Gilligan, criticizes the assumptions of Kohlberg's theory and advocates an alternative of looking at moral development. Steward and Sprinthall (1991:249) see Kohlberg's analysis as a good description of the different phases of moral development. I will briefly indicate some of the difficulties pertaining to the issue of moral decision-making that may be encountered in each phase.

Stage 1 Concern for obedience and punishment

Problem: The individual tends to fear legal penalties, but finds loopholes

Stage 2 Concern for co-operation with others for the benefit of self-interest and reciprocity

Problem: Since bargains are struck in self-interest, he/she tends to sell to the highest bidder

Stage 3 Concern for enduring personal relationships

Problems: Conflicts of interest and risks of nepotism may arise

Stage 4 Concern for law and duty

Problem: No discretion can be allowed and this leads to inefficiency because of reliance on systems and red-tape

Stage 5 Principled reasoning

Problem: Hypothetical reasoning, tend to idealize and set too high ideals, cannot bring principle to shed light on specific situation

Kohlberg's assumptions with regard to the characteristics of mature moral reasoning and successful moral decision-making could be criticized for the way in which they inhibit women from making their contribution on equal terms. Although Kohlberg's description of the development of moral reasoning skills has long been hailed as an excellent analysis of development towards moral maturity, his critics accuse him of deliberately excluding women from his experiments, because they were displaying strategies of moral reasoning that didn't collaborate his theories.

Comprehensive criticism of Kohlberg's approach has been provided by feminists such as Carol Gilligan. Gilligan suggests that there are different ways in which people perceive moral problems. These differences reflect the different dimensions of human relationships that give rise to moral concern. Gilligan (1988:74) poses the idea of the "ethics of care", as opposed to the "ethics of justice" of Kohlberg. The justice perspective draws attention to problems of inequality and oppression and holds up an ideal of reciprocity and equal respect. The care perspective draws attention to problems of detachment or abandonment and holds up the ideal of attention and response to need. Though both sexes use both perspectives,

the care focus on dilemmas are more often found amongst women and the justice amongst men. Gilligan (1988:82) argues that both perspectives represent mature moral reasoning and should be acknowledged as such.

In the case of the ethics of care it is impossible to describe such a strictly linear process of moral development. It involves a more random use of various considerations in order to provide care and concern in each specific situation. This phenomenon corresponds with the idea of *the moral bricoleur*, who makes use of various moral impulses in an eclectic way. The same individual may for instance draw on an ethics of justice in some situations and prefer to operate according to an ethics of responsibility and care in another situation. For instance, a female executive might subscribe totally to an ethics of justice in terms of certain working relationships, but might subordinate this ethos to an ethics of care if the needs and interests of the team she is responsible for are at stake. These internal conflicts often give rise to difficulties in terms of moral decision-making. In this respect it is also important to note that the justice focus and the care focus do not always support the same moral decision. Detachment, which is the mark of mature moral judgment in the justice perspective, becomes THE moral problem in the care perspective, i.e. the failure to attend to need.

The predominance of the justice perspective in public life can be attributed to various factors. Patriarchy has led to systemic socio-economic and political injustices, and the restriction of women to the private sphere and child-rearing responsibilities. For centuries the place of women was in the home, and her views were generally seen as inferior to those of men because of her lack of education. Therefore the views of women and their moral arguments were systemically excluded from the public sphere. When operating in a business environment, within which the justice orientation dominates, women tend to react in one of two ways. The ones who enter into leadership positions may refrain from using arguments that reflect a care perspective in the workplace and adopt, and sometimes even excel, in the ethics of justice. The result is not only the impoverishment of the moral discourse because valuable perspectives and problem-solving suggestions are lost, but also in the compromising of these women's integrity as they have to silence some of the moral voices inside them.

Other women shy away from positions in which they will have to justify their moral decisions or give guidance to others. In these cases the organization loses valuable leadership potential and ends up alienating women who feel that the playing field is not as level as it is portrayed to be.

Addressing these problems will take more than a few gestures made towards women from a typical justice perspective, that is, by means of rhetoric of rights and equality and tokenism. A fundamental re-evaluation of the type of moral arguments that will be considered legitimate within the workplace is necessary. Women should not be allowed into the workplace or into CEO positions on the basis of how well they can employ the male reasoning of the ethics of justice. They should be allowed to make alternative moral arguments based on relationships, care and responsibility for others, as well as justice reasoning, if they so choose. Gilligan's attempt to describe the elements that are excluded and repressed because of male dominance and the priority given to male standards however run the risk of reinforcing the stereotypical views that women possess characteristics and forms of reasoning that are totally distinct from men. Although Gilligan acknowledges that both men and women draw on the responsibility and care perspective in their moral reasoning, her work is often cited in a way that paradoxically tends to confirm stereotypical and discriminatory views of women. The point that Gilligan and others want to make is the recognition that various forms of discourse, reasoning and acting exist and that all individuals should have the freedom to employ whichever form they choose in every sphere of life.

- **Types of moral reasoning:**

Individuals may also make use of various types of moral reasoning, i.e. deontological or teleological or some combination of these. According to deontological reasoning certain moral rules or desirable behaviors are seen as ends in themselves. Immanuel Kant, the father of deontological theories, is well-known for his development of the Categorical Imperative. It is based on two basic precepts. The first is that it should be possible for anyone making a moral decision to universalize their own judgement as to what constitutes the morally correct behavior in a given situation to all similar situations that may arise in



future. The second precept of Kant's theory is that one should never treat another human being as a means to an end but always as an end in itself. Teleological reasoning prioritizes desirable outcomes. One of the most prominent exponents of teleology is Utilitarianism. Utilitarian moral reasoning is aimed at always maximizing the pleasure of the most people involved in any given situation, and minimize their pain and discomfort. There are many varieties of deontology and teleology, as well as a number of approaches that were developed in reaction to it such as ethical relativism and situational ethics. These theories will be discussed in depth in Chapter 3 in order to examine their most basic assumptions and to critically evaluate their applicability to the unique demands of the South African context. What is important here is to take note of the fact that these various patterns of moral reasoning play an important role in the way people make moral decisions.

In order to illustrate this, let us look at a simple example. Take, for instance, the way in which a Kantian and an Utilitarian may view taking home stationary from work for their children's use. The Kantian would immediately put this action to the universalization-test. If all employees were to take stationary home to their children, there would be none left at work. Furthermore, taking something that belongs to someone else amounts to stealing, and if stealing were to be made a universal maxim, there would be chaos. The Utilitarian may look at this situation from a completely different perspective. Taking home stationary does not harm the company in any direct way, since it is of very little monetary value, and the parent might compensate for the use of company property by working longer hours. It could be argued that kids should be compensated when their parents work longer hours, because they get to spend less time with them. This give-and-take approach therefore maximizes both the interests of the organization and the family, without hurting either.

- **Gender and sex:**

Lötter (1998:183) makes a distinction between sex and gender. Sex has a biological connotation and several physical characteristics and conditions have to be taken into account when determining someone's sex. In the case of gender, psychological and cultural connotations outweigh the biological considerations in the concept of sex. Gender refers to the way in which the individual appropriates, transcends, conforms or ignores the standards



of masculinity and femininity prevalent in society. In fact, it is thought that every individual has a certain degree of both masculinity and femininity and that the ratio of one or the other can vary in the same individual at different times. This complicates the way in which gender stereotypes can function as explanatory tools for predicting or explaining individual behavior.

A woman's gender may be one part of her identity, but she may also be an ambitious professional, a good golf player and a keen baseball supporter. Because it is one of the most obvious aspects of her identity, her gender may become the pre-eminent determining aspect of her role in an organization. Her employer's perceptions and expectations of her may therefore be based on stereotypical views about the abilities or characteristics of women. As a result she may be seen, for instance, as a good candidate for managing relationships in a supervisory capacity. However, she will probably not be invited to the occasion where the actual deals are being made or relationships of trust are being built on the golf course. When gender or cultural communities become the only or dominant narrative structure within which identity is understood, a metanarrative is created that continuously subjects the "Other" to pre-established explanatory and distorting tools. If gender could be reframed differently, employees, especially female employees, would be liberated to contribute far more to the organization than they are currently being allowed.

- **Cultural influences:**

In understanding the way in which culture influences moral decision-making in the workplace, various cultural aspects in terms of which individuals may differ from one another can be identified. Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:31) identify six basic issues within cultural value-orientation frameworks that could be identified within various societies throughout time. These six aspects may help us understand how an individual's cultural orientation could influence his or her moral decisions.. The six issues are as follows:

- 1) Relation to nature
- 2) Orientation to time
- 3) Belief about human nature

- 4) Mode of human activity
- 5) Relationships among people
- 6) Use of space

Before we look at the various ways in which these aspects are understood by various cultures and how they may influence moral discourse in the workplace, we should take note of how Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:31) sees culture. In their view culture is not a combination of the properties of the 'average citizen', or some modal personality, but rather, among other things, a set of likely reactions of citizens with a common mental programming. They therefore identify five caveats that has to be kept in mind when mapping out cultures:

The first caveat reminds us that variations exist in all cultures, and that there is therefore no such thing as cultural homogeneity. No culture is so simple that all members of that culture believe that only one way of dealing with an issue is appropriate in all situations. Rather, each culture may have an ordered preference of variations for solving a particular problem.

Secondly, Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:32) warn us that one should not confuse personality with culture. Confusing the individual level with the group or societal level is such a common error that it has been identified and named the ecological fallacy in the social sciences. It manifests itself in two ways: The first is a tendency to project the cultural values known to be held by a group onto an individual who is a member of that group. The second tendency is to project from individuals to groups. Both types of fallacies are forms of stereotyping and are to be consciously avoided. One should refrain from resorting to any one of two extremes. Culture is certainly relevant, but in no way deterministic.

The third caveat has to do with the fact that cultures are dynamic and therefore change over time.

Fourthly, culture should not necessarily be understood in terms of national culture or country. Various cultures and subcultures may exist in one country. Each of these may even have their own language. Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999: 33) for instance point out that deaf Americans have their own language - American Sign Language.

The fifth caveat would have us remember that any one person can belong to many cultures simultaneously. One may for instance share a national, school, and gender culture at the same time.

The sixth and final caveat requires an acknowledgement that this framework itself represents and reflects a distinct orientation towards life, namely mastery, which will be discussed in more detail later on.

Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski's (1999:37) identify three possible variations in a culture's relation to nature. Cultures may have an attitude of subjugation towards nature, live in harmony with nature or seek mastery over nature. These attitudes may exert an important influence on people's professional lives. People with an attitude of subjugation to nature may, for instance, be more qualified, hesitant and vague in their goal-setting because they believe that certain things are inevitable and cannot be determined by us as humans. Someone with an attitude of mastery however, may be more specific, confident and unambiguous in his or her goal setting.

When it comes to cultures' orientation towards time, Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:39) identify three orientations, namely past oriented, present orientated and future orientated. When one considers traditional African cultures and certain eastern cultures one may have to add a cyclical orientation to time as well. These orientations to time influence the way in which people work. At work, people who are oriented towards the past may normally seek an extension of past behavior, while those orientated towards the present may seek short-term solutions and those oriented to the future may seek long-term solutions.

The third issue relates to variations in the way in which human nature is perceived. Cultures may view human nature as basically evil, as neutral or mixed, or as positive and good. Control systems, management style and organizational climate may all be influenced by a person's cultural orientation in this regard. If one believes that humankind's basic inclinations are fundamentally good, one would probably opt for loose, information-based control systems,

choose laissez-faire, participative management styles and prefer collaborative, informal organizational climates.

The fourth aspect that cultures differ on is their preferred mode of human activity. Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:43) distinguish three focuses of activity. The first is being, the second containing and controlling and the third is doing. The being mode has the following characteristics: it allows emotional decision-making, it prefers a feelings-based rewards system, is spontaneous and is satisfied with vague, feeling-based and intuitive measurement systems. In cultures that prefer containing and controlling actions, the decision-making criteria is rational, logic-based, concerned with balanced objectives as desired outcomes and prefers the use of complex, qualitative and broad measurement systems. The doing mode has pragmatic decision-making criteria, is results-orientated, compulsive and use simple, operational measurement systems.

Cultures also differ with regard to the way in which they view relationships among people. The three basic orientations described by Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:46) is hierarchical, group-orientated and individualistic. These orientations impact on organizational structure, communication and influence patterns, reward systems and teamwork within organizations. For instance, in cultures that have a hierarchical orientation, the organizational structure tends to be based on vertical differentiation, its communication is authority based, its rewards are status-based and its teamwork is regulated and formal. Culture who prefer individualistic relations opt for informal, flexible behavior vis-a-vis structures, their communication patterns are multiple, as-needed and open, their reward system is individually based and teamwork is voluntary and informal.

One more aspect with regard to which cultures may differ is their spatial orientation. Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:48) identify three possible orientations, namely private, mixed and public. Cultures with a private orientation prefer one-to-one and secret communication patterns, their office layout places emphasis on barriers and privacy and their interaction patterns are physically distant, one-to-one and serial. The public orientation in turn displays wide, open communication and influence patterns, they prefer

office layouts that are open and interactive and their interaction pattern is physically close, with frequently touching and engaging in multiple relations.

Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski (1999:49) argues that one may even be able to set up a complete integrated matrix to show how cultures that live in subjugation towards nature, will generally also be oriented to the past, believe that people are intrinsically evil, have a being mode of activity, prefer hierarchical structures and maintain a one-to-one, physically distant social orientation. Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski's framework is immensely helpful in mapping out differences in terms of distinct variables. However, one might question whether these variables always coincide with a particular cultural group's boundaries. It is not hard to imagine someone who, for instance, live in subjugation towards nature, yet displays a long-term time-orientation, and believes that all people are intrinsically good, while preferring the containing or controlling mode of activity, or individualistic relationships between people, with a strong sense of private space and one-to-one communication. Mapping out culturally influenced patterns of behavior is definitely interesting and can provide the basis for discussion amongst participants of different cultural groups, but an individual's behavior should not be limited to a predetermined space within the matrix. He or she should be allowed to freely locate him or herself in such a matrix by voluntarily associating or dissociating with the cultural frameworks they encounter or participate in, rather than being determined by them. If Lane, DiStefano & Maznevski's warning that cultural frameworks should not function as deterministic structures is to be heeded, one is better off not trying to predict how cultural orientations with regard to the six issues at hand coincide within the individual.

The oversimplified and deterministic use of culture as explanatory tool has become an especially pressing problem in the South African context. In South Africa easy recourse is often made to salient features such as culture in explaining individual moral behavior. Because of Apartheid indoctrination and a history of separate development, many stereotypes exists pertaining to cultural differences among South Africans. Differences do of course exist between people from different cultural backgrounds, but when culture is used as explanatory tool in explaining moral reasoning and moral decision-making, problems

become evident. Salient differences are isolated and lead to stereotypical views of individuals based on an essentialist approach to identity. One of the most common examples of using cultural differences to explain moral conflicts is that of so-called African time versus Western time. As a result of the fact that many black Africans grew up in an environment where time was not measured as accurately and did not have the same meaning as in a more linear, Western culture, their work ethics and reliability in terms of dead-lines and appointments, are often called into question. Moral judgments are then made, such as: Africans are lazy, they steal time, they are unreliable and irresponsible and they have no respect for other people. The derogatory nature of these claims and its clear moral content highlight the crucial role that cultural differences can play in understanding the dynamics of ethics in a pluralistic workplace. Explanations that rely solely on cultural stereotypes are very often racist and ignorant in nature.

I have argued extensively in a previous paper (Painter-Morland 1999:151) that culture effects the individual in a much more complex way than essentialist theories suggest. For instance, many of the differences between white and black had previously been explained in accordance with the Africa-Western dichotomy. In this conception white people had a Western orientation and were therefore rational, with a linear view of time, orientated towards the future, materialist, and individualist. Black people were expected to conform to an African orientation which implied that they were irrational, or emotive, had a cyclical view of time, were thought to be orientated towards the past and the moment, whilst displaying non-materialist, communal values. The reality however is that many individuals in South African organizations display a very unique combination of many of these traits. You may for instance find a young black African who is very ambitious and materialistic, and oriented towards the future, but who believes in ancestral forces and strong communal ties. The individual is a *moral bricoleur*, who extracts values from various backgrounds and influences in an eclectic way in order to address the situation at hand. This of course has direct implications for moral decision-making processes in the workplace. It becomes difficult to predict individual moral behavior, because each individual's moral composition is unique. It is also very hard to establish a set of common values and practices for the whole organization, especially in organizational environments as diverse as the public service.



Hilliard (1996: 22) writes: *"Although indecisiveness about common ethical values and norms are not in itself wrong, it created numerous difficulties in the public service because it complicates the compilation of a uniform and generally acceptable code of conduct for all public servants and office-bearers."*

- **Religion:**

During the previous dispensation, 77% of the South Africa's population was considered Christian, and the importance of religious diversity was often underestimated. As a result, people often referred to religion in an effort to find common ground. However, statistics gathered under the previous government tended to exclude large majorities of Africans, especially in the rural areas, and the fact that there was less freedom of religion under the previous dispensation, render these figures highly questionable.

The 1996 census (CIA World Factbook 2000) showed that 68% of South Africans, who indicated some sort of religious affiliation, considered themselves Christian. This seems to vindicate the perception that South Africa's population is religiously homogeneous. However, minority religions now receive protection under our new Constitution and can therefore no longer be ignored in moral discourse. Furthermore, it needs to be acknowledged that the Christian religion has historically displayed many variations in terms of spirituality, confession, and organization. Therefore, even among those people who consider themselves Christian, many differences exist. It would thus be misleading to think of the Christian religion as a basis for consensus.

This does not mean that religion has no role to play in South African moral discourse. After the demise of Apartheid churches tended to turn to personal, domestic matters, because the distinction between private and public had become a firmly established feature of the new democratic South African society. This is an unfortunate situation in a society that is in desperate need of moral reconstruction. Even though religion currently tends to be under-emphasized within business ethics debates, it is still a very important part of many people's lives and therefore still plays a crucial role in individual moral development. Internationally, only 16% of the world population indicates no religious affiliation ([www.adherents.com](http://www.adherents.com)). If

this trend is reflected in the South African population, religious affiliation should be acknowledged as an important component of people's moral configurations. The relationship between religious considerations and ethical considerations in business was been confirmed by a questionnaire surveying the interests of members of the Council for Ethics in Economics in Columbus, Ohio (Childs 1995: 5). When asked how they viewed the role of personal religious belief and heritage in making business decisions, virtually all the businesspeople involved agreed that it was "very important". A sizeable study done by the Center for Ethics and Corporate Policy in Chicago also provided considerable evidence for people's need to integrate their faith and daily work (Childs 1995: 6). According to Childs (1995:7-11) there is a lot of reluctance in business circles to apply explicitly religious values in their professional activities. He attributes this to the following five reasons. In the first place the lingering conviction in the secular world is that objective reason can lead us to moral truth along the path of neutrality. Secondly, people tend to equate religious ethical ideals with a few commonly held principles such as not stealing, not harming others deliberately, and lying or cheating, and thereby short-circuits more probing moral reflection. In the third place, there remains a long-standing dualistic assumption that spiritual life and businesses belong in separate worlds. One of the key moral issues business people often identify is "the reintegration of the self and values in the workplace". This seems to indicate that business people find the compartmentalization of life troubling. Fourthly, the church has often been hostile in its attitude towards business and has tended to neglect addressing the specific daily needs of those in business. Finally, businesspeople often operate with a stereotype of the church as out of touch with "the real world" and incapable of understanding that world.

Childs (1995:2-9) identified a number of areas in people's professional lives that are thought to be influenced by the religious convictions that underlie their basic moral considerations. These areas include: the purpose and meaning of life and human society and the individual's sense of vocation; the intrinsic purpose of business as an expression of social relationships and activities and the way in which business fulfils its responsibilities towards and within this social structure; and the guidance that religious principles provide

with regard to the way an individual should think, talk and behave in his/her everyday life (Childs 1995:8).

- **Political pressures:**

Politics influences individual moral-decision-making in various ways. In terms of political corruption, the gains that elected officials gather through immoral practices, such as corruption etc., primarily exerts an influence on the political process. In the case of bureaucrats however, political decisions can also affect their willingness to corroborate with a corrupt system. In the case of South Africa this cuts two ways. On the one hand, bureaucrats who have been appointed under the Apartheid regime are now experiencing a severe lack of job security because of affirmative action and nepotism. They feel that they are justified in exploiting the system while they still have access to resources. On the other hand, black South Africans have been kept out of senior positions in the public service so long that some of them feel justified in "taking their turn to ride the gravy train". This type of corruption influences the everyday activities of the public service.

- **Financial pressures and Social pressures:**

It is a basic reality of life that an individual that is either in financial difficulty or under economic pressure because of aspiring to a lifestyle outside of his or her financial means, will more easily be tempted by the financial or social gains of corruption. In the South African public service there are many individuals who, because of injustices in the past, have been deprived of a decent lifestyle and now feverishly pursue the luxurious lifestyle they feel they have always deserved.

All kinds of social pressures, resulting from various social contexts that individuals participate in, play a role in moral decision-making. The most basic social setting for the individual is that of family and friends. For instance, the fact that many individuals come from single-parent families and are often single parents themselves, decisively influence their moral decision-making. Friends and other social interaction outside the workplace often define the way in which people deal with problems, communicate their feelings, and

deal with disagreements. These aspects ultimately influence the way people treat each other and interact at work. Furthermore, one's position in the society also plays a role in what you deem acceptable or not. Status or influence is valued within all cultural backgrounds. It is a question of improving the position of the individual vis-à-vis other role-players. Media influence, beauty, charisma, social connections etc. are all priced attributes that people are willing to pay a price for, even if it may compromise other value-systems that form part of their identity.

But even within the organization social pressures are a reality. Various "subcultures" exist within the organization. They all have their own hierarchies, work ethic, conflict-resolution strategies, ways of communicating (sometimes even a very distinct way of speaking or of using certain words), dressing and relaxing. The degree to which the individual is susceptible to the influence of the group may vary according to age, career development, ambition etc. Powell (1998:51) argues that cohesiveness in organizations often has distinct limitations. This conclusion is supported by other research. The "group-think" phenomena can become a very serious threat to ethics within an organization. Groupthink can be described as the tendency of members of highly cohesive groups to lose their critical evaluative capabilities. The net effect is that individuals tend to behave in accordance with the group's norms even when this means going against what they would normally do outside the group setting. Conversely, an unethical person who is part of a group with high ethical standards is more likely to behave ethically (ICAC 1998:7).

Some empirical studies conclude that what a person's peers do is the best predictor of his or her ethical behavior. It is thought that perceptions of peers' behavior influence the respondents' unethical behavior more than the respondents' own ethical beliefs. Some studies show that groups can have a larger capacity for ethical decisions than the average capacity of the individual members of the group. However, it was also found that groups composed of individuals with similar levels of ethical judgment, tend to poorer ethical decisions than the average of the individual members. This attests to the dangers of homogeneous groups. Groups composed of diverse individuals, on the other hand, tend to improve their level of ethical decision-making compared to the average of the individual

members in the group. It was also found that those individuals with the best ethical reasoning skills tend to exert the greatest influence on the group process (ICAC 1998:8).

- **Occupational or professional background:**

People with a strong professional background who work within the corporate world often experience a conflict between their professional values and the expectations of a competitive business environment where certain business goals, targets, and responsibilities towards shareholders and clients all vie for priority. For instance, a legal expert is part of the corporation's legal team and therefore should therefore put the interests of his or her employer, the corporation and its shareholders first. This professional may find it difficult to reconcile these expectations with the demands of the legal profession's code of conduct and the priority it places on serving justice and the best interests of all those involved in each situation.

### 2.2.2. Organizational variables:

- **A lack of common moral vision within an organization:**

A lack of common moral vision could be attributed to many factors within the South African situation. Culture and religion are two of the factors that have already been mentioned. Even within apparently homogeneous cultural and religious groups, individuals, as *moral bricoleurs*, tend to have different moral configurations. It therefore becomes very difficult to predict how an individual's moral reasoning will take place. This uncertainty can even lead to what Andre (1995:489) depicts as "diversity stress". Diversity stress can exist in any situation where beliefs and values differ. Diversity stress becomes morality stress when managerial decisions are shrouded with ambiguity and competing moral principles. The fact individual are moral *bricoleurs* does therefore not mean that a company should not provide their employees with some common core values in order to create some unity amidst the diversity. The core values can however not operate in isolation of the broader vision and mission of the company and its business goals. An ethical organization begins with its vision and mission. If ethical values are not part of this broader strategy, individuals will be



tempted to view moral decisions as something that cannot be reconciled with "business as usual". This can have a detrimental effect on individual's moral decision-making.

- **Ethics and compliance programs that support ethical behavior in organizations:** Studies done by the Independent Commission against Corruption in Australia, ICAC (1998:1) indicated that an individual employee is likely to behave according to the group norms that function within the organization that they work for. This is the case even when they are required to go against the moral values they would usually ascribe to outside of the group setting. Highly cohesive groups run the risk of making unethical decisions when they are not led by managers who encourage the expression and consideration of diverse moral perspectives. The opposite is also true: highly cohesive groups that emphasize ethical behavior can result in more and better ethical decisions. They also found that an unethical workforce perpetuates itself, because ethical staff tends to leave when they discover that their moral inclinations bring them into conflict with the expectations of the organization. Ethics in the organization impacts on job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, employees' levels of stress and staff turnover.

What kind of organization will have a positive influence on individuals' moral decision-making? ICAC (1998:13-22) identifies the following elements of a good ethics and compliance program: a clearly stated mission and core values jointly identified by the whole workforce; a code of ethics and business conduct; the effective communication of the company's values to all involved in and with the organization; leadership's commitment to and participation in the program; ethical strategies for managers; ethics training; rewards and sanctions; procedures and rules; structures, systems and adequate resources to achieve goals; and interaction with and feedback from the external environment. It should be made clear however that the existence of these aspects within an organizational culture cannot guarantee an improvement in the standards of ethical behavior of individual employees. Certain prerequisites exist for the successful functioning of these measures. For instance, ethics training must look at actual unethical practices in the organization rather than discussing intangible universal values. The goal should be to translate abstract principles into specific job decisions. Furthermore, the mere existence of a code of conduct does not



stop unethical behavior. It has to be accompanied by clearly proposed sanctions if it is to minimize the likelihood of unethical behavior (Brien 1997:51). The type of code, its formulation and the marketing of the code should fit the organizational culture, its informal and formal practices as well as the type of business conducted by the organization. More specific suggestions as to how these aspects should be dealt with within the pluralistic context of South African organizations will be discussed in Chapter 5.

ICAC (1999:9) has developed a set of questions to assess the status of an organization's ethical framework: These questions include:

- Have you got a Vision and Values statement?
- Does a code of ethics and/ or a code of conduct bring them to life?
- Do staff and stakeholders know about these values and codes?
- Is there an effective training program?
- Are the organization's key strategies and plans (for example, the corporate plan), aligned with its core values?
- Has the organization conducted a recent risk assessment? What are the high-risk areas? Do the organization's policies and procedures acknowledge the relative risk levels of the activities they cover?
- Do policies and procedures reflect the organization's vision and values?
- Are key systems to enhance ethical behavior in place? E.g. recruitment, internal reporting, grievance handling, internal investigations, complaints handling, performance management including disciplinary and reward systems?
- Do these systems reflect the values and vision of the organization?
- Does your organizational structure accommodate values based management and participative decision-making?
- How does the organization deal with the external environment? For example, the organization's clients and suppliers?

- **Leadership commitment to ethics:**

In their study of the influence of leadership and management on ethical behavior in the workplace, ICAC (1998:14) found that staff are more likely to do what they see their

supervisors doing than adhere to their company's ethics policy. They include a comparison between what were the most important factors influencing ethical behavior, and which factors determine unethical behavior. The ICAC survey found that the following four factors exerted the most influence on employees' *ethical behavior* (from most to less important): the individual's personal behavioral code, the behavior of company managers, the formal company policy, the behavior of colleagues. The factors that exert the greatest influence on *unethical behavior* were (from most to less important): behavior of company managers, the ethical climate of the industry, the absence of company policy, the behavior of colleagues, and employees' personal financial position. Middle managers reported that senior management was the source of most of the ethical conflicts that they encountered within their working environment. These conflicts were mostly related to the concealment of information, a lack of concern for the long-term effects of certain decisions and actions, and the unfair treatment of individuals. Studies have also shown that the opinions of a company's CEO exert a powerful influence on employees' ethical behavior. Both formal and informal statements from CEO's that support ethical decisions resulted in an increase in ethical decisions compared to companies where no such statements were made by their CEO's. Personal ethical goals were mostly cases subordinated to the CEO's ethical views (ICAC 1998:15).

- **Stakeholders:**

The extent to which an organization is accountable to its stakeholders greatly influences the care its employees take to maintain their trust, respect and cooperation in all decision-making and conduct in the workplace. Fritzsche (1997:63) refers to a ranking of company stakeholders provided by Harvard Business Review. The priority of stakeholders in descending order was customers, stockholders, employees, local community, society, suppliers, and government. A certain degree of variation may of course exist in this order. For instance, in the manufacturing industry customers enjoy priority over stockholders. It was found that although stockholders do exhibit some concern and support for ethical behavior, they were generally more concerned about whether the company's behavior was legal, rather than ethical (Fritzsche 1997:63). It is interesting to note in this regard that the United States Sentencing Guidelines made the creation of an ethical business culture

legally compulsory, by promising greatly reduced liability penalties to companies that met its criteria for establishing an ethical organizational culture. Further encouragement is provided by the fact that the US market tends to penalize firms who were accused of specific transgressions. Firms that had engaged in bribery, tax evasion, theft of trade secrets, financial reporting violations, or violations of government contracts experienced a significant decrease in the value of their stock within twenty days of the announcement of the transgression. The image of the firm and the information received by customers about the firm, whether through advertising or negative press, definitely influence the market. Yet it is unclear to what extent the penalties received in terms of loss of stakeholder trust act as a deterrent for unethical decisions and behavior. Fritzsche (1997:63) reports that studies found that a firm that has incurred a violation is more likely to become a repeat offender.

- **Features of the organization – size, resources and industry:**

The culture that develops in an organization over a period of time influences the way an individual employee makes decisions. This culture is often directly influenced by specific organizational variables, such as its size, resources and the industry it is involved in. The ICAC (1998:21) research indicate that illegal behavior is likely in the following Australian organizations: those with scarce resources, but even more so in organizations where resources are plentiful; those operating in highly dynamic environments; organizations that are large in size; organizations that have had three or more prior violations; organizations that trade in food, lumber, petroleum refining and transportation equipment. It would be interesting to see what industries or types of business ventures tend to be more prone to unethical business-practices in South Africa. The following factors tended to influence the standard of ethical decisions of managers negatively in Australia: mergers; rapid growth; the addition of a foreign operation; and decentralization.

- **Ethos:**

Within a democracy, many workers, especially those in the public service, and those who are involved in industries that provide goods and services to the public, often find themselves in a situation where they are expected to uphold two distinct value-systems. Pugh (1991:10)

identifies two distinct value-systems, namely that of the bureaucratic and the democratic ethos, that co-exist in the workplaces of democratic states. These value-systems are very different in nature. The bureaucratic ethos has long been associated with the historical mode of modern public administration. Within this ethos content values are assessed against established rational goals and objectives using instrumentalism and utilitarianism as the criteria for action within a strong hierarchical system. Within the democratic ethos values such as personal liberty, private property, equality and social equity/ justice are deemed most important. The methodology of the democratic ethos is also quite different from its bureaucratic counterpart. It tends to be more deductive, dialectical and deontological in nature, which means that the rightness or wrongness of the action is being considered rather than outcomes (Pugh 1991:17). In South Africa at the moment, democracy, empowerment and personal freedom are being celebrated as the first fruits of democracy. However, South Africans seems to be so used to operating in the bureaucratic ethos of hierarchies and utilitarianism, that they do not have the skills or competencies to cope with democratic freedoms. This seems to be a problem within all young democracies.

- **The nature of the position held by an individual in the organization: discretion, seniority, and type of authority.**

The seniority of the post a person occupies and the measure of authority he or she exercises influences the risk for unethical behavior. The more discretion a person has to exercise in the course of his or her work, the easier it will be for this person to commit corruption. As Klitgaard's (1998: 3) metaphorical formula states:  $C = M + D - A$ , or Corruption (C) equals monopoly power (M) plus discretion (D) - accountability (A). In the case of South Africa, the public service inherited a system where there is a notorious lack of accountability. To make the situation worse, the previous exclusion of many South Africans from public service and the inferior education and training of black South Africans resulted in the unfortunate reality that many public servants are not sufficiently skilled and experienced to handle their responsibilities. Incompetence tends to breed further corruption, since public servants often rely on hearsay or the authority of others when making decisions. Affirmative action policies tries to redress historical imbalances, but sufficient in-house training and advice are not always available to meet the urgent needs at

the pace it is required. This makes the public service especially vulnerable to consultants and big-money-business to enter the system illicitly. As Moody-Stuart (1997:6) puts it: *"Huge sums are being spent on development and redevelopment, on major capital works and equipment supply. Most significantly, key decisions are being taken by men with very little business experience and no personal wealth."*

- **Role(s)-conflict within employees:**

Van Wart (1996:526) argues that employees often experience problems with role definition. He ascribes this to what he calls "role interests" that require employees to balance a number of competing objectives. Van Wart identifies five competing role interests: public interest, legal interest, personal interests, organizational interests and professional interest. As part of the social fabric of society, business is expected to serve the common good of the public. At the same time, however, every corporation has to protect its own interests, as well as those of its employees and stakeholders. It also has to be remembered that employees are human beings with personal interests such as family and friends, as well as with financial and social problems. As citizens of a new democracy all South Africans also have special legal interests with regard to upholding the Constitution. Add to this the professional requirements and Codes of Conduct that they are expected to adhere to by virtue of their professional training and obligations, and the stage is set for complicated ethical dilemmas.

- **Salary, working conditions and job security:**

Within the market approach it is often argued that market forces tend to control corruption. Public officials therefore need to be lured from the broader job market by competitive remuneration. As Rose-Ackerman (1997:28) argues: *"If officials are paid much less than people with similar training elsewhere in the economy, only those willing to accept bribes will be attracted to the public sector"*. In an argument against pay-for-ethics, Hood (1995:197) however argues that opposition parties will almost always use this as a stick to beat the ruling party with, and secondly, the public would hardly support such a policy, or if they do, demand at least the same privileges and living standards for themselves. Work

pressures, dangerous working environments, and a lack of job security may serve as justifications for people to supplement their income in illicit ways as a type of "danger pay".

### 2.2.2. National and International factors:

- **Legal parameters**

The extent to which American business have paid attention to ethics over the last decade and the pace at which good quality Ethics Programs across America had been developed, is due to what Hoffman & Driscoll (2000) call the carrot and stick approach. They (2000:9) argue that the Federal Sentencing Guidelines that imposed a mandatory system of heavy fines and rigorous probation conditions for organizations convicted of federal crimes, acted as important stimulus for Ethics Programs across America. The Sentencing Guidelines present companies with both a carrot and a stick as an inducement for dealing with moral issues in the workplace. Not only does it cost a company under prosecution far more if unethical conduct leads to a lawsuit (the stick), but the Federal Sentencing Guidelines also promise to reward companies that have effective ethics and compliance programs in place, by either not prosecuting them at all, or at least reducing their fine if they are found guilty (the carrot).

The Sentencing guidelines provide seven very basic guidelines for organizations to keep in mind when they go about developing an ethics and compliance program (Hoffman & Driscoll 2000:10). They are:

- 1) Establish compliance standards and procedures.
- 2) Assign high level individuals to oversee compliance.
- 3) Exercise due care in delegating discretionary authority.
- 4) Communicate and train all employees regarding company values and compliance procedures.
- 5) Monitor, audit and provide safe reporting systems.
- 6) Enforce appropriate discipline with consistency.
- 7) Respond to offences and prevent reoccurrence.



The Sentencing Guidelines have also been criticized as being guilty of "regulatory overkill and over deterrence". Cohen (1992: 147) argues that some regulatory offences in the corporate world cause little or no harm at all, and that it is therefore simply unjust to punish them so severely. However, the Federal Sentencing Guidelines sent a very clear message to corporations that it is not only their duty to do all they can to uncover, report and punish unethical and illegal conduct, but that it is also their duty to prevent it from happening (Ferrell, LeClair, & Ferrell 1998:354). No longer can companies hide behind the excuse that nobody knew, and that it is really nobody's fault. This is very important if one considers that in 58.5% of the cases in which organizations were sentenced under the guidelines in 1998, personnel with substantial authority were involved in or tolerant of the criminal activity. None of the organizations sentenced in 1998 had an "effective program to prevent and detect violations of law" in place (U.S. Sentencing Commission 1998:2100:2).

Hoffman & Driscoll (2000:11) argue that the Federal Sentencing Guidelines acted as a good impetus to make corporations pay attention to ethics programs, but that many companies have gone far beyond what the Sentencing Guidelines required. The reason for this is that corporations soon realized that an effective compliance system based on legal requirements is not enough to curb unethical behavior. Much more than compliance with legal requirements is needed. What legal standards do however achieve is to bring to the attention of corporations the importance of taking responsibility for ethics within the work place. In the South African business context this is one of the most important messages that the Government and the legal system could possibly send to corporations regarding their commitment to creating an ethical business culture. We may not need the exact same format as that of the US Federal Sentencing Guidelines, but some legal parameters that stress the importance of proactively combating unethical behavior in the workplace would be invaluable.

◦ **National history and current circumstances:**

A number of reasons have been proposed for the incidence of malpractice and corruption in South Africa. Van Zyl & Lazenby (1999:16) indicate that following factors may play a role in the tendency of South African business to resort to immoral practices:

- A declining and stagnant economy as well as overload and a fear of retrenchment among employees.
- Government structures and regulation that does not adequately control unethical conduct and corruption.
- Sanctions imposed as a result of the Apartheid regime compelled businesspeople to act in "secrecy" and these actions often resulted in unethical practices.
- The excessive limitations on the media who were thereby prevented from exposing corruption and malpractice.
- Uncertainty and fears about the future
- Beliefs that ethics and business for profit are irreconcilable.

Immoral business practices are often the result of the phase of development in which an economy and businesses in general find themselves. The fact that many businesses are currently struggling for survival in South Africa often make them susceptible to a reasoning of "bread first, morals later", as Rossouw (1994) indicates. One also finds that a certain business style that condoned immoral practices for a variety of political and socio-economical reasons in an effort to protect and support a certain ideology, persists in the new dispensation long after that ideology has been abandoned. Another contributing factor is the existence of structural deficiencies and inadequate training and development that are a legacy of certain political policies. The policy of "Separate development" for instance, tried to maintain separate homeland structures for black people while the main development of infrastructure were restricted to urban areas within the "White territories". Likewise, "Bantu education" provided Black people with inferior education. The struggle against Apartheid and the violence, instability and trauma associated with it created an environment in which family structures where moral values should have been taught were destroyed. Moral education was further eroded by the fact that many South Africans got used to justifying their immoral acts in view of what they considered to be a higher political cause. On both sides of the struggle, those defending and those fighting against the Apartheid ideology, people found reasons to repress their moral conscience for the sake of survival and overcoming their opponents. This war mentality led to significant erosion of the moral conscience of many people in South Africa.

Furthermore, recent developments in the country have changed the playing field for many South Africans. Van Zyl and Lazenby (1999:20) indicate that various new challenges face businesses in South Africa and that these will influence the way in which moral business cultures may develop:

- Businesses face the challenge of motivating white employees that face job insecurity because of affirmative action policies.
- Seemingly homogeneous workforces are something of the past and South African managers now have to face up to diverse workforces. This diversity does not only imply cultural or religious diversity, but the huge variations between individual *moral bricoleurs*.
- The perception exists that because of the new dispensation everything has to be changed. This not only leads to the loss of valuable assets in terms of people and structures, but it also creates despondency amongst many South Africans who are left with the impression that everything is falling apart. These negative perceptions should be eradicated.
- The speed of change and all the diverse developments that coincide within many South African organizations make them more vulnerable to the threat of immoral business practices.

- **The African legacy:**

Africa is said to have a history of systemic corruption, secrecy and nepotism. Various theorists have argued that this is due to the previous cultural and political practices that have historically been the hallmark of traditional political systems. They have argued that the succession of corrupt African despots who had ruled for short periods of time only to be overthrown by a now familiar pattern of military coups, has created an environment in which corruption had become endemic. But as Alatas (1986:45) has convincingly argued: "*The history of corruption in the United States is convincing proof that corruption is not correlative with either pre-modern or modern conceptions of bureaucracy, family ties, civic consciousness, the gift institution, or governmental ethics*". Alatas further argues that it is a fallacy to assume that in premodern societies there is no clear perception on what constitutes corruption. In Hindu, Buddhist and Islamic [and one may also argue African traditionalist] societies there are a variety of checks and balances to preserve the common

good and the public interest. Recent research has however shown that the combination of an unstable national situation with pervasive unethical organizational cultures can lead to an "everyone does it" attitude that is hard to get rid of. Sen (1997: 9) argues that this is due to the role played by "conventions of good behavior", and how these conventions have emerged and been sustained in different societies, regions, and organizations. The ethical climate of an organization can be described as the cumulative collection of prevailing practices and perceptions and includes variables such as shared values, heroes and heroines, managerial policies, rituals and ceremonies (Upchurch & Ruhland 1996:1086). These prevailing practices are definitely influenced by national heroes, shared national values, as well as national rituals and ceremonies. If these are corrupt, the organization will probably reflect these values.

- **International changes:**

In the past decade the world has experienced a whole sequence of very significant events that have forever changed the face of international politics, economics and social issues in the world arena. The end of the Cold War, the tearing down of the Berlin Wall and the fall of communist regimes all over the world had all been of particular importance in this regard. By 1988, Wood (1994:18) reports, the demonstrations of power and influence displayed by the United States on every possible occasion had been replaced by a whole series of other phenomena: globalization, tribalization, nationalization of policy and the localization of politics. Together, these phenomena had been responsible for much greater complexities that we were previously accustomed to. Wood (1994:18-25) describes four fundamental changes that have transformed the world. The first set of these fundamental changes is the increasing interdependence of the global economy and the fluidity of political-military alignments as the major framework within which national policy and strategy is approached. Globalization refers not simply to the interdependence of separate entities but to the fact that their capital investment, manufacturing bases, and markets are becoming increasingly global in character. Globalization means that the very nature of international economics is being denationalized and that the ability of national governments to control economic flows has been substantially reduced. International control such as can still be exerted is only possible at enormous material and human cost.

However, economic globalization is not the only relevant phenomenon. Tribal sentiment is also very much in evidence, both within and across national boundaries. Even as much of the world has become part of an increasingly integrated economy, historical antagonisms and romanticized ethnic, religious, and cultural differences show renewed resilience (Wood 1994:19). Politics seems to have become more local, whereas business is becoming more global. This interaction places increasing pressures on local governments to both protect the identity and interests of local populations, while at the same time establishing themselves as players in the global arena.

Wood (1994:21) speaks of another factor that complicates national and international business, one that exists on the level of state and society. Contemporary free and pluralistic societies are typically built on the premise that many associations, belief systems, and interactions are private and voluntary and that government power should be exercised in a way that allows an extensive private sphere. The unity of the whole is maintained by a common national market and the constitutional protection of individual rights and responsibilities, within which the rights of groups are basically derived from individual rights and duties. Pluralistic societies however inevitably encompass a wide variety of preferences with regard to life-styles. There is increasing pressures on national governments to legitimize, guarantee and sometimes even fund the myriad definitions of happiness as it is found in all these various life-styles. These pressures do not only create problems on a national level, but also on an international level. The integration of economic forces, the movements of displaced communities, and the transnational character of many tribal identities contribute to the fact that governments have much less real authority than their citizenry may believe.

A further international factor pertains to strategic choices that have to be made in the post-cold war world. Should we opt for a global institutional and normative order, a so-called "minimum world public order"? Wood (1994:23) explains that if one conceives "order" as the control of unauthorized coercion across state boundaries, one could seek to define norms and to strengthen either state or international capabilities so as to limit aggression while



improving self-defense and genuine police action on behalf of the global order. The United States has already declared itself eager to engage the US in joint actions on behalf of the international community, in order to give content to the "New World Order". Wood (1994:25) believes that the United States' leadership role in establishing a new international order will be of crucial importance in decisions made in business and society across the world.

- **North - South divisions:**

Talks about the "New World Order", a "Global Ethic" and other internationalist projects are severely hampered by the lingering remnants of the colonial order in the developing world. Banuri (1994:72) is of the opinion that there are significant differences in the way the Northern and the Southern hemispheres view international issues. He rejects claims that these differences are due to the fact that Southern hemisphere governments have their own political agendas, or a result of their chronic need for financial aid. According to Banuri the North still fail to appreciate that the South has different experiences, perspectives and ways of looking at the world. For instance, the South does not see the environmental problem as something that is being caused by the poor, but rather as the result of the rich consuming eighty percent of the world's resources. Environmental problems are caused by power, by the ability to export one's problems elsewhere. Banuri (1994:72) maintains that the South does not trust the processes of decision-making in the North. The citizens of Southern hemisphere nations often do not trust the processes of collective decision-making in their own countries, let alone at a global level. He further argues that one cannot talk about institutions at a global level, or relationships at a global level, without talking about justice and injustice.

Another important factor that is often underestimated is the fact that the South has other voices besides those of governments; voices which are not talking about the transfer of money or technology from the North to the South. Banuri (1994:73) says: " Instead of discussing institutions of power and responsibility, Southerners might rather want to talk about decentralization, establishing institutions and property rights, giving autonomy to local institutions, and so forth." He maintains that Southerners look at institutions like the



World Bank differently. They believe that talk about healing the planet is basically the arrogance of the North. Even the way in which "development" is discussed reflects only the northern point of view. It assumes that economies with the high level of consumption of the North are the norm to which the South is to aspire to. Yet, aren't these ideals precisely part of the global problems that we are dealing with? Banuri's views may be relegated to only one of the many contradictory voices from the South, but his comments make it very clear that many issues surrounding the North - South divisions remain to be addressed, and that these issues will continue to impact our ability to discuss and address moral problems.

### 2.3. Perspectives on diversity and the development of new approaches:

Having established that identity is made up of a very unique configuration of value-systems, and that moral decision-making is influenced by a wide variety of factors, this dissertation will argue that diversity can be a valuable resource in establishing meaningful moral dialogue. Diversity should however not be understood as different groups of people that can be identified according to certain essentialistic group characteristics. Rather, diversity is to be found in the diverse value-systems that form part of each individual's moral decision-making. Moral *bricoleurs* should be empowered to draw on this wide variety of value-systems in order to make their moral contribution in the workplace. There are not many precedents of organizations that managed to tap this rich resource of diversity. We can learn from the mistakes that have been made by organizations that tried to accommodate diversity in limited ways. But more importantly, we can draw on the insights of organizations that managed to create an environment where individuals' unique inputs could flourish. This section will evaluate certain perspectives on diversity in order to establish which may be helpful in tapping all of the moral resources that moral *bricoleurs* in South Africa have to offer.

Thomas and Ely (1998:80) identified three basic paradigms to dealing with diversity that may provide us with some scope as to what may be possible in various forms of dealing with diversity. The first of these is the **discrimination-and-fairness paradigm**. Within this approach, the focus is primarily on equal opportunity, fair treatment, recruitment and

compliance with government regulations. The main goal of this approach is to treat everyone equally because it believes that people are fundamentally the same and that important differences between them are not supposed to play a significant role in the workplace. The success of diversity programs within companies that ascribe to this approach is measured in terms of their ability to recruit and maintain a diverse workforce. The staff therefore becomes diversified, but the work does not, because employing a diversified workforce does not guarantee that minorities will be allowed to influence a company's dominant strategies, procedures, and ways of going about the work. More often than not, they are simply expected to fit in, to be assimilated into "the way that we do things around here". Because these organizations pretend to ignore differences, they are unable to appreciate the valuable contribution each individual can make in terms of solutions and suggestions on the basis of his or her unique identity. Differences are not only the result of people's unique cultural heritage, but also stem from each individual's unique value-configuration. The discrimination-and-fairness approach runs the risk of being perceived as tokenism, patronization and reverse discrimination. People from minority groups feel that they are not being employed for their unique, valuable contribution and their qualifications, but rather because of the group they belong to. Other employees within the organization are also often unhappy because they see themselves as victims of reverse discrimination.

The second paradigm is the **access-and-legitimacy paradigm**. Within this approach the motivation behind creating a diverse workforce is that we are living in a multicultural country, with markets made up of people from all different kinds of groups and cultures. Under these circumstances, having a diverse workforce make economic sense. Whereas the discrimination-and-fairness paradigm is primarily concerned with conforming to the demands of justice and equality, this paradigm has economic motivations in mind. If the organization wants to serve this diverse community and access its markets, the composition of the workforce should reflect the demographic composition of the community it serves (Thomas & Ely 1998:83). This market-based motivation for diversity has certain advantages, because the competitive advantages it offers are often qualities that an entire company can easily understand and therefore support. However, it also has its limitations. Organizations that ascribe to the access-and-legitimacy paradigm tend to push staff with niche capabilities

into differentiated pigeonholes too easily. The capabilities that these people could contribute to the organization as a whole is often not appreciated. These unique contributions are therefore often not integrated into the organization's work. The motivation for creating and maintaining a diverse workforce within this approach is often a crisis-oriented need for access and legitimacy. The result is that employees often feel exploited. Other opportunities within the organization that may not be directly related to the particular niche-market segments are often closed to these employees, even though their training and experience may be in mainstream markets in which they might have previously worked (Thomas & Ely 1998:84).

A third paradigm is emerging that relates diversity to the variety of individual perspectives it offers. Ely & Thomas (1999:19) calls this the **integration-and-learning perspective**. Organizations that ascribe to this perspective have developed an outlook on diversity that enables them to incorporate the variety of unique perspectives represented amongst their employees into the main work of the organization. This means that they enhance their work by rethinking primary tasks and redefining markets, products, strategies, missions, business practices, and even cultures (Thomas & Ely 1998:85). Ely & Thomas (1999:23) cites the example of a law firm primarily that focused primarily on female clientele in employment-related disputes. In the light of their mandate to protect and advance the economic rights and interests of low-income women, they identified their failure to attract female clients of color as a shortcoming. They therefore decided to diversify their all-white program staff. Up to this point it may appear to be a typical case of the access-legitimacy paradigm, yet this firm went further. They hired a Latino attorney with the specific purpose to expand their work to the Latino community and to demonstrate their commitment to represent all low-income women. However, they went even further. Over the next ten years, they underwent a transition from staff composed entirely of whites to one that included a program staff that was at least half women of color. Even more important was the fact that the demographic composition of the program staff entirely reshaped the character and priorities of the firm's work in ways that was previously unanticipated. Members learned from their diversity and integrated what they had learned into the core work of the organization. They expanded their functions to work around minimum wage and

manufacturers' liability - aspects that previously fell outside the firm's scope because it was not thought not to be strictly related to sex discrimination. But because their new staff understood the context and realities of their clients, they were able to make their firm aware of how these issues affect women (Ely & Thomas 1999:23). One female attorney is quoted as saying: "*[Diversity] doesn't just change whom you sit next to every day. It means differences in terms of how you see the issues, who you can work with, how effective you are, how much you understand what's going on...*" The success of this approach is due in large part to the priority it places on "process", i.e. time spent on exploring different points of view, deliberating about how and whether they should inform the work, and listening to people's stories and so that they are able to say what is in their hearts.

Thomas & Ely (1998:86) indicate that there are certain preconditions for getting to the point where diversity really makes a positive contribution to the way in which work is perceived and done within an organization:

- 1) Leadership must understand that a diverse workforce will embody different perspectives and approaches to work, and must truly value variety of opinion and insight.
- 2) The leadership must recognize both the learning opportunities and the challenges that the expression of different perspectives presents for an organization, and accept the time and effort that will have to go into it.
- 3) The organizational culture must create an expectation of high standards of performance from everyone, therefore it doesn't expect less from certain employees than from others.
- 4) The organizational culture must stimulate personal development and attempt to bring out people's full range of useful knowledge and skills.
- 5) The organizational culture must encourage openness, have a high tolerance for debate and discussion and should support constructive conflict on work-related matters.
- 6) The culture must make workers feel valued in order to make them feel committed and empowered to take the initiative in applying their skills and experience to the organization's benefit.
- 7) The organization must have a well articulated and widely understood mission that makes it clear what the organization wants to accomplish. In this way changes and new initiatives will be grounded in common purposes that everyone is working towards.

8) The organization must have a relatively egalitarian, non-bureaucratic structure that promotes the exchange of ideas and welcomes constructive challenges to the usual way of doing things.

#### 2.4. Conclusion:

This chapter came to the conclusion that individuals operate as *moral bricoleurs*, who draw on a variety of value-systems in order to address the moral issues they are confronted with. The behavior of these moral agents cannot be predicted by referring to one of the groups that they belong to. Moral *bricoleurs* are also more than the sum-total of the characteristics of all the groups that form part of their distributed identities. Therefore, diversity is not something that exists only among groups, it also exists among and within individuals. When dealing with moral discourse in a pluralistic environment, diversity can only become a positive force if individuals are allowed and empowered to draw freely on various aspects of their distributed identities to address the moral issues they are confronted with. Ethical approaches used within organizations should facilitate this process. Unfortunately, not all ethical approaches succeed in doing so. Chapter 3 will indicate some of the limitations of ethical approaches commonly used in dealing with moral dissensus.

### Chapter 3: Evaluation of available ethical approaches

The aim of this chapter is to take a critical look at various approaches to dealing with different moral perspectives. I will identify three broad perspectives on dealing with the problem of a lack of moral consensus, and indicate how a fourth and fifth might be considered as combination of some of the other approaches. The first approach aims at attaining the greatest amount of good for the greatest number of people. The second approach searches for common values and attempts to commit individuals to those things that they have in common, and which make them a unique group or community. The third perspective argues that one can universalize the moral sphere by appealing to objective reasoning which brings all individuals to certain basic conclusions. The latter two approaches are combined in the fourth approach, the emphasis being put on finding certain universal values that transcend differences and can sometimes even fuse different communities into a coherent universal whole, such as John Hick's and Hans Küng's global projects. A common universal structure of what constitutes the good is identified whilst under-emphasizing, rationalizing and reasoning away those aspects that the various groups do not agree on according to some just procedure. Finally, the Integrative Social Contracts Theory's (ISCT) attempt at bringing certain strands of these approaches together in a comprehensive strategy for dealing with morality in the workplace will be evaluated. In the course of this chapter it will become clear that all these approaches rest on certain problematic assumptions and ideals. They do not only ignore particularity and difference in the way in which it had been defined in Chapter 2, but also provides us with little help when it comes to dealing with moral dissensus in pluralist working environments.

Van der Ven's depiction of morality as the search for the good, the just and the wise can be used to analyze the various approaches available to us and to indicate the problems these approaches have from the perspective of the needs of pluralist working environments. The first two approaches discussed will both be examples of teleological thinking, which tries to determine good ends that should be aimed for. Habermas suggests that the substantive approaches within moral thinking may be understood as teleological ones, since they contain a vision or a set of visions concerning the good life, which is to be strived for and acted on



(Van der Ven 1998:138). The third approach will be deontological in nature, attempting to define the just procedure to be used in order to reach moral guidelines. The fourth represents an attempt to achieve a synthesis in the search for the good and the just, by aiming for a universal consensus with regard to common goods and just practices. The ISCT theory attempts yet another form of synthesis, one that provides us with a substantive approach of hypernorms and suggests certain corresponding procedural parameters. Whether the ISCT theory equips us to make *wise* moral judgments in all respects is however questionable, because of some of its core assumptions.

In the course of the argument developed here, it will become clear that procedural rationality always implies substantive rationality and vice versa. When one is describing how one should reason in determining what is good or just, one is already making certain substantive assumptions as to what should be considered good or just. This is illustrated in the fact that Habermas describes utilitarianism as a procedural approach. As Van der Ven (1998:137) says: "*Habermas distinguishes between two main types, substantive and procedural and divides procedural into utilitarian subtypes on the one hand and deontological subtypes on the other*". I would describe utilitarianism as both a search for maximizing certain goods and therefore having to indicate the priority of certain goods above others, whilst at the same time trying to indicate a just procedure for reaching those goals. The distinction between substantive and procedural approaches might therefore be functional in describing the various aspects of a certain approach, but not in distinguishing one approach from another. This point will be further illustrated as the chapter progresses.

### **3.1. The first search for the good: The best possible consequences for the largest number of people**

Consequentialism can be divided into ethical egoism and utilitarianism. Egoism is the belief that one ought to bring about the greatest good for oneself. In terms of the definition of what constitutes "moral" conduct given in chapter 2 of this dissertation, conduct that only take self-interest into account when making decisions on what constitutes the correct or ethical behavior cannot be considered "moral". Egoism is therefore seen in this dissertation

as an immoral form of decision-making. Utilitarianism is the approach that argues that one ought to act to bring about the greatest good for the largest number of people. According to Hoffman (1995:24) utilitarianism, in its traditional form, does not permit an individual to give priority to his/ her self-interest. Rather, the interests of all persons affected by an individual's action are given the same weight. The ideal is to treat everyone alike in the sense that the interests of all involved are brought into play when making a moral decision. In determining the interests of everyone, which are supposed to be pursued, one should seek pleasure and avoid pain. It is also assumed that the pleasures and pains of any one person are similar to those of another person and that the duration and intensity of pleasures and pains can be quantified and measured. Finally, utilitarians also assume that individuals are able to canvass the acts available to them and to make reliable judgments about the amount of pleasure and pain caused to all involved by the decision that is made in that particular instance.

One of the main proponents of the utilitarian theory is Jeremy Bentham. He argues that it is possible to take the balance of pleasure and pain for each individual affected by a certain act and add it all up in order to establish a ranking of acts in terms of how much total pleasure or pain they cause. The act that is ranked top of the list, that is the one that causes the most pleasure and the least pain, would then be considered the morally best act. Even though it may seem very reasonable to judge the morality of an act by trying to maximize the good for the greatest number of people, utilitarianism does make certain problematic assumptions. In the first place it assumes that it is possible to calculate pleasure and pain and rank it on a scale. But can all pleasures and pains be compared to one another, or would it in some cases be like comparing apples and pears to one another? Furthermore, can the pleasures and pains of one individual be compared with those of another? As Hoffman (1995:26) indicates, utilitarianism assumes the possibility of making certain calculations that cannot be made. Another utilitarian John Stuart Mill attempted to address these problems by distinguishing different kinds of pleasures that people experience. Some pleasures, so argued Mill, are qualitatively better than some others; for instance, intellectual pleasures are better than the pleasure one gets from food. He proposed that "competent judges" who had experience of various kinds of pleasures would

be able to establish a hierarchy of different kinds of pleasures. But the question arises: Who is considered to be a "competent" judge? There is no way in which one could set up an "objective" criterion as to what constitute good ends for everyone involved in order to establish an objective measure that can be used to calculate utility.

Another issue that comes into play is how one decides to distribute the pleasures and pains that are the end result of some action to all the affected parties. How does one, for instance, adjudicate what type of pain and what amount of pain can or may be suffered by a certain group of people in order to maximize the pleasures of some other group? Hoffman (1995:27) cites the example of the problems that arise if utility is maximized in the United States by ensuring that an ethnic minority gets all the pain while the white majority gets all the pleasure. The fact that it is unfair is not prohibited by this type of hedonistic utilitarianism. In South Africa this principle of utility was used to discriminate against the black majority in favor of the pleasures and benefits of the white minority. It was argued that the Apartheid system was to the greatest benefit of all involved, yet the question as to the overall injustice of the system was never raised.

A fundamental topic that utilitarianism thus has to deal with, relates to the following question: useful to what passion and interest and for whom? Van der Ven (1998:141) sees Locke as one of the founders of classic libertarian utilitarianism. In *An essay concerning Human Understanding* he elaborates on the idea that to humans goods seems to equal pleasure and evil equals pain. Despite the hedonistic tone of this theory, Locke view of nature as pleasure-related is founded on the belief that God created this nature. To seek pleasure and to try to further it by rational means is to do God's will, which is embodied in the nature that he created. Locke, as a Christian, seemed to believe that God guaranteed "the harmony of interests". When one looks at the South African situation, one starts to doubt whether this kind of reasoning can hold water, and whether a more just procedure of establishing the terms of pleasure seeking would not be necessary. One comes to the conclusion that substantive and procedural moral reasoning should support one another.

### 3.2. The second search for the good: Finding the good in the local community

Turning now to a further teleological approach, we find that there are those who seek the good in goals determined by communities, since communities contain visions of what is regarded as the good life that is to be worked towards. An excellent example of this type of teleological ethics can be found in Aristotle's thinking. Aristotle sees the ultimate aim (*telos*) of human life as the happy life (*eudaimonia*), which is embedded in the social life of the community or the polis (*politicon zoon*). The content of this happy life equals quality: the quality of good living (*euzoia*) and the quality of good acting (*eupraxia*). In this way of living, happiness is not identical with pleasure, but pleasure is the outcome of living virtuously and acting excellently. One must practice the virtues to be able to achieve this happiness. Virtue lies in avoiding two extremes. Extremes, or vices, are excess and deficiency, overdoing and doing too little, overacting and not acting enough, experiencing too much or too little. The most important virtue in Aristotle's ethics is friendship, because it forms the basis of the communitarian life of the polis. It implies a shared striving towards certain goods and is therefore not limited to the private life, but rather has its roots in some common public project. Friendship goes beyond the goals of mere pleasure and utility, it is rooted in personal respect for and interest in the other. Although Aristotle's ethics provides us with some useful insights into what can be perceived as common values and moral goals, it fails in certain respects. In the first place it is based on a scientifically obsolete biological-teleological anthropology and is ethnocentrist and sexist in nature. Secondly it is also clear that the city-state as it existed in Aristotle's time no longer exists and that our current society is in fact made up of a huge number of poleis, each embodying divergent moral practices and ideas within a plurality of social systems, institutions, sectors, and situations (Van der Ven 1998:140).

Acknowledging the fact that Aristotle's way of using substantive, teleological moral thinking would no longer suffice within our modern society does not mean that other teleological interpretations are not still very popular today. Van der Ven (1998:22) describes communitarianism as an approach in which the individual's belonging to a community is taken as the point of departure. By community, he means the collection of individuals in groups,

insofar as they participate in each other's lives and have certain beliefs, values, and norms in common. These beliefs, norms and values are embodied in stories, narration that contains metaphors, symbols, and ideas by which the group's morality is impregnated, reinforced, and strengthened.

Van der Ven (1998:23) distinguishes two forms of communitarianism. The first consists of people belonging to the Responsive Communitarian Platform, of which Etzioni is the main proponent. They believe that people belong to interdependent and overlapping communities of memory and mutual aid that are rich sources of moral voices. The second form of communitarianism consists of critics of liberal political theory who do not (yet) identify with the communitarian movement in the sense of the Communitarian Platform. Its representatives, such as MacIntyre, Taylor and Sandel do not even identify themselves as Communitarian without certain qualifications. MacIntyre (1988) depicts the lack of moral values in modern society as a result of the disintegration of the moral communities in which moral terms and the values they stood for made sense. He criticizes the "rational subject" of the Enlightenment as a ghostly self-lacking any moral content and therefore unable to engage in any sensible moral discourse. Yet, Van der Ven (1998:23) indicates that MacIntyre himself thinks that rebuilding community life in modern industrialized society would be "ineffective and disastrous".

Another paradigm, often associated with communitarianism because of its emphasis on distinct communities as bearers of values, is multiculturalism. Multiculturalism acknowledges the fact that moral pluralism is not only the result of pluralism within Western culture, but also in non-Western culture. The main distinction between Communitarianism and Multiculturalism can therefore be described as the fact that communitarianism does not take into account the complex composition of today's multicultural society.

The question of how to deal with the demands for recognition by particular groups made in the name of nationalism or multiculturalism, has led to an extensive debate which is vividly illustrated in the publication *Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition* in which various authors respond to Charles Taylor's essay: *The politics of recognition*. Taylor (1994:



39) identifies two major changes that occurred in the public sphere that raised the question as to how one should deal with group identities within the sphere of a liberal-democratic political system. The first change is the move from "honor" as primary value to the acknowledgement of "dignity" as prime value. This led to the politics of universalism, emphasizing the equal dignity of all citizens, with the content of this politics being the equalization of rights and entitlements. The second change can be described as the development of the modern notion of identity, based on the distinctness of the individual or the group compared to everyone else. This gave rise to the politics of difference, meaning that everyone should be recognized for his/her unique identity. The problem is that the recognition of both the politics of universal dignity and the politics of difference cause problems. On the one hand you insist on nondiscrimination, being blind to all aspects that make people different, on the other, you plead for the acknowledgement of unique needs and therefore for differential treatment (Taylor 1994:40).

Taylor (1994: 58) discusses the manifestation of this problem in Canadian Quebec, where French nationalists insist on upholding their culturally unique identity, even if this causes certain discriminatory practices. He (1994:60) argues that there is a form of the politics of equal respect, as enshrined in a liberalism of rights, which is inhospitable to difference, because it insists on a uniform application of the rules defining these rights, and is suspicious of collective goals. He indicates that there are other models of liberal society that call for the invariant defense of certain rights. Yet, these models are willing to weigh the importance of certain forms of uniform treatment against the importance of cultural survival, and opt sometimes choose in favor of the latter. These models display elements of the true democratic empowerment of communities. Taylor (1991:119) mitigates the sense of powerlessness that people experience in the large-scale, centralized, bureaucratic states by supporting Tocqueville's decentralization of power. He makes it clear that they are not in the end procedural models of liberalism, but are grounded very much on judgments about what makes a good life - judgments in which the integrity of cultures has an important place. Taylor (1994: 64) pleads further that we do not only acknowledge the right of these cultures to survive, but that we also acknowledge their worth, based on a premise that we owe equal respect to all cultures, which involves something like an act of faith.



Critics of Taylor have pointed to the fact that judgments we make on the value or worth of other cultures can never escape our own categories and terms of reference, and are therefore open to the distortions and prejudices that are part of our symbolic life-worlds. This point has been made concerning the way in which moral judgments we made about each other in South Africa is the result of our categories, our language and its underlying prejudices (Chapter 2). The danger in Taylor's theory in my view lies in the fact that he uncritically uses us-them terminology without acknowledging the fact that each individual in a multicultural society might exhibit a very diverse configuration of value-systems in him/herself. Wolf (1994: 81) points out that the failure to respect another culture does not lie in beliefs about the relative merits of one culture compared to the other, and the remedy is not to be found in acknowledging that other cultures have something of significant importance to teach the world. Rather, Wolf feels that Taylor does not recognize the fact that the "other" culture might in fact be part of "our own", that they in fact constitute our community. Apiah (1994:155) goes even further in indicating that dialogue with the other shapes the identity of each person as he/she develops and that these separate and unique communities that Taylor speaks of in fact coexist within individuals. The further danger is that in allowing communal perceptions of the good to persist uncritically based on an act of faith and to protect communities regardless of what their perception of the good is, robs the individuals within those communities of their right to choose their own good, and to dissociate from the good of the community if they so wish. The good chosen by the collective must never be allowed to function as a metanarrative that excludes the voices of minorities or the powerless, thereby allowing discrimination against them. The good of the community then functions as a metanarrative undermining dissent, discussion and therefore also personal and communal growth.

The dangers inherent in both Communitarianism and Multiculturalism center around the fact that in protecting distinct group identities, one runs the risk of undermining the freedom of individuals within those groups to choose their own moral values and to dissociate from those imposed by the group. Van der Ven (1998:27) argues that moral education must break through tradition - social habits, customs and rites - insofar as they hinder freedom as the

core of morality. The person's autonomy, self-determination and emancipation should not be made subservient to the protection of the community. Within multiculturalism, the existence of various different cultures and groups may be perceived as a danger to the dominant group, or it may be seen as an opportunity for society's culture to be enriched. Either way, it has certain dangers. If the dominant group in society tries to shield themselves from outside influences, it will create even less space for individual dissent and choice, and undermine moral freedom. If it tries to incorporate or integrate all differences, the moral identity of the group is at risk.

Communitarians want to maintain that they advocate a balance between too much and too little control of the individual. They believe that the individual's self-regulation is determined by a kind of psychic infrastructure for living the moral life. Acting in accordance with moral virtues, values and norms the self-regulating self is shaped through habituation processes within the community and thus becomes a communitarian self. In other words, the discipline exercised is a communitarian discipline, the habits communitarian habits, and the self a communitarian self. The Communitarians acknowledges the existence of other groups with distinct convictions, values and norms, and accommodate them from the perspective of the core values of democracy and human rights. According to the Communitarians, young people need to be educated from the perspective of the spirit of the community of communities, which is characterized by "pluralism-within-unity" (Van der Ven 1998:67). This solution seems to be presented as too harmonious when one considers the fact that in today's Western society values and norms are pluriform. These values and norms cannot be depicted as a system of concentric circles, with an innermost hard core of stable values and outer circles of changeable, variable and pluriform values. The irony is, that these core values based on generalized human rights and democracy, violates precisely the uniqueness and differences between communities that the critics of the liberal "ghostly rational self" want to restore.

What becomes clear, is that when Communitarians have to provide content to their "telos", they revert back to modernist assumptions that cannot deal with plurality. It either represents a restricted version of the good as decided upon by a specific community,

excluding other versions of the good and postulating one, unambiguous truth, or it embraces certain universal core values that is supposed to transcend differences and bind us all to a common view of the good, despite our differences about more specific aspects. Yet, the values of democracy and human rights advocated by the Communitarians are not common to all groups, in fact they are extremely Western and modernist in content. Furthermore, these core values are both general and vague. It undermines specificity and particularity and therefore is of little value in dealing with plurality in moral discourse.

Now it would certainly solve this dilemma if the solution to every specific moral problem would be self-evident and accessible to individuals coming from all groups if we only use the right strategies and tools. Some philosophers believe that they can provide us with just such devices. In the next section we will analyze the possibility that through the use of objective reasoning we can make our specific individual choices in such a way that it anticipates all similar problems and thereby provides us with some universalizable rules for conduct

### **3.3. Universalist moral reasoning:**

One of the approaches generally understood as procedural in nature is deontology. Hoffman (1995) describes deontology as part of the broader category of ethical absolutism, which can be divided into consequentialism and nonconsequentialism. Under consequentialism Hoffman understands ethical egoism and utilitarianism. Under nonconsequentialism he understands Kantianism, or deontological theories.

The deontological theories make certain claims as to how things are and what moral rules are therefore self-evident in the way that things are. The father of deontological ethics is beyond dispute Immanuel Kant, who in his moral theory of the categorical imperative formulates two basic maxims that should guide moral decision-making. In the first place he is of the opinion that something cannot be good if it cannot be the will of all rational individuals (Van der Ven 1998:162). Therefore the first maxim states that a moral decision must always be put to the universalization test. "Act only on that maxim through which you

can at the same time wills that it should become a universal law" (Kant 1964:88). Can all rational individuals in a similar situation uphold the decision that you have just made, across the boundaries of space, time and circumstance? One should thus not refrain from breaking promises because of its negative effects as the utilitarians would insist, but rather because it cannot be willed as a universal maxim (Van der Ven 1998:145).

Kant's second criteria for deciding whether something is moral or not, is to apply what has throughout history been known as the Golden Rule, namely that one should not treat your neighbor in a way that you would not have him/ her treat you. It is formulated as follows: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means to an end, but always at the same time as an end" (Kant 1964:96). The principle of utility is therefore categorically rejected and deontology is therefore antithetical to utilitarianism in any form (Bok 1995:164).

These tests that we can apply in deciding what is moral and what not, have been described by Ricoeur as the "royal gates of universality". Once it successfully passes through the royal gate, it takes on the form of an obligation, a moral constraint. The law of universalization therefore appears in the mode of the imperative, which one is compelled to obey. Yet this does not undermine the individual's autonomy, since autonomy is to be understood as self-legislation through which one rationally prescribes a rule to oneself, as if making a contract with oneself. The moral self is therefore the self-obedient autonomous self (Van der Ven 1998:163).

Kant's theory has through the course of the twentieth century been subject to numerous commentaries and critiques. Without attempting to give a comprehensive overview of its critics, I will attempt to at least indicate various strands of criticisms. The first strand I would like to pursue is the point that in universalizing moral decisions and in attempting to speak of the treatment of all of "humanity", **particularity and difference tend to be overlooked or underemphasized**. Particularity is overlooked both as it pertains to the individual making the decision and the "others" that are taken into consideration in making the decision.

In the first place, in stressing the individual's autonomy, he overlooks the multitude of concrete situations that might mitigate or even principally relativize the individual's self-legislative concern. Autonomy is an abstraction that is in effect always dialectically related to heteronomy (Van der Ven 1998: 173). Human beings are influenced by inclinations, desires and passions and therefore can hardly rely on objective rationality. In fact, the demise of modern dualisms such as subjective versus objective, facts versus values and public versus private have been convincingly argued in the work of many of the so-called postmodern philosophers, as well as in twentieth century feminist philosophy.

With regards to overlooking the particularity of the other parties involved in or affected by the moral decision, Ricoeur for instance argues that Kant's formulation of the Golden Rule transforms the neighbor into the abstract category of "humanity". Love is transformed into respect for the Other, thereby objectifying what might otherwise depend on subjective feelings. Respect to all in Kant's terms should be applied indifferently and without distinction. The fundamental problem identified by Ricoeur (1992:240) relates to the fact that Kant's indifference and indistinctiveness overlooks the respect that is owed to individuals in their diversity, specificity, and uniqueness.

The fact that it sees "humanity" as an abstract category that may never be treated as a means to an end immobilizes Kant's theory in situations where a conflict of so-called universal maxims occurs, for instance in the case of a conflict of duties. Should one kill one person to save a whole community? Can an affirmative answer to this question be universalized? Is it always right to kill one person to save a community, or should one adjudicate this kind of conflict of duties in each particular situation? Van der Ven (1998:146) is of the opinion that deontological thought does not provide an answer to the question of how to deal with moral differences in conflict situations.

Ricoeur (1992:239) argues in his *Oneself and Another* that Kant wants to maintain principles that contradict one another in practice. In the first place Kant wants to maintain autonomy based on universal reasonableness in all persons, which makes all people equal. Yet, he at the



same time wants to maintain that every person is an end in itself, which results in the acceptance of plurality and difference. Now in real life situations, these two aspects often stand against one another, for in order to allow for difference, you must accept the unequal distribution of abilities, means and effort and therefore in fact, that all people are not equal in all respects. To maintain the principle of equality, you then have to treat people differently, in effect, unequally, to be just. Deontology then comes to depend on procedural distributive justice, as will become clear when Rawls' theories is discussed later on in this chapter. Distributive justice is in effect an attempt at maintaining deontological principles by reinterpreting them in terms of teleological conceptions of the "good life" for everyone in society. Ricoeur (1992:229) also argues that the symmetry of the Golden Rule develops against the background of dissymmetry, in which one is the agent, the one who does, and the other is the patient, the one who is done to and suffers. This is the dissymmetry of violence which could also be understood as the "power-to-do" and the "power-to-do-over". This violence does not always result in physical violence, but sometimes also in the violence of humiliation, powerlessness etc. The dimension of interpersonal life that Kant describes tends to be focused on the activity of the agent making the moral decision by emphasizing the respect that the agent should have for the other. But respect does not determine every aspect of interpersonal life, which is characterized not only by activity, but also in a dialectical way, by passivity (Van der Ven 1998:173). The face of the other reveals her/ his need to be taken care of and appeals to me, makes a demand on me that I cannot through my own agency direct without distorting it.

From a feminist point of view, critics emphasize the fact that Kant's moral rationalism is male dominated because qualities of character traditionally considered as male are placed at the center of Kant's scheme. Therefore, his philosophy can simply be explained as the reflection of a male dominated society and clearly sanctions male superiority. Some feminists, focus on his arguments about women's potential to become free rational beings. Women are firstly accorded only status as passive citizens; they may not, by self-improvement or advancement, aspire to the status of active citizens. Second, women have limited potential because of their intrinsic nature, which is exemplified in the marriage contract and allows a man to dominate in public life in exchange for her dominion in domestic



life. This type of feminist critique serves to contextualize Kantianism within social and historical parameters.

But portraying Kant as simply a narrow-minded bourgeois in eighteenth-century Germany might not be an adequate approach. The problematic nature of Kant's moral views comes to the fore more explicitly in his belief that to act out of duty necessarily implies acting out of principle - something that men were capable of but women were not. The posture of abstract speculation - a male characteristic in Kantian terms, and Kant's guiding logic of "autonomous selves" is an abstraction that supports the definition of "corporations" and "neighbors" as equals. The latter in turn supports "the responsibility of business" as that of anybody else - no more, and sometimes even less. Kantianism, taken uncritically, positions the corporation on a plane of equality with abstract individuals. For instance, take Velasquez' citing of the case of balancing a corporation's interest in financial gain with its concern for the health of its neighbors as an example. Kant's categorical imperative will tell us that everyone must have equal moral rights and that everyone must have the same respect for the protection of the interests of others as for his/ her own. According to feminists such as Calas and Smircich (1999:61) the patriarchal biases inherent in the posing of this question is clear. If we considered the unprincipled (according to Kant) characteristics such as sensitivity, compassion, benevolence and particular judgments become our guiding values, it is impossible to argue against the logic of certain business ethics dilemmas in the way that ethicists like Velasquez do. One would for instance insist in the above example that the health of concrete individuals should be held as an important right, and not something that is negotiable.

A second strand of criticisms is related to **the instrumental reasoning that underpins deontological thought**. Kant's insistence that one should use the universalizability test as guide in making moral decisions, and refrain from considering consequences, has a certain form of "pretzel logic" inherent to it. In saying that it would not be possible to universalize lying or breaking promises, one is making a very strong statement as to what kind of outcomes one desires and what kind of society one would ideally choose to create. As Van der Ven (1998:145) indicates, an injunction against false promises has to do with the

calculation of the multitude of advantages and especially - in this case - disadvantages that would ensue in the intra-personal, interpersonal and societal domain if this principle were to be adopted as a universal maxim.

An illustration of how Kantian ideas can lead to instrumentalist management practices, is provided by Bowie (1999:86) who writes that a Kantian manager would probably subscribe to a very specific theory of human nature. He is of the opinion that a Kantian would assume that employees prefer to be self-directed, that they are willing to assume responsibility and want to act imaginatively and creatively, and that they act morally much of the time and can therefore be trusted. For Kant, if individuals do not behave accordingly, their inclinations are interfering with their rational nature. That is, some desire or urge is preventing the person from acting in a rational manner, or the person is suffering from a weakness of will. Bowie (1999:87) goes even further to say that as a Kantian manager, one should treat people according to the positive theory of human nature described above, since the power of this self-fulfilling prophecy will then help them develop into rational, moral human beings. Bowie's theory is clearly based on a very Western, liberal conception of certain goods, which he then assumes will apply to all people in all contexts. In fact, he believes that if you treat people according to this theory, they will in effect become what you have all along believed they should be!

Korsgaard (1997:245) indicates the implications of Kant's instrumental principle in order to argue that the instrumental principle cannot stand alone. For the instrumental principle to provide you with a reason to act, you must believe that the fact that you will an end is a reason for the end. It's not exactly that there has to be *further* reason; it's just that one must take the act of one's own will to be normative for you. Willing the end gives it a normative status for you, and the fact that you are willing the end effectively makes it good. The instrumental principle can only become normative if we consider ourselves capable of laying down laws for ourselves, or as Kant would put it, if we take our own wills to be legislative. This can also be traced back to the conception of ourselves as ends-in-ourselves. According to Korsgaard (1997:249) the normative force of the instrumental principle seem to depend on our having a way of convincing ourselves that there are reasons for the end we

choose, and that they are therefore good. Unless something attaches normativity to our ends, there can be no requirement to employ the means necessary to realize them. The fact that the agent in some self-legislative act willed something rationally does not in itself give it normative content. Who decides which rationally willed acts are actually good acts?

The fact is that certain reasoned decisions can have detrimental moral effects. Kant's argument that autonomy commits us to certain substantive principles that can be reached by his universalizability test seems to be weak in the face of the example of rational reasoning employed by the Apartheid government in South Africa. They may have reasoned that the best rational solution to South Africa's diversity problems is separate development. They may even have judged it to be in the best interest of all in terms of the Categorical Imperative. They could have gone even further by applying the universalizability test to it and arguing that it would be good if this strategy could be universalized to all societies across the globe. They may have thought that it is actually a good way of seeing each ethnic group as an end in itself, worthy of separate territories, self-government and culture specific practices. The problem is, it is impossible to find a way to test whether this political strategy is indeed a good way if dealing with diversity, which should in fact be applied universally. The danger is that it remains a hypothetical theory, which can be justified and rationalized in various ways. Rationalized theories tend to only show its true colors when applied in practice, such as in the case of Apartheid, when the reality of the discrimination and racism that resulted from the political system, created an uproar all over the world. It is clear that somehow this type of reasoning can avoid crucial moral questions. For instance, it never questions whether impartial, objective "reasonability" may not in fact serve very specific interests. It also "reasons" away the point of view of the distinct "other" by assuming they would have exactly the same "reasonable" point of view about the best ends. And if by chance they would display another view of the good, they could always be judged unreasonable or irrational, which would render them unable to self-legislate and which would also, according to Kant's instrumental reasoning, make them immoral.

The reason why universalizability seems to be such a popular and seemingly plausible moral strategy, is the inherent desire of humans to be able to analyze, synthesize and categorize

reality in order to be able to predict the outcomes of all situations. Taylor (1997:286) describes Kant's theory as a combination of British empiricism and Continental rationalism. Form and categories function as a grid or matrix through which experience is unified, organized and thereby rendered intelligible. The matrix is seen as prior to experience, therefore universal. All experience is mediated by this grid and therefore the actual reality, the "Ding-an-Sich" that Kant speaks of becomes forever inaccessible. Kant tries to overcome the absolutized oppositions between subject and object in his third critique. He tries to mediate the theoretical and practical faculties of the mind. His analysis is organized around the notion of an inner teleology. Cause and effect relationships combine itself in self-organizing structures. Reason, therefore, in both its theoretical and practical capacities, functions to create unity out of plurality and to reduce manyness to oneness. Yet Kant's account leaves unanswered the question of the relationship between the two rational functions. While reason synthesizes and unifies, it remains unclear whether reason itself is unified. Moreover, because of the fact that reason imposes form upon nature, the unification of subject and object can only be partial and the movement from heteronomy to autonomy remains incomplete (Taylor 1986:5).

The reunification of subjectivity and objectivity in artistic activity is Kant's way of resolving the dichotomy (Taylor 1986:6). Yet the unity of nature and reason in the work of art is possible only if subjectivity and objectivity are implicitly one. The identity of nature and freedom is present in the artistic genius, because genius is natural talent and in creating the work of art, the genius responds naturally and spontaneously. Yet this spontaneity is not arbitrary, random or contingent. Rather, the genius acts according to the rules, principles, or ideas with which he is naturally endowed. Since original artistic activity is both natural and free, it is a self-realization rather than the violation of nature. Taylor (1986: 8) argues that Kant's argument in the third critique fails to overcome the oppositions of the first two Critiques on at least three counts. In the first place, though the activity of the genius is rational, it is, nonetheless, unconscious. Furthermore, the aesthetic idea is, according to Kant, irreducibly indeterminate and, hence, cannot be completely defined by any concept. In the third place, the reconciliation of the opposites embodied in the work of art remains an abstract ideal or "regulative idea" that guides and

extends the synthetic activity of reason but is not concretely actualized in time and space. Through this process of setting idea and ideal over against nature and history, Kant's work of art deepens rather than resolves the oppositions that sunder human experience.

Hegel has another way of dealing with the dichotomy between subject and object. He historicizes, systematizes and ontologizes Kant's aesthetic idea (Taylor 1997:288). Hegel maintains that free activity presupposes complete self-consciousness, which can be realized only in transparent conceptual knowledge. He holds that it is necessary to move beyond artistic representations and poetic images to conceptual reflection and rational knowledge. His task is thus twofold: in the first place he must give conceptual expression to Kant's aesthetic idea, and secondly he must establish the actuality of this speculative idea by uncovering its concrete embodiment in nature and history. Hegel develops his theory on the spirit that is "pure self-recognition in absolute otherness", or otherwise put, identity-in-difference. As Taylor (1986:8) explains it: he wants neither to collapse difference in identity nor dissolve identity in difference. Hegel's speculative idea is neither a subjective idea nor an abstract ideal but is the actual Logos or concrete structure of everything that exists. This absolute subject, which Hegel also describes as *Geist*, is not an individual that stands over and against all else but is the entire natural-historical process comprehended as an evolving dialectical totality. Every particular, every individual that exists is a member of and a moment in the unfolding, evolving whole. But as Taylor (1986:9) indicates, Hegel's speculative system both constitutes the closure of the search for unity and identity that characterizes Western philosophy, and arrives at a form of knowledge that is supposed to overcome the doubt and uncertainty that occasioned Descartes's inward turn. Hegel returns difference to identity and other to same. Taylor (1986:10) puts it as follows: "*In the life of the spirit, alterity finally disappears in the full light of transparent self-consciousness and absolute knowledge*".

Although Nietzsche agrees with Hegel's criticism of Kant's "Ding-an-Sich", he fictionalizes, relativizes and desystematizes the Hegelian concept. Kant's "Ding-an-Sich" is nonsensical, because if one removes all the relationships, all the properties and all the activities of a thing, the thing does not remain at all. The "Thing" is the multiplicity of relationships,



properties and activities. In and through it everything arises and passes away. Yet, Taylor (1997:290) indicates that unlike the closed structure of the Hegelian system, the open fabric of the Nietzschean web creates a fragmentary field in which aleatory associations generate unexpected patterns that disorganize as much as they organize. The Kantian categorical grid and the Hegelian systematic logic, which reflect and endorse processes of industrialization, are ill suited to a postindustrial environment governed by global structures of information and flows of images. The Nietzschean notions of fragmentation, temporary unions and change is much more applicable within the postindustrial networks-based society. While previous technologies do not simply disappear, the overlays of various electronic networks transform the very conditions by which we experience and develop knowledge (Taylor 1997:293).

Metaphysical reasoning is unsuitable in our current context, because of the way that it undermines difference and particularity. The political theory of John Rawls acts as an illustration of what Kantian thinking amounts to in everyday practice. Universalistic reasoning such as that of Rawls provides the basis for consensual values, because it satisfies the philosophic ideal of consensus reached by using rational procedures in the same way as in scientific rationality. It restricts morality to a central minimum core that provides the minimum grammar of morality that everyone can agree on. This strategy of finding a minimal consensus on universal values illustrated very well by the work of Rawls. Our discussion will make it clear that Kohlberg was correct in his depiction of Rawls' theory: *"Morality as justice best renders our view of morality as universal"* (Van der Ven 1998:210).

The development of the theory of the social contract is a good illustration of the use of deontological guidelines for living together in institutions. In the deontological "kingdom of ends", everybody is an autonomous self-legislator on the condition that what is legislated is respectful of all other people in their common status as legislators. The rule of justice is based on a procedure that establishes rights and obligations within the parameters of a social contract. John Rawls' theory of justice is based on the idea that rational individuals under the veil of ignorance (meaning that they don't know what position they will have in society) will come to certain rational conclusions as to how society should be arranged to the



benefit of all who live in it. His theory holds that these rational individuals will come to two conclusions (Van der Ven 1998: 167). In the first place they will agree that each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty, which would be compatible with a similar liberty for others. The second conclusion they will come to is that even though one might declare that justice should be based on equality, the reality of societies reflects inequality, which should be dealt with fairly. Therefore the second principle that is agreed upon would be this: " Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all"(Van der Ven 1998: 167). He also insists that any arrangement of social and economic inequalities should be made such that it would still be to the greatest possible benefit of the least advantaged, or the lowest classes or positions in society.

As Van der Ven (1998:167) indicates, this makes Rawls a leftist in the eyes of conservative thinkers, because he advocates an egalitarianism of a sort, and a rightist in the eyes of others, because he legitimizes inequality and differences in wealth and income. For someone like Charles Taylor, Rawls is not rightist enough, because he has no place for a just distribution of merit. Yet Ricoeur sees the main problem with Rawls' theory in the clear individualism at work in Rawls' contractualism. The original position is a position of individuals (Van der Ven 1998:168). Therefore one can ask the question as to whether the social contract equals a community, and whether it indeed constitutes the kind of community that people would want to live in? Sooner or later procedural justice cannot do without substantive ideas as to what constitutes the good. Even if Rawls rejects utilitarianism as an approach because it insists on some teleological conception of the good, Rawls himself introduces another utilitarian idea, implied in the balance between inequality and benefit for all. This idea is typically utilitarian, since it contains the idea of sacrifice for the realization of something else. As Van der Ven (1998:169) explains it: "Substance transcends procedure; procedure does not correspond to the fullness of substance. Ultimately, procedure is negative; it can indicate only what should not be done, not what should be done".

The combined effect of the instrumentalist character of deontological reasoning and its denial of the unique and the particular makes it a very problematic approach in pluralistic

environments. In her critique of Rawls' theory in her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Iris Young (1990:100) argues that the modernist ideal of impartiality as the hallmark of the moral reasoning of the transcendental subject undermines difference in at least three ways. First, it denies the particularity of situations, since the reasoning subject, emptied of all particularity, treats all situations according to the same moral rules. The more rules can be reduced to a single rule or moral principle, the more impartiality and universality will be guaranteed. Second, in its requirement of dispassion, impartiality seeks to master or eliminate heterogeneity in the form of feeling. This requires abstracting from the bodily being, its needs and inclinations, and from the feelings that attach to the experience the particularity of things and events. If one accepts a more embodied, holistic view of morality as will be developed in chapter 4, it becomes possible to see bodiliness as a crucial part of establishing normative statements within moral reasoning. The third, and the most important way that the ideal of impartiality reduces particularity to unity is in reducing the plurality of moral subjects to one subjectivity. Impartial reason is supposed to represent a point of view that all and any rational individual can accept, precisely by abstracting from the situational particularities that individualize them.

Young (1990:101) indicates that even though Rawls insists on the plurality of selves as a necessary starting point for a conception of justice the reasoning of the original position is nevertheless monological. The veil of ignorance removes any differentiating characteristics among individuals, and thus ensures that all will reason from identical assumptions and the same universal point of view. This universal category requires expelling those differences that do not fit into it. Like other instances of the logic of identity, the desire to construct impartial moral reason results not in unity, but in the dichotomy between reason and feeling. Setting up theoretical distinctions does not however inhibit real-life practices. As Young (1990:103) explains: "*Feelings, desires, and commitments do not cease to exist and motivate just because they have been excluded from the definition of moral reason. They lurk as inarticulate shadows, belying the claim to comprehensiveness of universalist reason.*"

The ideal of impartiality generates yet another dichotomy - that between general will and particular interests. In modern political thought this dichotomy appears between public

authority that represents the general interest and private individuals with their own desires, unshareable and incommunicable. The idea of the civic public excludes women and other groups, Young (1990:117) argues, because its rational and universal status derives only from its opposition to affectivity, particularity and the body. Habermas attempts to address these problems in his communicative action theory, but according to Young (1990:118) a strong strain of Kant's universalism remains in Habermas, which undermines his move to a radically pluralist participatory politics of need interpretation. Habermas retains vestiges of the dichotomy between reason and affectivity by firmly separating discourse about feelings from discourse about norms. His model of language itself relies on a paradigm of discursive argumentation, de-emphasizing the metaphorical, rhetorical, playful, and embodied aspects of speech that are an important aspect of its communicative effect (Young 1990:118).

In criticizing both what he calls "liberal politics", and "republican politics", Habermas (1994: 121) brings in even more evidence with regard to the limitations of both mere proceduralist and substantialist approaches to dealing with pluralist communities. The function of liberal politics, according to Habermas, is to bundle together private interests against governments specializing in pursuing collective goals. Republican politics has a broader function than the mediating role of liberal politics, since it is rather constituted by the processes of society as a whole and is therefore a reflective form of substantial ethical life. In this way contemporary republicans give public communication a communitarian reading. Habermas calls this ethical constriction of political discourse into question and argues that politics should not be assimilated to a hermeneutical process of self-explication. Instead, he (1994:128) advocates what he calls a discourse theory of democracy that works with higher-level intersubjectivity of communication processes. Discourse theory invests democratic processes with normative connotations stronger than those found in the liberal model, but weaker than those found in the republican model. Discourse theory depends on the institutionalization of procedures and conditions of communication. Habermas is of the opinion that institutionalization is of the utmost importance since only a system can act in the political playing field. The critical question as to how to manage the institutions and structures that mediate this communicative process in a way that allows them to maintain

their temporary character and their functions as mediators, remains however. These structures very easily get a life of their own and then start to restrict and predetermine communicative processes in such a way that it undermines individual freedom and creative renewal of the system.

#### **3.4. The intermediate position: Minimalist common values:**

Even in the pursuit of minimalist common values, there are many variations and approaches available. One example of a philosopher who attempted this search for common values in the field of interreligious dialogue is the renowned philosopher John Hick. John Hick boldly went where few have dared to tread before him, and his work indeed brought mutual respect and insight amongst believers of various religions. Yet the final step in Hick's theory is to propose that all religions have pieces of the same puzzle, and that if we are to make sense of the Transcendent (interreligious referral to God), we will have to compromise, synthesize and in effect, syncretize. He for instance suggested that Christians may want to let go of their beliefs in the Trinity, and their confession that Jesus is the Son of God, since these statements make exclusivist claims to superiority and Truth that restricts the interreligious dialogue, and that also hinders all of us in getting closer to the Transcendent. To suggest that the values or beliefs that religions have in common might, or even (as John Hick argues) should, transcend those beliefs that give them their unique identity and integrity, may be somewhat extreme. But this is exactly what happens if unique particularities are sacrificed in order to accommodate what we might have in common. It can be argued that these new structures of commonalities undermine the integrity and spirituality of specific groups to such an extent that the greater goal that Hick so vigorously pursues, namely access to the Transcendent is ironically undermined. When seeking cooperation between people from various religions, the discussion should focus on gathering various religious responses to a very specific contextual problem. One can then gather insights about the values that the various religions may consider applicable to the situation, develop an understanding of how each religion would interpret that specific value in terms of the problem at hand and develop a temporary consensus and action-plan. This would however only be applicable to that specific situation and would have to be revised

regularly as cooperation progresses. This does not in any way constitute a timeless construct that fuses religions into one.

We find similar attempts to bind religious groups to a set of common values in the work of Hans Küng and his project of constructing a "global ethic". Although the declaration entitled "Towards a Global Ethic" set an admirable agenda for working toward greater tolerance, mutual trust, and cooperation within communities as well as between them, Bok (1995:32) indicates that it does not carry out its announced intention of singling out minimalist core values acceptable to all. As a result, it displays intolerance toward those not capable of living up to its highest, maximalist ideals. It even uses words such as "irrevocable", "unconditional" and makes statements such as "every form of egoism should be rejected". Bok (1995:33) indicates that this calls for a level of self-abnegation that very few can attain. The broad guidelines for human behavior that the declaration develops cannot be labeled minimalist, since most of them are not consistently held, even by the world's major religions, let alone by more secular traditions. The maximalist nature of the declaration is revealed quite explicitly when Küng calls for a "global transformation of consciousness", which clearly does not involve the more than twenty percent of humanity estimated to be without religious alliance, nor the many religious people who would be wary of such a transformation (Bok 1995:34). Seeing religious consensus as a way to get to "thick" moral consensus loses sight of the fact that in many cases, religion is sometimes a handy instrument used by those in power to protect their interests. No system that allows the voices of the powerless to be eliminated in this way should be seen as a "global ethic". Seeking consensus is not necessarily negative, but any consensus can become dangerous if it is being portrayed as universal, timeless truths. It will always be open to misinterpretation or abuse if not seen as something contextual, temporary and revisable.

When one takes a closer look at Hans Küng's global ethics, one finds that he makes certain distinct assumptions with regard to the global project. Küng (1997:17) for instance states that globalization is unavoidable, ambivalent, incalculable, and then surprisingly, he also holds the seemingly contradictory position that globalization can be controlled rationally. He is of the opinion that global phenomena are not necessary natural processes, but rather that



they are developments which - with certain limits - can be guided. Küng argues that just as there is a need for a new global law against excessive speculation, so there is also a need for an ethical minimum, to guarantee a life together on our globe that is to some degree peaceful. Küng seems to underestimate not only business' distinct dislike of over-regulation, he also seems to lose sight of the complex nature of the interactions and factors that influence the global village. This is what gives it the character of volatility, instability and ambiguity. While Küng seems to recognize the fact that globalization involves ambivalence and incalculability, he seems to underestimate it when it comes to the measure of control he thinks can be exercised over this complex phenomenon.

A second very questionable strategy employed by Küng is to assume that religion can supply the world with some basic function that cannot be performed by ethics alone. He sees religion not as a later exponent of a common global ethic, but as something that deepens it and gives it foundation (Küng 1997:26). He provided us with four perspectives to make the point that religion provides us with things that a universal ethic cannot:

- Only religion can provide an unconditional guarantee for our unconditional norms, our deepest motivations and our highest ideals and at the same time give them concrete form.
- Only religion can provide a basis for protest and resistance against unjust conditions and give expression to the longing for the "wholly other" which is already at work and cannot be silenced within the world.
- Only religion can create a home of trust, security and hope through shared symbols and rituals. In other words, religion can offer an ultimate spiritual community and home.
- Only religion can communicate a specific depth dimension, and a comprehensive horizon of interpretation even in the face of suffering, injustice, guilt and meaninglessness.

It would be excessively skeptical to argue that religion cannot play an important role in all this, yet one cannot help but question the assumption that religion is the "only" possible vehicle for establishing these values. Not only does it make the missionary assumption that



all people should and would at some stage be converted to some or other faith, but also that religions can in fact agree on shared norms, rituals and convictions to such an extent that it would provide the world with a global ethic. This thesis would not only undermine the integrity and uniqueness of the religions involved, but will also create a metastructure and a metanarrative of the kind that inevitably runs the risk of domination, exclusion and discrimination against those who fall outside it.

It also seems as if Küng works with a definition of ethics that sees it as something very rational, impartial and objective in nature. One can argue that instead of relying solely on religion to move individuals morally, one should rather challenge this understanding of ethics. The view of moral reasoning advocated here includes not only religion, but also bodiliness, social relations, and culture as important aspects of ethical motivation. Moral discourse infused by these aspects can indeed be a very strong motivational force.

Küng (1997:27) for instance argues that business culture has always been important, but that today it has become of strategic relevance. He maintains that business culture ultimately consists of a combination of decisiveness with the values, criteria, norms and modes of behavior of executives and their colleagues in a business. Executives themselves should therefore become aware of their own moral and religious values, and make sure that their colleagues and employees see something of what motivates their heads and hearts. One would support Küng in his call for allowing executives and anyone involved in business to refer to their religious values as an important part of their moral configuration and to resist banishing religion and morality to the so-called private sphere. Yet, the assumption that someone will definitely be a better manager or executive if he or she adheres to specifically religious values, is questionable. Many instances exist of executives and managers without any religious alliance who upholds very strong moral values.

In her analysis of various approaches towards common values, Sisela Bok (1995) tries to steer clear of extreme foundationalism, whilst at the same time maintaining that basic, minimalist common values are indeed possible. She (1995:70) argues that in rejecting certain foundationalist claims, such as claims that certain moral values are divinely ordained,

part of the natural order, or that they are externally valid without exception, that they exist independently of human beings, many critics of foundationalism throw out the baby with the bath water. In rejecting foundationalism, she argues that we do not also have to give up on the idea that certain values are in fact held in common by all human beings, or that common values need to be worked out in all human societies. Bok (1995:12) defends four basic propositions:

- 1) Certain basic values necessary to collective survival have to be formulated in every society. A minimalist set of such values can be recognized across societal and other boundaries.
- 2) These basic values are indispensable to human coexistence, though far from sufficient, at every level of personal and working life and of family, national and international relations.
- 3) It is possible to affirm both common values and respect for diversity and in this way to use the basic values to critique abuses perpetrated in the name either of more general values or of ethnic, religious, political, or some other diversity.
- 4) The need to pursue the inquiry about which basic values can be shared across cultural boundaries is urgent, if societies are to have some common ground for cross-cultural dialogue and for debate on how to best cope with hazards that do not stop at cultural boundaries.

Bok's approach seems to be an attempt at using the basic values of the liberal democracy as parameters for cross-cultural discussion, tolerance and cooperation. Yet in effect, she is making clear assumptions as to what constitutes the good life, what goals are worth pursuing and what programs should therefore receive priority. In assuming that the goals that each society identifies as priorities in their specific contexts would yield similarities across societal boundaries, she assumes basically the same "goods" will be identified by the parts, thereby providing the bigger, global collective with a clear vision of the good. The fact is that various levels of development, differences in cultural and historical background, political and economic forces, may lead to very different priorities in communities across the globe. Another factor that Bok seems to underestimate is how quickly these priorities can be changed by factors such as governments in power, economic or even natural disasters, or wars. The variables that come into play in particular societies are endless.

Furthermore, even if people can periodically or perhaps even episodically agree on basic values, rights and commitments, the way in which they arrange their lives to apply these values may differ dramatically. Justice may be agreed upon by all societies, but in a Muslim society justice towards women is enacted by protecting them, shielding them from public life, assigning them a specific role within their community and restricting them to it. Nominalist agreements on minimalist values seem to have little effect in practice. If Bok is going to use basic values such as justice and equality in affirming both common values and respect for diversity, is she going to criticize the Muslims for their way of treating women? If she is, she will have to make sure that they share her understanding of the practices and contents of the term "justice". Unfortunately it becomes very difficult to come to a consensus with people who work with a very different perception of "justice" and whose political and social application of this understanding of the term also sets the parameters for any moral discussion on equality and rights.

Bok's appeal to common values that facilitate cross-cultural cooperation pertains to a basic question that this dissertation wants to address -how do you get people that are very different from each other and hold divergent beliefs and values to feel close enough, loyal enough, and committed enough to collective goals to get them to work with others in groups on communal projects. We will all agree that certain projects are just too big for any individual to address on her/ his own. I doubt that getting individuals to subscribe to some set of abstract minimalist values that they share with the rest of humanity is going to get us very far. They assist in setting the broad, proceduralist parameters for the discussion, but I want to maintain that what is needed is very specific, contextualized solutions that are the result of corresponding deliberations on which values apply, what they mean to people and why and how they apply to the problem at hand. If we are going to address global problems such as poverty, environmental issues and war, let us not lose sight of what the "global village" looks like, how it operates, what demands it makes on people, what the stakes are and what power relations function in it. If we take these into account, we can hardly come up with oversimplified, minimalist values that apply across the board.

Each of the ethical approaches that had been discussed here, seems to be fraught with problems. Many of them also seem to rely to a greater or lesser extent on their coexistence with other approaches in order to provide us with guidelines. In the next section I will attempt to look at ways in which we can try and steer clear from binary oppositions with regard to our ethical approaches, and argue instead for the interrelatedness of substantive and procedural strategies, universal concerns and particular contexts, and individual and community interests.

### **3.5. An attempt at a synthesis of various approaches: The Integrative Social Contracts Theory (ISCT)**

Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:12) provide us with an exploration of many of the often-used, non-contractarian approaches to business ethics. They draw the conclusion that no single theory has emerged that is fully capable of providing meaningful guidelines to the wide range of challenging business ethics issues that confront us in the workplace. They evaluate Norman Bowie's attempts at applying Kantian ethics in a sophisticated manner to a myriad of business contexts. Evan and Freeman similarly worked out an elaborate Kantian-based model for stakeholder management. Rights-based approaches informed by deontological theories or theories of social justice also abound. The work of Werhane on human resource management is an example of an approach that figures under the latter category. Donaldson and Dunfee (1999:13) refer to the attempt to provide universal guidelines to business ethics questions as "the view from nowhere". Deontology rests on the assumption that one can make absolutist statements about truth and morality if only one could be reasonable or objective enough. Yet Donaldson and Dunfee (1999:28) argue that in the business world we deal with what they call "bounded rationality". That is a form of rationality that acknowledges the fact that human cognition is subject to serious physical and psychological limits, and that individuals make systematic errors in reasoning. Decisions are often made in the face of insufficient information and time constraints. In addition to this the business world is institutionally "thick", i.e. businesses are human artifacts created for specific purposes. Because the rules and structures of business can vary dramatically from culture to culture, from industry to industry and from company to company, one realizes that

universal, timeless truths are hardly going to assist us in making specific moral decisions in a real business environment. Perhaps the most intractable aspect of the "artifactual" problem in business ethics is cultural variety, which in South Africa manifests itself as one of the main problems in moral discussions.

Dunfee & Donaldson (1995:174) also evaluate consequential approaches to business ethics, where a certain end-point is postulated. The attempt to justify corporate ethics consequentially through the achievement of higher profit levels in a type of utilitarian "Ethics pays"-argument is typical of these approaches. The work of Aupperle, Carroll and Hatfield (1985) and the research currently being done by the Center for Business Ethics (see their web site: [www.bentley.edu/cbe](http://www.bentley.edu/cbe)) on whether or not the existence of corporate ethics programs actually do affect the bottom line of the organization, all share this goal. Consequential approaches all face the difficulties involved with the bounded rationality that Donaldson and Dunfee (1999:29) speak of. One does not always have at one's disposal all the relevant facts to make precise calculations. In a volatile business environment one would be hard-pressed to make clear-cut predictions even if one had time and opportunity to gather significant fact, precisely because the cause and effect relationships in complex systems cannot always be established.

Attempts have also been made to combine both consequential and rights-based factors in lists of principles or questions to be applied by business decision-makers, as have been done by Richard de George or Laura Nash. As early as 1981 Cavanagh, Moberg and Velasquez proposed an elaborate decision model for sorting among three of the more common theoretical approaches. One has also seen the rise of the stakeholder theory as a way of combining certain normative views on the responsibility the corporation has to all its stakeholders, with an instrumental approach by which one establishes a framework for examining connections between the practice of stakeholder management and the achievement of various corporate performance goals. Others have attempted a descriptive analysis of the extent to which firms follow stakeholder management strategies and the way in which the law requires, or at least supports, such strategies (Dunfee & Donaldson 1995:175). When one has to weigh various interests against one another, the problem with



stakeholder analysis becomes apparent. It forces one to quantify and qualify the "good" for all involved in a means to an end calculation that is open to the objections raised against utilitarianism earlier in this chapter.

Dunfee and Donaldson (1995:181) argue that context-specificity in contractarian ethics may constitute the ideal source of normative standards for the actual process of stakeholder management. Contractarianism tends to be a norm-centered approach to ethics. Empirical issues abound concerning the way norms are created, communicated and accepted within particular business communities, how they change or are purged, and how they are enforced or supported. Robertson & Ross (1995:213) indicates that the integrative social contracts theory as formulated by Donaldson and Dunfee recognizes ethical obligations based on two levels of consent. In the first place, consent is based on a theoretical "macro" social contract appealing to all rational actors. Secondly, members of numerous localized communities consent to the terms of real and specific "micro" social contracts. Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:19) emphasize the hypothetical character of the "macro" contract as opposed to the non-hypothetical, actual agreements existing in the extant contract within and among communities. Macro contracts, in short, fill in what micro contracts leave out, and vice versa.

Two important concepts in understanding the essence of ISCT are that of hypernorms and moral free space. Hypernorms constitute universal limits to community consent, and are therefore recognized by the hypothetical macro-social contractors as key limits on moral free space and are essential to establishing consent in micro-social norms while recognizing precepts and values common to most people. Hypernorms constitute principles so fundamental that by definition, they serve as "second-order" norms by which other norms can be judged.

Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:51) distinguish three distinct types of hypernorms, namely procedural, structural, and substantive hypernorms. Procedural hypernorms specify the rights of exit and voice essential to support micro-social contractual consent. The right of voice for instance encompasses and extends beyond Habermas' recognition of the



substantive rules of argumentation. The right of exit prohibits coercive restrictions on egress from micro-social communities. Secondly, structural hypernorms exist that are necessary for political and social organization, for example, the right to property is supported by an economic hypernorm that obliges members of society to honor institutions that promote justice and economic welfare - within, of course the bounds of other hypernorms. Finally, substantive hypernorms specify fundamental conceptions of the right and the good. Whereas the sources of procedural and structural hypernorms are specified or implicit in the macro- or micro-social contract, Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:52) argue that the sources of substantive hypernorms are exogenous. This last assumption can be questioned, since this dissertation argues that the structural realities of institutions, as well as procedural parameters to moral discussions, are directly related to substantive beliefs about the good and vice versa. The problems caused by these complexities surface in certain of Donaldson & Dunfee's arguments. For instance, they argue that variations of hypernorms can be identified over time, but that it does not necessarily mean that the underlying set of hypernorms have changed. These changes may simply reflect changes in the methodology by which hypernorms are recognized. Methodology, however, also become substantive norms in that they prescribe preferred ways of pursuing the desired good.

Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:56) claim that they are not advocating an Esperanto of global ethics that speaks with univocal meaning to all. Rather, theirs is a form of moral minimalism [as opposed to foundationalism] that consists of principles and rules that are reiterated in different times and places, and that are seen to be similar even though they are expressed in different idioms and reflect different histories and different versions of the world. They identify certain philosophical positions and certain collective agreements that provide us with some idea of commonly accepted moral norms. Philosophically they point to the work of Hans Küng, John Kline, Richard De George, John Rawls, Amartya Sen, Immanuel Kant, John Locke, and Confucius. Collective agreements they point to include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the Council for a Parliament of the World's Religions (Towards a global ethic, 1993), Global 2000 Report from Millennium Institute (1993) and the Caux Round Table (1994). They (1999:54) do not want to claim to have found a final list, expressible in a particular moral language and valid for all moral situations, since that would

constitute a form of moral absolutism. Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:59) do not want to take a position on whether hypernorms have a purely rational basis as Kant argues, or a partially empirical and historical basis as Hegel argues. When one looks at the list they have compiled, it seems as if they are more prone to rational, hypothetical agreements, rather than to empirical and historical sources. The hypernorms are in fact abstract principles aimed at transcending specific agreements, and therefore it succumbs to the same difficulties indicated in the evaluation of Kant, Rawls, Küng and Bok earlier in this chapter. In analyzing the work of these philosophers it becomes clear that even though they claim to reach rational, impartial agreements, these agreements still serve certain power-interests, reflect certain cultural mores and presuppose certain institutional parameters.

ISCT claims to take these contextual realities into account by allowing for real micro-contracts that allow communities to arrive at their own agreements on contextual moral guidelines. Donaldson and Dunfee (1999:83) refer to the existence of a *moral free space* that acknowledges that it is right and proper for communities to self-define significant aspects of their business morality. Ethical rules develop both formally through explicit contracts, and informally through implicit agreements among groups of people. Why are these community specific norms necessary? The first reason relates to the fact that the application of general ethical rules to a specific context often becomes problematic. Secondly the enormous variety of moral preferences among individual community members and their communities cause firms, even in the same industry, to develop quite different values and traditions. Thirdly, corporations and other business organizations frequently reflect the religious or cultural attitudes of their employees or of the surrounding culture. Finally, the flexibility and openness of moral free space allows for the generation and modification of the ethical norms that are essential if organizations are to accomplish their goals efficiently (Donaldson & Dunfee 1999:84-85).

The identification of localized communities is in itself an empirical task. Dunfee & Donaldson (1995:39) describe the "community" as a self-defined, self-circumscribed group of people who interact in the context of shared tasks, values and goals and who are capable of establishing norms of ethical behavior for themselves. Individuals may belong to multiple

communities whose norms may function in any given situation. In order for a community to exist, it must pass the "self-awareness test" by which the members of a community recognize their association with the group and view it as a source of obligatory ethical norms. Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:86) refer to "authentic" ethical norms in business as those norms that are considered genuine in a community, and that actually represent a community consensus concerning parameters of ethical behavior. These norms are influenced by the ethical climate in the organization, which includes leadership, organizational structure, policies, incentive systems, decision-making and informal systems; sub-communities within the organization; and legal parameters (such as the US Corporate Sentencing Guidelines in the case of American business).

The benefits of the ISCT approach are clear: it allows communities to define their own contextual moral guidelines within the broader parameters of what is considered universally acceptable. According to Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:21) the very logic of ISCT entails tolerance. Tolerance is an extension of the emphasis on consent and choice. Therefore on the continuum of extreme relativism, cultural relativism, pluralism, modified universalism and extreme universalism (absolutism) ISCT is compatible with pluralism. It acknowledges the fact that there are broad ranges of ethical viewpoints that may be chosen by communities and cultures, and that the possibility exists that conflicting ethical positions in different cultures are equally valid. It is also pluralistic in its acceptance of many kinds of moral theories. However, it maintains that there are circumstances in which the viewpoint of a particular culture will be invalid due either to a universally binding moral precept or to the priority of the view of another culture or community (Donaldson & Dunfee 1999:23).

The ISCT approach also has its difficulties, as was shown in the above criticism on the identification of substantive hypernorms. These difficulties can be illustrated further by looking at some of the problems inherent in what Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:120) view as a structural hypernorm, namely the hypernorm of necessary social efficiency. Efficiency can be understood as a moral principle when we acknowledge that some goods may possess intrinsic worth for society, in other words, they are the goods that society pursues. If such "necessary" public goods do exist, then efficiency in pursuing them is also desirable.

Societies must therefore develop systems to pursue necessary goods and create policies, rules and procedures. A simple example of how the structural hypernorm of social efficiency can contradict some of the substantive hypernorms identified in the ISCT approach, is the issue on whether or not multinationals should use cheap child-labor in third world countries. Let us assume that a particular third world country has high levels of unemployment and that many families are living below the breadline. Let us assume that social efficiency in their context demands that all the family-members that can succeed in finding a job must contribute to the household. One of the substantive hypernorms identified by Donaldson & Dunfee (1999:70) is: "Every human being must be treated humanely". Let us say that at the level of the micro-contract the local community finds it completely acceptable, in fact desirable, for their children to work from an early age. Now in terms of the social efficiency principle the children should be allowed to work - it makes business sense and it makes sense in terms of community survival. However, the substantive hypernorm would raise issues as to whether or not it is humane for children to work and how those children who do choose to work are to be treated. In various cultures it is not considered inhumane for children to do hard manual labor under difficult conditions from an early age. Furthermore, it serves the purpose of social efficiency - the company gets to produce its goods at a low cost and the families in the third world country gets to survive another day. Are we satisfied with this conclusion, or does our reference to hypernorms leave us with many unanswered questions? These are questions that can in fact only be answered from a very contextual, historical perspective.

### **3.6. Possible solutions**

In order to address some of the problems of these approaches, a few important issues need to be addressed. In the first place, it seems as if a crucial problem inherent to many of these moral theories is that it either overemphasizes substance and content over just procedure and meaningful moral reasoning, or overemphasizes procedure whilst paying too little attention to the meaning(s) of the good that these procedures embody. A second problem is the tendency to either over generalize and universalize, or to individualize and particularize up to the point of fragmentation. A third problem, closely related to the

second pertains to the relationship between the individual and the group and the way moral goods are determined within these structures or institutions.

### 3.6.1. Substantive versus procedural:

When we look at the first problem, it seems as though one cannot get away from the fact that all moral theories attempt to distinguish certain moral goods that are supposedly more moral, worthier and more rational than others. This seems inevitable when discussing morality, since morality is all about choosing certain beliefs and actions and rejecting others in our efforts to consider the interests of all the parties involved in the moral issue. Yet because of the fact that each moral dilemma constitutes unique challenges for adjudicating the interests of all involved, some moral theories hold that it is more effective to prescribe certain procedures for reaching moral decisions than to prescribe distinct goods. However, all attempts to develop such procedures seem to make certain assumptions as to what will constitute the good.

In the Kantian sense, what is good is seen as those decisions that were made impartially, objectively, autonomously, and that can apply generally. Yet, as many feminists have already indicated, not all people believe that it is good to be impartial, detached, and objective and to make general statements instead of very specific and particular ones. In Kant's rational procedure, substantive goods are already indicated as valuable and others are demoted as unworthy of moral status. In fact, Kant seems to hold certain contradictory principles in high esteem, which necessitates a procedure to adjudicate between the conflicting goods. Ricoeur (1992:208) argues that Rawls' distributive justice is in fact an attempt to find a procedure that would give equal expression to Kantian principles that are in fact not easily compatible. Kant's principle of the autonomy of each individual and the principle of the respect each individual deserves as an end in itself cannot always easily be realized institutionally, precisely because people who deserve equal respect are in fact not always equal with respect to talents, means, dedication, position in society etc. That is why some procedure is necessary to find an optimum form of realization of principles within contextual restraints. Yet, procedure cannot function independent of concern for certain



"goods". Van der Ven (1998:168) indicate that Rawls' distinction between natural and social primary goods in his discussion on what constitutes basic liberty shows that there can be no "pure" procedural contractualism. Procedural contractualism cannot do without a substantive approach, because procedural justice cannot avoid making decisions at some stage or another about what constitutes the "good". The substantial sense of justice cannot be perfectly transformed into the procedural rule of justice on which the social contract relies. As Van der Ven (1998:169) puts it: "Substance transcends procedure, procedure does not correspond to the fullness of substance. Ultimately, procedure is negative, it can indicate only what should not be done, not what should be done."

Are we to conclude that all procedural theories are invalid or useless? No, this would be to assume that one should allow any reasoning to count as moral as long as it prescribes a certain good. This would be to give the substantive priority and could result in complete relativity as to what constitutes the good. This relativism could result in extreme individualism that holds that every one person decides what is good in any given situation. It could also result in strong communalism where the good is determined by what the most people in the community consider good. In effect this would construct a metanarrative of the good that would disallow moral dissensus and is sure to discriminate against certain individuals who hold a conception of the good that differs from that of the majority.

Metanarratives or "grand narratives" can be seen as attempts to subject reality to a comprehensive set of substantive categories on what constitutes the good for everyone involved and to prescribe a matching procedure to its attainment. In the context of morality this means that certain moral strategies, based on certain conceptions of the good can function as a grand narrative that explain all moral decisions, and prescribe certain moral actions in terms of procedures. This boils down to a quick fix by which one considers only one conception of the good legitimate and eliminates all other goods or concerns. When this happens morality runs the risk of functioning as legitimizing narratives for the protection of certain power interests, and closing off a certain subjectivist interpretation of how things are and how things should be. If other narratives cannot challenge this narrative, it could easily become a way to legitimize the existing power configurations, and



discriminate against those who would not benefit from the existing view of the good. In Lyotard's works, *"The Inhuman"* (1991) and *"The Postmodern Explained"* (1992), it becomes clear that this will to power so inherent to human beings is where immorality and, in Lyotard's terms, "inhumanity" starts. He argues that the human subject's desire to control by making everything representable undermines the true humanity of the human race. Lyotard does not pretend that we can survive without any narratives, since narratives are our way of making sense of our lives and our relationships. He only urges that we should never allow any one narrative to become a subjectivist prison from which no escape towards transcendence of our current structures of meaning is possible. We should allow the plurality of narratives to challenge and shape one another, even if this causes a certain measure of uncertainty. True humanity only becomes possible if we allow ourselves to be confronted by the "inhuman", or in other words, that which transcends us. Lyotard (1991:98) will argue that this uncertainty constitutes the essence of true humanity, since it indicates an awareness of something bigger and greater than our own attempts at meaning and representation

What we need is a certain view of moral reasoning that acknowledges that any choice with regard to procedure also makes certain statements about the good. The procedure must be such that the various perspectives on what constitutes good can be identified, formulated but also renegotiated as part of the ongoing moral discourse. Falzon (1998:62) describes a form of openness that allows a process of dialogical ethics to take place. The attitude of openness does not oppose all forms of order, or organizational activity, but rather the absolutization of particular forms of order, and the establishment of fixed states of closure and domination. In opposing totalization and promoting resistance, the attitude of openness opens up the possibility of the modification of prevailing principles and forms of life, as well as their transformation and renewal through ongoing dialogue. Being open to the other is not to be understood as an ideal state, something that we can attain once and for all; rather it is an ongoing task. This "ethics of the other" that Falzon (1998:63) speaks of have been invoked by many recent thinkers under many different names. Derrida's "hierarchical violence" of Western reason, invokes as a motivating impulse of deconstruction the idea of an ethical responsibility to affirm the otherness of the other, to postpone final

closure of meaning and significance and to open the space for "the other" to arrive in. The possibilities inherent in Derrida's strategy of deconstruction will be explored in terms of its benefits in a pluralist organizational context in Chapter 4. Postmodern feminists have alluded to the idea of an ethics of care that had been referred to earlier. It attempts to exercise care towards the other by holding open the intersubjective space in which difference can unfold in its particularity (Falzon 1998:63).

### 3.6.2. Universal versus particular

Van der Ven (1998: 172-176) gives an expose of Ricoeur's analysis of the search for the good, the just and the wise that helps us understand why overemphasizing either the universal or the particular is undesirable in moral reasoning. Within each of three stages he identifies there are three dimensions: the relation to oneself, the relation to the other, and the relation to the whole of society. In the first stage, the emphasis is on the teleological search for the good life in personal, interpersonal and institutional settings. In the second phase the good is tested from a deontological perspective that emphasizes rationalization, formalization and universalization. The good is assessed to determine whether it can be justified in rational terms. Three groups of criteria is important: autonomy in personal life, respect for others in interpersonal life, and procedural justice in democratic institutional life. In the third stage the good that had been discovered in the first stage, and tested in the second stage, must be applied in the concrete situation. It is a combination of activity and passivity that requires Aristotelian *phronesis*, practical wisdom, or "judgment in the situation" as Ricoeur calls it. This third stage requires the higher ability of synthesis that allows one to compose one's vision and formulate one's own judgment about the situation in its singularity. It is therefore not enough to identify certain goods and to critically test them; one should also be able to relate any beliefs and values to the specific situation at hand.

What is in fact called for in the stage of the wise, is that the meaning of a universal value such as justice be negotiated *in* the particular situation. This not only eliminates the abuse of the use of universal values such as justice in the interest of certain groups, it also

incorporates into the substantive content of justice elements of care and compassion for everyone involved. Universal values become the procedural parameters that create the space for negotiation of substantive contents that is always contingent, always evolving and therefore always renegotiable and dynamic. The meaning of the universal is therefore always deferred and postponed. However, the fact that it can never be decided upon or fixed for eternity does not mean that it should not be discussed. It in effect sets the agenda for moral discourse, it indicates concerns that have to be taken into account.

Solomon (1997:155) suggests this interaction between justice and care in the business world by indicating the central importance of care and compassion in the context of the central managerial virtue of justice. Justice as fairness holds institutions together and it is the virtue of fairness that above all, marks a good manager. Fairness does not imply the application of certain abstract and impersonal principles, although administrative equity is never completely beside the point. Neither is fairness merely the respect for employee or other stakeholders' rights. "Rights" normally enter the picture when the harmony of communities have broken down in order to determine legitimate demands rather than cooperative or mutually formulated decisions. Justice is first of all an attitude of caring, a sense of compassion for those in a less advantageous position, a relationship, and only secondly a matter of rights, equality or merit. Unfortunately, the free market tends to say very little about this conception of justice, because it is in the very nature of the market to reduce people to consumers or commodities, human dignity to a market value and personal worth to a salary (Solomon 1997:156).

In my view free market rationalism does precisely what is so problematic in deontology: it formulates certain rules that set as highest value certain goods and generalize about the rest, trusting that the procedure will somehow distribute the good to all because of the inherent justice of the system and its rules. Yet, people do not fit into these abstract categories of contractual obligations and rights and the universal rules of the system do not take care of particular individuals and specific problematic situations. The problem is, some universal value does not always trump particular concerns, in fact the universal value has no content without the specific goods that society is striving for. In this sense teleology and

deontology are dependent upon one another. As Ricoeur (1992:190) explains, we don't have some abstract "obligation" to adhere to certain principles. He maintains that it is possible to dig under the level of obligation to discover some ethical sense about why certain things are considered "good" in terms of the interests of all involved. Those goals that society see as necessary for the "good life" in the society, organization or social institutions that they are involved in, determine the content of the universal value of justice in that specific context. This does not mean, however, that using universal concerns for justice, peace, welfare etc as parameters for discussion is not useful. They can be helpful as long as they allow the actual individuals influenced by these discussions to come face to face with each other. The details of how one should approach other people in this way will be developed in Chapter 4 by referring to Levinas' discussion of the face of the other.

### **3.6.3. Individual versus community**

Another problem with most moral theories is that they cannot seem to find a meaningful interaction between the individual moral agent, the community that he/ she is part of and the institutions in which he/ she participates. The individualized free agent of transcendental philosophy had fallen into disrepute, yet it is also not true that individuals are mere puppets of the communities or institutions in which they live and work. The communitarian solution rests on the important assumption that a homogenous moral community at local level is possible. Within the South African working environment this is unlikely. Communitarianism also considers community life and living in the community as an unquestionable end. This overemphasis on the community as end has contributed to grave injustices in South Africa. The protection of distinct group identities was pursued as an unquestionable end, undermining not only individual rights and freedom but also the integrity and rights of other groups. Because of the fact that communities and institutions do have a great influence on moral decision-making, as was indicated in Chapter 2, it will also not be helpful to deny the importance of communities and institutions when developing a moral theory. The communitarian's observation with regard to the links that exist between narrative, community and ethics should therefore be taken seriously, yet not at the expense

of the individual's freedom to associate and to co-define and redefine the terms of the association.

Zygmunt Bauman (1994) describes both individualism and communalism as part of the reason why it becomes so difficult to speak of morality in any meaningful sense. In the first place, Bauman (1994:22) speaks of the privatization of common fates, where individuals live separately side by side. It is a privatized world in which people may share space, but not thoughts and sentiments, and where they are acutely aware of the fact that they no longer necessarily share fates either. The most common strategy individuals use to avoid moral responsibility is to claim that they need space. The "I need space" strategy militates against any moral sense, since it denies the moral significance of even the most intimate inter-human action. It exempts core elements of human inter-relationships from moral evaluation and neutralizes even those aspects of human existence falling outside the already neutralized world of public bureaucracy and institutions. A vicious circle develops, through which an increasingly privatized life feeds disinterest in politics, and politics, freed from constraints, deepens the extent of privatization, thus breeding more indifference (Bauman 1994:27). This disinterest extends to other institutionalized spheres such as that of business in that the individual's relationship with her/ his workplace is defined by the way in which having a career or a job serves her/ his private interests, and where creating common value-systems in the workplace is not high on the individual's priority list. In fact, it becomes very hard to argue for the value that any sense of community boundaries might have for the individual, since it merely limits his/ her freedom and encroaches on his/ her space.

Bauman (1994:30) however makes it clear that a sense of community is unlikely to fill the moral gap with some content. The overall effect merely continues the tendency to expropriate the individual's moral responsibility. It is now the community who defines good from evil, and who dictate the definition of moral conduct. The most important concern of the moral legislation of communities is to keep the division between us and them watertight; not so much to promote moral standards, as to install double standards according to which the own can be treated in different terms from the other. Because the community replaces



the torments of moral responsibility with the certainty of discipline and submission, disciplined selves are by no means guaranteed to be moral, nor do they necessarily promote the cultivation of moral selves (Bauman 1994:33). In fact, the history of Apartheid in South Africa illustrate what Bauman (1994:34) describes as the process through which *"submissive selves can easily be deployed - and are deployed - in the service of the cruel mindless inhumanity of the endless (and hopeless) intercommunal wars of attrition and boundary skirmishes."*

In an attempt to overcome the dangers inherent to an overemphasis on either the individual or environment (social, cultural, institutional), Van der Ven (1998:29) advocates what he calls an interactionalist approach that rejects both personal and environmental determinism. Interactionalism is an attempt at synthesizing the paradigms of individualism, communitarianism, and institutionalism by placing the emphasis on reciprocal interactions between individual, community, and society. Personal determinism holds that all processes in moral life stem from the individual's cognition, emotions, motives, intentions and choices, while neglecting the influences of environmental factors. Environmental determinism is the proposition that all moral thinking, feeling, striving and behaving are controlled by external stimuli operating in the environment. From the interactionalist perspective, the individual is counteractive but also proactive, and not only does the environment influence the individual, but the individual also orchestrates, conducts, and even create the environment. Interactionalism has both a structural and a process aspect. The structural aspect is characterized by the interdependence of personal and environmental factors. The process side of interactionalism is revealed when one studies this structure over time and it becomes clear that human functioning causes interaction that itself influences interaction in future. This gives interactionalism a dynamic aspect over time.

Solomon (1997:150) envisions a business corporation that supports the interaction between the individual and the institution. Corporations have been described either as a legal fiction, an artificial person whose only reason for existence is to make money and protect the owners or the stockholders, or it has been described in terms of the military metaphor of a hierarchical chain of command whose primary purpose is to beat the competition. The latter



leads to ruthlessness, hostility, bloodletting and often mutual destructiveness, and the former to corporate irresponsibility and social unresponsiveness as well as to endless debates about the alleged social responsibilities of organizations as defined solely in terms of their fiduciary obligations. Solomon (1997:151) proposes that a corporation should instead be seen as a community, a group of people working together for (more or less) shared goals and with some sense of a shared culture. The distinguishing factor in this view of the corporation is the fact that it is first and foremost a group of people who stand with each other in a variety of personal and professional relationships.

In the corporation, individuals working in a corporation are defined to a large extent by the role they play within the organization - "the individual-in-the-organization". However, this does not mean that the individual's individuality is denied. Each individual is treated as a full-fledged human being, and not as a mere means to an end. Yet, what constitute their interaction are the shared goals and purposes for the sake of which they engage with each other in the workplace. They determine what the terms and parameters of the engagement are in terms of what they are willing to put into the interaction and what they want to get out of it. However, the terms and parameters of this interaction in turn determine them in their everyday lives, their beliefs and their actions. The individual is thus at the same time subject and object in interaction with the organizational structure he or she associates with.

### **3.7. Conclusion:**

This chapter contends that in order to deal with moral dilemmas in a pluralistic environment, one should refrain from devising abstract and universal solutions. A context-specific solution should be found for each dilemma. This solution should attempt to balance substantive and procedural considerations, and recognize the interaction between the two. Furthermore, it should translate universal guidelines to particular, individualized options. In this process, the individual and his or her specific identity-configurations, as well as his or her specific context, should be acknowledged. At the same time though, the interaction of the individual with groups, and the maintenance of unity amidst diversity should remain a



firm priority. In the process of accomplishing this delicate balance, rejecting the available ethical approaches described above or resorting to yet another attempt at combining them in a new synthesis, will not suffice. New perspectives and creative options need to be explored. Chapter 4 will serve exactly this purpose.

## Chapter 4: Twentieth century philosophical clues towards moral strategies

### 4.1. Background:

When we look at the history of philosophical developments in the twentieth century, we find many clues as to what constituted the agenda of these philosophers who were grappling with the disappointments of the war, genocide, poverty and environmental crises of the last century of the 2nd millennium. When we try and grasp this agenda in terms of broad strands of ideas, we find the following themes recurring in the works of many philosophers: antifoundationalism, anti-essentialism, nonrepresentational theories of truth, as well as antidualist and antimetaphysical conceptions of reality. Somehow, the philosophers of the twentieth century became disillusioned with the metaphysical dualisms that the Western philosophical tradition inherited from the Greeks. For instance, Rorty (1999:47) identifies the following dualisms: those between essence and accident, substance and property, and appearance and reality. Many of the philosophers of the twentieth century realized that our perception of the world is not constructed with the aid of these Greek oppositions, instead it is the result of a flux of continually changing relations.

The immutable "foundations" initially provided by metaphysics and later on by objective reason were crumbling under the feet of the twentieth century philosophers. Wittgenstein indicated in his later work that language does not represent reality but rather engages us in language-games by which we develop ever-changing conceptions of reality in relation to each other and to changing circumstances. Poststructuralism forever changed our reliance on language structures. No longer were language structures thought to contain any definite meaning and we had to resign ourselves to accepting the ever-deferring character of meaning as developed in Derrida's strategy of deconstruction and his conception of *differance*. Kuhn's paradigm theory indicated the dependence of seemingly solid scientific theory on arbitrary hypothesis ever open to refutation or reversal in the light of new insights or unprecedented problems. And when we thought that this process at least guaranteed the linear progress of science towards objective truth, which was also brought into question with pragmatism's assertion that we can no longer see truth as having any

strict correspondence to reality. Rather, according to the two slogans of the pragmatists, "everything is a social construction" and "all awareness is a linguistic affair". Because our linguistic practices are so bound up with our social practices, our descriptions of reality will always be a function of our social needs (Rorty 1999:48).

Twentieth century philosophers spent a lot of time discussing the Kantian legacy of dualisms. This legacy includes: immanent versus transcendent, individual or particular versus universal, transient versus permanent and fact versus value. Somehow it was no longer a consolation to us human beings to believe that even though we can never completely reach the transcendental, universal reality, at least postulating it makes us different from the rest of the phenomenal world in which other animals live and where everything is indeed relative, pragmatic and material. As we saw in the previous chapter, the problem with accepting dualisms or trying to rehabilitate them by providing them with a different content or slant, lies in the fact that they do not seem to provide us with solutions to our twentieth century realities of particularity, constant change, complexity and ambiguity. It no longer makes sense to hang on to something non-relational because it is an unconditional, universal, necessary, a priori truth. When one is confronted with the reality of language developing in relation to other terms and relationships, when one realizes that science is in fact socially constructed and that people's perspectives on moral truths and guidelines develop differently in different societies and contexts, searching for universal, a priori truths no longer seems plausible.

Does this lead us towards complete relativism? Does this rule out morality as we understand it and imply that all of us will resort to self-interest? Does it mean that society will self-destruct because appeals to absolute truth and absolute value are no longer possible? Is this indeed the Armageddon that many postmodernists, pragmatists, existentialists, poststructuralists and process philosophers were warned about? Is this necessarily the end result of attempts to be serious about the limits of language, and the relational and historical character of truth? Can we avoid the confining character of essentialism and the metaphysical character of dualisms without resorting to an "anything goes" attitude?

I believe that one of the main reasons why many of our modern tools for dealing with moral decision-making in the workplace have become blunt, lies in the fact that modernity led us to believe that we can reason away difference and conflict by just being objective, impartial and reasonable enough. The disappointing reality of the twentieth century's wars and genocide, is that "reasonability" is always fraught with power interests, that objectivity is the pretence of a subject with a face and body, a history, and a set of interests and that impartiality is the discriminatory exercise by which the interest of certain others are excluded for the benefit of our own interests. As May (1993:71) indicates, the foundations of much of our knowledge, are bound to a project which is at least as political as it is epistemological.

Modernity, according to Bauman (1993:8) is about conflict-resolution, and it admits no contradictions except conflicts amenable to, or awaiting resolution. The twin banners of modern ethical thought can be described as *universality* and *foundations*. I would like to describe it as a pyramid knowledge structure, in which the content of truth is either defined by the tip of the pyramid or by its broad foundations. Thus one can either opt to apply the abstract universal principles top-down to the situation at hand, or one might choose to find certain basic, universal truths that ground all moral decision-making. It comes down to the same process - by means of impartial reasoning processes, the solution to the moral dilemma at hand will become clear. Universality has been defined as a feature of ethical prescriptions that compels every human creature, just for the fact of being a human creature, to recognize it as right and thus accept it as obligatory.

Bauman (1993:8) argues that modern ethical thought operates in co-operation with modern legislative practice. In the practice of legislators, universality stood for the exceptionless rule of one set of laws on the territory over which sovereignty extended and foundations stood for the coercive powers of the state that rendered obedience to the rules a sensible expectation. For philosophers and ethicists, rules would be well founded when the persons expected to follow them believed, or could be convinced, that for one reason or another following them would be the right thing to do. Bauman (1993:9) indicates that the persevering and unyielding search for rules that 'will stick' and foundations that 'won't

shake' drew its animus from the faith in the feasibility and ultimate triumph of the humanist project. Modern thought and the practice of modernity were animated by the belief in the possibility of a non-ambivalent, non-aporetic ethical code. It has not been found yet, but modernity seems to believe that it lies around the corner, or the corner after the next one, or the corners of the next millennium. Could it be that the earnest efforts of modernity have been misguided and that what we are experiencing as continued failures of moral nerve is in fact indications of the vanity of modern hopes. Bauman (1993:10) seems to come to the conclusion that a foolproof, universal and unshakably founded ethical code will never be found. In fact, it can be argued that a non-aporetic, non-ambivalent morality is a practical impossibility - perhaps also an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms.

In my view, the marks of the moral condition as we experience it at the beginning of the 21st century are well described by Bauman (1993:11-14). In the first place, it seems impossible to establish whether human are either essentially good or essentially evil. They are, in fact, morally ambivalent: ambivalence resides in the heart of the human face-to-face encounter. Therefore no logically coherent ethical code can 'fit' the essentially ambivalent condition of morality and no rational procedure can 'override' moral impulse. At best one can hope to silence and paralyze certain ambivalent impulses, thereby increasing the odds for moral conduct. But there are no guarantees, no certainties, and no room for clear-cut predictions. In the second place moral phenomena are inherently 'non-rational' in that they normally do not fit the means-end scheme. According to Bauman (1993:11) moral phenomena are only moral if they precede the consideration of gains and losses, they are not supposed to be driven by considerations of mere utility. Therefore they are not regular, repetitive, predictable, monotonous and predictable in a way that would allow us to view them as rule-guided. In the third place, morality according to Bauman (1993:11) is incurably aporetic. Since the majority of moral choices are made between contradictory impulses, few choices are unambiguously good.

Although Bauman (1993:12) makes it very clear that he does not want to embrace relativism, he believes that morality is not universalizable. This does not mean that morality is merely a



local and temporary custom. By saying that morality is un-universalizable, Bauman (1993:12) is opposing certain dangers inherent in making universal claims. As he explains it, he is opposing: *"a concrete version of moral universalism which in the modern era served as but a thinly disguised declaration of intent to embark on Gleichshaltung, on an arduous campaign to smother the differences and above all to eliminate all 'wild' - autonomous, obstreperous and uncontrolled - sources of moral judgment."* Modern thought acknowledges the present diversity of moral beliefs and institutionally promoted actions and the variety of moral postures, yet sees it as an abomination and a challenge that should be overcome. In the process the autonomous responsibility of the moral self is silenced, because it is substituted with heteronomous, enforced-from-outside, ethical rules. The effect of this approach is not so much the universalizing of morality, as the silencing of certain moral impulses in concrete situations.

Modernity's emphasis on conflict-resolution and control often causes it to set the agenda for moral discussions in terms of its own logic and content. It assumes certain concerns and strategies to be universal, yet it in fact serves specific interests. Examples of this can be found in situations where the basic elements of what was considered rational above all doubt had been accused of being ethnocentric, imperialist and inhibiting in character. For instance, feminists have argued that excluding emotion, intuition and experience from what is considered "rational" devalues the inputs and contributions of women (and certain "sensitive" males!) from the workplace, which leads to discrimination. Furthermore, it distinctly impoverishes the moral decision-making in the workplace because it eliminates a big chunk of reality from the agenda. In the North-South debate about sustainable development and the environment, the ethnocentric nature of Western rationalities have been criticized. What is considered a rational, effective approach seems to reflect certain power interests. Where Western rationality puts the blame on Africa for not being ecologically aware, Africans feel that the Western consumption culture is the main culprit. In fact, it seems as if there is not even consensus about the agenda of what should be reasonably discussed. Even the way in which "development" is discussed reflects only the northern point of view. It assumes that economies that maintain the high level of consumption of the North are the norm to which the South should aspire. It seems as if

the West's modern goals of progress, control and comprehensiveness set an agenda that by no means stand fast in all contexts.

Does morality without foundations necessarily result in flux? I believe this need not be the case. Meaningful discussions on morality does in fact become much more likely in a conversation where the content of values are not assumed, and where misunderstanding about values that may previously have been considered "universal truths" can be avoided by specific, contextual examples and strategies. It is important to note that accepting the fact that morality does not operate unambiguously according to universal rules, does not lead to moral relativism. Rather than advocating an "anything goes" approach one becomes aware of the fact that all ethical codes and moral practices are rooted in specific contexts, spheres of life, and power-interests. Modern societies practiced moral parochialism under the mask of promoting universal ethics. By exposing the essential incongruity between any power-assisted ethical code on the one hand, and the infinitely complex condition of the moral self on the other, the falsity of society's pretence to be the sole author and guardian of morality is exposed. In this way the individual's moral conscience comes into play, and real moral discussion becomes possible. How to bring the individual to put her/ his moral values in play in the discussion, how to tie this complex moral self to organizational concern, will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5.

In developing a philosophical perspective on an alternative approach to dealing with morality in the workplace, I am going to suggest that we use the insights of the twentieth century philosophers in exactly the eclectic way that most of them suggest we go about developing truth. Only, we are taking them seriously in admitting that we will probably not find THE truth, since that would be to assert that these new perspectives constitute the "objective", or "true" way. No, we are merely going to look for insights useful for a specific context, and a specific range of problems. We will take a look at what various theories offer in terms of addressing the unique challenges of the pluralist working environment. We will make a unique mix without using any one recipe. In terms of another metaphor, we take a kaleidoscopic glance at the possibilities of mixing up various disciplines and various sciences, deconstructing the barriers between insights from "scientific" facts and "historical" values, playing around with the relationships between that which only appears to be true and what

system. In contrast to the earlier Hegel, who as "existential" thinker never lost sight of the tensions and contradictions of concrete experience, Hegel's reduction of objectivity to subjectivity attempts to dissolve these tensions and ambiguities. This is done by "decoding" experience through the interpretation of the world of space and time as objective manifestation of absolute subjectivity (Taylor 1987:63).

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, as much as he was attracted by the work of the earlier Hegel, maintained that the totalizing consciousness of Hegel's later work is presumptuous. Merleau-Ponty aimed his "nonphilosophical" critique of modern philosophy at subverting the constructive subject by exposing the errors and dangers of its presumptuousness. Merleau-Ponty indicates how a logically consistent transcendental idealism strips the world of its opacity and its transcendence. To Merleau-Ponty, the birth of eternally constructive subjectivity is the death of the passionate temporal subject. Eternity, understood as the power to embrace and anticipate temporal developments in a single intention, becomes the very definition of subjectivity. Yet the philosopher who claims to know universal truth forgets the inescapable non-knowledge from which his/her reflection necessarily departs. This experience that nurtures reflection cannot itself be known. Since the thinker is always "thrown into" a *de facto* situation, the search for the conditions of possibility is in principle posterior to an actual experience. The reflective subject claiming to be the creative source or origin of the world of experience is called a "parasite" by Merleau-Ponty, since it is nourished by experience more "originary" than its own deeds.

The irreducible temporality of subjectivity "decenters" self-consciousness in yet another way because *time* enters reflection. The achievement of self-consciousness takes time because of the inevitable delay between the constituting act of consciousness and the return of the constructive subject to itself through the process of recollection. The result of this delay is that the consummation of the union between subjectivity and objectivity remains a dream whose realization is perpetually "deferred" (Taylor 1987:68). The reflective subject attempts to close in on itself by incorporating every other and assimilating all difference. In contrast, the living body resists closure and necessarily remains open to what is other than and different from itself. This "holey-ness" and

"gappiness" causes the living body to be indefinable in terms of binary oppositions that structure conceptual reflection, such as that of subject or object. The body is neither subject nor object, but rather the mean between extremes - the milieu in which subjectivity and objectivity, interiority and exteriority intersect.

While the reflective philosopher, attempts to cast his/her eagle eye across the world to bring everything to light, the non-philosopher invokes an elusive and elliptical style to evoke carnality. As such, it embraces Heidegger's conception of the body as "dark hole" that makes light possible. Irreducible darkness is, paradoxically, the lighting necessary for the play of differences that constitutes spatial and temporal experience. The non-philosopher can apprehend this play of differences in the body, even though it will still remain impossible to comprehend it. "Flesh" as this "formative milieu" of subjectivity and objectivity is not limited to a particular genre of existence. Rather, the world is universal flesh - a network of relations, in which everything is intertwined and interlaced. Merleau-Ponty indicates how seemingly "objective" realities such as color is in fact yet another variant in another dimension of variation - that of its relations with its surroundings [recent scientific evidence for this will be presented later on in this chapter]. The fact that the "flesh of things" is the invisible interplay of differences that articulates the difference necessary for identity does not end in chaos, but rather in texture. Merleau-Ponty makes it clear that flesh is not a contingency or chaos, instead the interweaving of universal flesh produces a "texture" (*textere: to weave*) that forms the tissue or fabric of the visible which interlaces all things (Taylor 1987:73).

Merleau-Ponty extends this analysis to the use of language, and argues that language is a relational network in which "there are only differences between signifiers". This play of differences is not only created by a individual speaker or speakers. I am able to speak only because language speaks in and through me. In explaining the working of the "savage word", Merleau-Ponty emphasizes that the individual is not the organizer of language, rather words would combine through him by virtue of the neural intertwining of their meaning, through the "occult traffic of metaphor" (Taylor 1987:74). The "Logos" that Merleau-Ponty speaks of is not a transcendent ideality, but has its concrete embodiment in the sensible world with

which it is inseparably intertwined. In this sense the word is always already incarnate. This carnal *logos* is nothing other than the interlacing of flesh, and therefore veils as much as it unveils.

Merleau-Ponty argues that in order to avoid the presumptuousness of the reflective philosophers, it is necessary to return to the obscurity, ambiguity and contradictions of concrete temporal experience. He suggests that we turn "reflection" into "hyperreflection" [*surreflexion*]. The idea behind hyperreflection is that it does not assimilate the "transcendence" of the world within its own immanent activity. Transcendence, in this context, refers to nothing otherworldly, but designates the brute givenness or facticity of the world as such. Hyperdialectic is described by Merleau-Ponty as a thought that is capable of reaching truth because it envisages without restriction the plurality of relationships and what has been called ambiguity. Synthesis is impossible because existence remains open-ended (Taylor 1987:79).

The ideas of Merleau-Ponty, and as we shall soon discover, that of Levinas and Derrida sound strange and abstract to the ears of our generation who have for the most part grown up believing in the powers of the self-conscious and the self-governing individual subject. In fact, we have a whole range of modernist beliefs engrained into the way we perceive the world and ourselves and the strategies we have for coping with the problems that we face in reality. In fact, this epistemology which is the end-result of the enlightenment, is a solid pyramid of foundationalist truths that not only provide us with explanatory tools with which to analyze, explain and predict behavior, but also with the security of having access to so-called self-evident truths. The elements of the foundationalist epistemological pyramid support one another in such a way that one cannot really tamper with any one aspect of it without having the whole epistemology come apart. And that is precisely what happened when developments in cognitive science, linguistics and quantum mechanics started to undermine the most basic premises of foundationalist epistemology. By the mid- to late 1970's, a body of empirical evidence began to emerge that called into question the fundamental tenets of Anglo-American cognitivism. Up to then reason was viewed as disembodied and literal, assuming a strict dualism between the mind and body, in which the



mind was characterized in terms of its formal functions such as formal logic or the manipulation of a system of signs, independent of the body. However, two kinds of evidence drew this into question: firstly, the strong dependence of concepts and reason upon the body and secondly, the centrality to conceptualization and reason of imaginative processes, especially metaphor, metonymy, imagery, prototypes, frames, mental spaces and radial categories (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:77).

Lakoff & Johnson (1999:77) indicate that an embodied view of the mind emerged which challenged the disembodied view of reason to its core, by establishing the following:

- Conceptual structure arises from sensorimotor experience and the neural structures that give rise to it. Therefore our notions of structure, or category, is very much the result of our body's sensory reaction to challenges it encounters. We are neural beings, living organisms that must exclude certain things and include others to physically survive. Categorization is, for the most part, not a product of conscious reasoning, but rather the result of the brains and bodies that we have and the way in which we interact with the world (Lakoff & Johnson 1999:18).
- Mental structures are not meaningless symbols, but are intrinsically meaningful by virtue of their connection to our bodies and our embodied experience.
- Our capabilities for gestalt perception and image formation as well as our motor schemas give rise to "basic level" concepts that in turn give rise to primary metaphors which allows us to conceptualize abstract concepts on the basis of inferential patterns used in sensorimotor processes that are directly tied to the body.
- Reason is embodied, since our fundamental forms of inference arise from sensorimotor and other body-based forms of inference.
- Furthermore, reason is imaginative in that inference forms are mapped onto abstract modes of inference by metaphor.
- The result of this is that conceptual systems are pluralistic, not monolithic and therefore most concepts are defined by multiple conceptual metaphors, which are often inconsistent with each other. As Lakoff and Johnson (1999:73) explain, our most important abstract concepts, from love to causation to morality, are



conceptualized via multiple complex metaphors which are an essential part of these concepts. Without these metaphors the concepts are skeletal and have no conceptual or inferential structure.

If we therefore want to understand how morality operates in the workplace, we have to acknowledge both the embodied and imaginative character of our moral awareness. Our thinking about what is moral does not only rely on our very basic sensorimotor system and the way that it makes us respond to situations, but also on the imaginative construction of metaphors that enable us to make sense of the situation at hand. This view of the embodied character of our moral awareness is collaborated by Petersen's (1999:40) descriptions of the "silent patrons of our hearts" that may help us produce and evaluate multiple fleeting sketches of possible decisions and actions, before we consciously reason about what to do. He agrees with Lakoff and Johnson's view that somatic markers developed by the process of biological and social evolution pre-selects responses before we engage in conscious reasoning. Somatic markers represent a more sophisticated version of what we call a "gut-feeling". Petersen (1999:42) argues that many diverse experiences such as displeasure, acceptance, punishment and praise may lead to the creation of somatic markers that are activated before and during our reasoning process. I argued, in my analysis of Olafson's insights in Mitsein, that we develop our moral conceptions because of the interactions with others and with the world that depend on positive or negative feedback, thereby forming subconscious as well as conscious moral dispositions. In trying to create a moral culture in the workplace, these aspects have to be taken into account. They can in fact provide us with imaginative alternatives in our value-creation programs, as will be illustrated in Chapter 5.

Acknowledging the embodied character of reason however has further epistemological implications. Firstly, it undermines the classical philosophical view of scientific realism. Disembodied objective scientific realism makes the following claims: Firstly, there is a world independent of our understanding of it that we can have stable knowledge of, and secondly our very concepts and forms of reason are characterized by the external world itself and not by our bodies and brains. These assumptions support the subject-object dichotomy that so many twentieth century philosophers struggle with. Lakoff and Johnson

(1999:97) indicate the importance of philosophers such as Merleau-Ponty and Dewey in grappling with this problem. Both these philosophers argue that mind and body are not separate metaphysical entities. In fact, when we use the words mind and body we are imposing bounded conceptual structures artificially on the ongoing integrated process that constitutes our experience. The result of a strict subject-object dichotomy is that there are only two possible, equally erroneous, conceptions of objectivity. Objectivity is either given by the things themselves (the objects) or by intersubjective structures of consciousness shared by all people (the subject). When we look at the moral theories discussed in the previous chapter it becomes clear that all of them either appeal to some self-evident truths provided by reality itself and accessible through rationality (such as Kantianism) or to some intersubjective agreement on what constitutes common truth. The dangers of both these extremes were highlighted in the previous chapter. The problem underlying both approaches is that the dichotomy between subjectivity and objectivity remains unbreached. The solution that Lakoff and Johnson (1999:93) propose is that of embodied realism, which relies on the fact that we are coupled to the world through our embodied interactions. Our directly embodied concepts can reliably fit those embodied interactions and the understandings of the world that arise from them.

The disintegration of the foundationalist epistemology, brings up another, related question, namely, how does one go about establishing meaningful truth? As post-Kuhnians, we know that there are no pure observation sentences from which a scientific theory can be arrived at through induction. There can be no assumption-free scientific observation. But does this mean that there can be no stable scientific truths at all and no lasting scientific results? Lakoff and Johnson (1999:107) want to argue for embodied scientific realism. Embodied truths are not objective truths, because truth depends on understanding. Yet, truth is not completely subjective, because embodiment keeps it from being purely subjective. The two philosophers argue that because we all have much the same embodied basic-level and spatial-relational concepts, there will be an enormous range of shared "truths". They argue that social truths make much better sense on this account than on the correspondence theory. These social truths are based on extremely wide understandings and experiences of culture, institutions, interpersonal relations and social practices. Social truth can only make

sense as an embodied truth because it makes no sense without understanding. Therefore, when one wants to determine what is just, the truth will depend on the understanding(s) existing in that specific embodied context, which will bring to the fore contested concepts such as fairness, rights, democracy, identity etc. One should therefore be careful to overemphasize the "enormous range of shared truths" that Lakoff and Johnson speaks of on the basis of shared human bodilyness. Social truths depend on the interactions of so many different understandings and so many variables play a role that I would caution against deterministic biological arguments.

Petersen (1999:48) provides us with some perspectives on how our social grammar influences the development of moral truths. He argues that people can intuitively recognize certain sentences as stating something unjust, very much in the same way as one would recognize a face, without being able to immediately explain what caused one to recognize it. Petersen (1999:49) describes this social grammar as layered and contingent, not derivable from simple principles. It involves an internalized ethical grammar, or a set of tacit norms, and a certain level of knowledge. We can think consciously about these norms and values, and they seem to be part of our common sense. Yet Petersen argues that these norms and values are often vague, and actually represent only the upper tip of a much more complicated structure of ethical norms, experiences and knowledge. Ineffable ethical norms and feelings, inclinations and emotions that belong to the collective unconscious represent the unconscious layers of the mind, and this is where somatic markers originate.

This social grammar is shared and silent in character, a collective unconscious, as Petersen (1999:53) explains it. Every member of the community carries a holographic impression of the collective unconscious, which is part of the social grammar in their hearts and minds, without being able to state the particulars. Every member of the community would be able to make value judgments on the basis of this impression without being able to show an explicit chain of reasoning. This social grammar displays a certain generativity in that the ineffable norms and feelings of the deeper layers of this grammar will allow many different concrete moral judgments to be generated by the individual, all in some way compatible with the shared, but ineffable grammar. Petersen (1999:57) explains this social grammar by using

the metaphor of a game that is defined by a number of general rules, but does not allow for individual actions to be predicted or determined. The ineffability of this grammar means that it cannot be changed at will, that is subjectively, we can only listen to it. Yet one has to emphasize that this does not mean that our individual judgments and actions will just be involuntary expressions of the collective unconscious, since grammar does not determine specific judgments and actions. Ethical considerations comprises both the complex set of social-emotional responses we have inherited and our ability to let our emotions be activated by the virtual experiences constructed with the aid of symbols in order to make novel judgments and decisions. The outcome is thus neither determined solely by the grammar we inherited, nor does it allow for arbitrary subjective outcomes (Petersen 1999:59).

By referring to the work of Polanyi, Petersen (1999:25) refers to various kinds of knowledge that all play a role in how we perceive a situation and how we make decisions about what to believe and what to do. In the first place he refers to formal, explicit knowledge that includes declarative, propositional knowledge and explicit procedural knowledge. In the second place, he refers to the "silent patron" type of knowledge that includes personal tacit knowledge and implicit knowledge, i.e. informal, impressionistic, self-regulatory knowledge and tacit knowledge structures. What Polanyi explains to us is that we go from certain particulars to what may be seen as a gestalt. Because of our previous experience, we are able to recognize a gestalt without recounting all the various particulars. We tacitly integrate all the particulars to a whole without consciously being aware of how we reach our conclusion. In fact Polanyi would argue that by forcing ourselves to constantly break the world into particulars, we might cause a self-willed kind of autism, in which particulars remain meaningless fragments (Petersen 1999:38). Thirdly, what he calls "lumpy knowledge" includes stratified knowledge and new knowledge based on unspecifiable and subliminal clues. This could be illustrated by a technician or professional who received certain basic knowledge through training, but is able to do infinitely more than what she or he has directly been told, without being able to explain where the knowledge comes from (Petersen 1999:42). Fourthly, social and cultural knowledge refers to that which we inherit from our communities. All these types of knowledge work together in a way that we can hardly comprehend, much less predict with any certainty. In my view they constitute a web

objective, will constitute the matrix in which all subjects and objects are formed, deformed and reformed.

It is this process that allow organizations to operate as non-totalizing structures that I will attempt to describe in the last section, in order to develop a theory on how moral decision-making and behavior in the organization might develop and operate. I will argue that individuals develop a relational conception of the good, both in economic and moral terms, and that the measure in which individuals identify and associate themselves with these goods becomes the strange attractor that binds them together within the organization. However, just as much as they intersubjectively constitute the good, they are themselves changed and influenced by it. Changes from within themselves, the external environment and new additions to the organization places the whole system in flux, therefore instability and an ongoing redefinition and re-evaluation of the strange attractor in the organization will be inevitable. Furthermore, the existence of the strange attractor that binds the complex system together does not mean that all behavior and decisions can be explained by referring to it. In fact, the character and content of the attractor may be so complex and volatile that it is indeed hard to pinpoint, and cause and effect relations within the complex system makes clear-cut prediction of behavior and perceptions virtually impossible.

#### **4.4. Living and reliving the relational character of moral values:**

This section will argue that moral values and the ethical principles by which they are explained do not exist as timeless universal truths to which impartial and objective reason provide access. Rather, moral values are the result of the fact that we as humans define "the good" in terms of complex interactions of positive feedback, continuous evaluation and practical effectivity in our relationships with other human beings, nature, and if we are religious, the Transcendent. The way in which we balance the interest of all the parties involved results in certain moral goods being established and re-established as time goes by. Yet, we do not, as subjects, have unlimited and uncontrolled power to arrange the content of what is considered morally good as we please and by whim. That would, of course, result in moral relativism, and it would also belie the insight of the twentieth century philosophers



that we as subjects are also the objects of our own construal and devices. The fact that we as subjects are at the same time also objects serves to bring us beyond the category of subjective and objective truths to relational truths. And even with regards to relational truths we do not have to resort to relativism as the critics of pragmatism argue. The reason being that the truth is not disregarded in its totality every time individuals come to define what constitutes the good. Those individuals stand within a certain tradition, have a certain upbringing, is a unique configuration of value-systems as Chapter 2 argued. Every subject is determined by the historical, contingent "*Geworfenheit*" which human existence implies. It is in exploring the limits of this *Geworfenheit* and pushing against the boundaries of perceptions and beliefs inherent to this condition that moral values become valuable. Moral development, it will be argued, takes place when the relations in play in determining the "good" in a particular situation is broadened and diversified, because as the number of relations used in determining the good increases, the danger of the good becoming an exclusive arrangement to the benefit of the few diminishes. This also enables us to take what is often seen as a complicating factor of the pluralistic environment and use it as one of the most important strengths in developing a moral working environment. This concept of relational values also undermines the distinction between material goods and moral goods, since all decisions on "goods" are made in relation to every other person and aspect of society. The dichotomies of the public versus the private, the political versus the ethical etc. are also addressed in this way.

#### **4.4.1. From the impartial individual subject to relational subjectivity:**

The reaction against the rational subject who can access objective reality by means of his/her reason, has been addressed by various philosophers in the twentieth century. Mark Taylor (1987) traces this reaction against the subject to Martin Heidegger's attempt to address the inherent nihilism in modernity. As Taylor (1987:37) explains, the distinguishing characteristic of modern philosophy is to think Being in terms of subjectivity. The work of Heidegger explains the way in which Hegel's dialectic of self-consciousness extends and completes the Cartesian return to the subject. The subject's search for certainty and stability by means of the objectification of reality takes revenge upon the subject itself



when the objective fruits of man's subjectivity reign supreme and man itself becomes objectified. Heidegger wants to dismantle the conception of the human subject mastering reality and pleads for the realization that man cannot grasp reality by means of subjective reason but must rather allow reality to present itself, in fact, to unveil itself. This openness towards the arrival of reality and refraining from grasping reality as subject, is explained in Heidegger's conception of the gift. The arrival of reality is as unexpected and unreciprocal as the acceptance of a gift. Man must remain open to the arrival of this gift by acknowledging his/her "*Geworfenheit*" "thrownness" in the historical and contingent reality.

A less well-known aspect of Heidegger's work is the concept of *Mitsein*, which is explored by Frederick Olafson as a clue to Heidegger's views on morality. Although Heidegger never directly addressed the issues of normative ethics, in *Being and Time* he provides a very harsh critique of the whole conception of "values" as objective criteria for the guidance of our lives. These "objective values" belong to an anonymous public mode of selfhood that excludes individuality and the distinctive character of the human being and are no more than a set of defenses by which we human beings hide our freedom from ourselves (Olafson 1998:3). The question that needs to be asked is whether, in a world without moral signposts, standards of right and wrong are still possible in our relation to one another. Heidegger's thoughts on what constitutes authentic human life provide us with some clues in this regard. In *Being and Time* he has a section devoted to *Mitsein*, our being in the world together with one another. This is not merely an empirical fact, but rather a constitutive element in our own mode of being as well in that of every other being. Olafson (1998:4) indicates that mere empathy will not suffice in doing this being-together-in-the-world justice. Heidegger speaks of *Fursorge* - one human being's caring about the other - and it is this caring that he declares to be, in its several modalities, central to our being with one another. One of the existential virtues closely akin to authenticity, namely "resoluteness", pushes us to caring *Mitsein* with one another.

The special character of the relationships amongst human beings is of central importance for moral philosophy. The mode in which human beings are in the world together is that of disclosing both other entities and themselves. According to Olafson (1998: 11), the.

Heideggerian conception of a human being as "subject-entity" (*seiendes Subjekt*) makes the character of our being together in the world much less "obvious" than it is usually thought to be. Not only the mode of being that is quite different from *Dasein* is being disclosed, but also other like entities - other human beings. Both the Ego and the Alter and their cousins not only have a world in Heidegger's sense of the world, but they are also reciprocally present to one another as having a world - in a way for which there is no parallel in the natural world. Olafson argues that "our being for the sake of others" does indeed follow from *Mitsein* as this relation of reciprocal presence. He argues that the recognition of another human being as complementing one's own being is prior to the definition of substantive rules of conduct (do's and don'ts), whether of justice or whatever, and this identity of the Ego and Alter, accordingly, would imply that this relationship has an influence on how ethical perceptions and behavior develop. There is a partnership implicit in this kind of reciprocity between human beings that carries with it a binding character of a specifically ethical kind. The relation of one subject-entity or *Dasein* to another constitutes a whole new approach to what is regarded as authoritative moral requirements. Olafson argues that we are unavoidably implicated in ethical relationships with one another and in those relationships we are both bound and free - free in the sense that only in our relation to others we can acknowledge and realize our own human nature, and bound in that we cannot treat others in a way we do not accept for ourselves.

As was argued in Chapter 2, our perception of the moral good is influenced by many different factors that originate from all the various aspects of our lives. It is therefore not strange that Olafson (1998:73) indicates that the kind of human world in which we paradoxically and somewhat discredibly feel most at home, has the kind of hybrid character in which the commitment of human beings to any set of understandings based on mutual recognition is never very secure and in which quite inconsistent life policies may alternate in a single life with bewildering frequency. Olafson (1998:73) claims that the ethical reality of our lives is therefore neither that of the unalloyed state of nature nor that of a true moral community, but rather a confused mixture of the two. This compels us to live with the particular uncertainty that surrounds precisely those statements that we considered irrevocable and free of ambiguity.

Olafson (1998:84) investigates the good as the foundation of our notions of well-being and happiness. He indicates that the "good" has, especially in the modern period, been understood as defining forms of satisfaction that need not in themselves be inherently ethical in character. The "good" has been seen mostly as an object of desire, as something attractive to human beings. The "other standard" that is used to evaluate the good in terms of its moral content, has been the "right", which unlike the good, has no immediate attractive associations with it. The principle of the right that Kant for instance requires of us, has as its underlying assumption a kind of self-denial that presupposes the familiar contrast between the life of enjoyment and a strenuously conceived moral rectitude. Kant also aligned our rational natures with the latter and argued that our dignity as moral beings will compensate us for the sacrifice of pleasure. The fact that we act upon the rational decisions of our higher faculties constitutes a new kind of good that comes our way when we adhere to the right. But is the satisfaction that we get from doing the right thing always something that sacrifices pleasure, a sacrifice that is decided upon rationally?

Olafson (1998) argued that the central axis of our moral life is our developing understanding of the implications of the fact that there are other human beings in the world with us. When one takes into consideration that the notion of *Mitsein* generate a kind of mutuality that makes the other's happiness a condition of one's own, this kind of happiness becomes a good that incorporates the moral content of the right within it. Olafson (1998:89) explains that in the context of *Mitsein* the goods that we value and seek for ourselves increasingly become what can be called "person-related goods". We therefore come to understand that the goods we ordinarily seek are mediated by other human beings, who in one way or another help us to acquire what we want or need. Olafson (1998:92) argues that it is only in a reciprocal relation to someone who can recognize us and confirm us in our sense of what we aspire to be that a form of happiness is realized that cannot be reduced to the private consumption of the good things this world has to offer. I want to go even a little bit further, to ask whether the material pleasures offered to us by the world is not indeed also the result of our *Mitsein* with others and the positive or negative feedback we receive in relation to our professional success, our lifestyle, and our influence

and status. This would mean that even material goods, and the economic values needed to produce them, are intricately bound up in our being-with-others in this world.

When one looks at the way the market economy operates, it becomes clear that the relational character of our being-in-the-world certainly influences the way economic goods and services are distributed. I want to argue that those perceptions and motivations that constitute economic goods are no less determined by the fact that our being-in-the-world places us in certain relations with other human beings than by moral perceptions and opinions. We come to strive towards certain economic goods and certain moral goods because we derive positive feedback from attaining certain economic goods, just as we derive positive feedback from pursuing certain moral goods.

In fact, marketing experts such as Hackley and Kitchen (1999) argue that effective marketing communication seek to combine emotional and rational appeals to create certain perceptions of "the good life" that people may want to aspire to. What the media can for instance do, is to relate a part of the subjective reality of the individual to some external stimuli. According to Hume's epistemology, used by Hackley and Kitchen (1999:20) in his analysis, we associate one idea with another if there is a resemblance between them, or if they are contiguous in time or place. If the association of the one idea with the other is compelling enough, they may appear to become necessarily connected after a number of repetitions. This means that what becomes desirable in the economic sense, and what therefore derives profit and drives the market economy, is directly influenced by the way human beings measure themselves, their ideas and perceptions, against those of other people, institutions or even natural phenomenon. Why is this an important point to make? I will argue that the dichotomy that exists between so-called business values such as profit, efficiency, productivity, sustainability etc. and so-called moral values of justice, equity, honesty, and benevolence, causes us to always seek the solutions to business ethics dilemmas in terms of the either-or style of reasoning. I would like to believe that if we take into account the relational way in which our perceptions of the "good" come into being, we might find that the goods sought in the economic world supports moral goods, and moral goods also support the good life that is a necessary condition for a growing economy.

Hackley and Kitchen (1999:18) uses the example of British citizens watching scenes of children starving in Africa on TV. For the purposes of this discussion, we can imagine wealthy suburban residents of South Africa seeing pictures of starving children in other parts of Africa. We might sympathize, and try to imagine what those children or their parents must be feeling, or we may look down on them, judging that a lack of hard work and dedication caused the situation. By the same impulse, we see advertising images of affluent consumption and if our experiential reality does not match the image we might experience a subjective feeling of dissonance, or a state of felt deprivation. In this case, it seems that our desire for certain economic goods may directly influence our moral perceptions, and our moral perceptions might also influence our striving towards certain economic goods. In the first instance it is clear to us that the situation is not only an undesirable economic state, it also makes a moral appeal on us. We might shrug off our moral conscience by arguing that certain values such as hard work, dedication, honesty and respect for human dignity as is ingrained in our new South African Constitution sets those living in wealthy suburban areas apart from those living in certain other African countries. We can even argue that the poverty in South Africa itself is the legacy of the previous dispensation where these values were undermined or at least restricted to only the affluent White minority. But we will be hard-pressed to sustain the argument that people bring poverty upon themselves precisely because of the fact that there is no clear-cut distinction between the economic and the moral dimensions of life, nor between the political and the ethical, and the public and the private. The whole of our being-in-this-world are determined by what we perceive as good in relation to other people, institutions, nature, and if we are religious, the Transcendent. The things we hold as highest goods determine how we deal with political power, how we distribute social goods such as education and health care how we run our economy, how we manage our businesses, and how we deal with one another as human beings in all spheres of life.

If we acknowledge the complexity of relations by which all the various spheres of life is related to one another, and the intersubjective relations which determines the content of our descriptions of the good, one cannot practice moral judgments by referring to some



abstract common set of values or principles that is supposed to guide us through moral dilemmas. Olafson (1998:93) makes the point that "values" cannot bind people to one another any more than the consumer preferences on their shopping lists can. I want to argue that Olafson is correct in saying that we should refrain from speaking about "values" as objective, timeless moral truths that must be applied to practical moral dilemmas. The *explicatio-applicatio* logic of this type of moral reasoning does not make any sense if one realizes that the moral content value or principles that is being explicated in the explication activity, is indeed part of and determined by the relational practice of people grappling with one another on certain moral issues. Olafson (1998:96) insists that he has neither postulated the idea of a new moral truth nor retreated into subjectivism. He is rather advocating the idea of a relationship between human beings that is preeminently realized in our capacity to acknowledge a common truth. But these common truths should not be seen as something that functions as objective, universal moral guidelines, once again separating the "is" from the "ought". Rather, our lives with other like beings constitutes a relation between us that has a normative character, and it is that relation that finds expression in the "ought". By this reasoning, Olafson (1998:99) indicates, the whole conception of the ethical as something either subjective or objective- either in here or out there - is shown to be beside the point. Understanding Being as a milieu of presence enables us to understand ethics as the locus in the world of the encounter with one another of entities that exist. Dasein's inability to understand itself in any other way than by a false assimilation of itself to inappropriate models drawn from entities in its world could indeed be made bearable by the fact that there are indeed such entities as we humans, entities that can recognize one another as bearers of truth and relate to one another so as to at least approximate some tailor-made, temporary solutions to life's most difficult moral dilemmas.

#### 4.4.2. From exclusive constructions to interactive deconstructions: Levinas and Derrida

When reading the work of the French philosophers of the twentieth century, one finds that they pursued many similar intuitions, even though at many points they simply agree to disagree. In Derrida's essay *Differance*, he speaks of bringing together some different



directions and ideas that had originated over a period of time in a sheaf. He insisted on the word sheaf for two reasons. In the first place he wanted to illustrate the general system of the economy that each time, text by text, context by context, displayed a graphic disorder. On the other hand, the word sheaf indicated that the assemblage that he proposes has the complex structure of weaving, an interlacing which permits the different threads and different lines of meaning - or of force - to go off again in different directions, just as it is always ready to tie itself with others (Derrida 1982:4). I am going to attempt to employ something of the same in this section, where I would attempt to weave together the ideas of Heidegger, Levinas, and Derrida based on an intuition as to where the overlapping of some of their ideas in the complex web of twentieth century thought might lead us in our thinking about morality in the workplace. In identifying certain common concerns, in weaving together my own subjective construction on where all this might lead us, I will not pretend to bring these philosophers together in some common structure, or to dialectically place them against one another in order to once again synthesize the differences in some Hegelian fashion. Rather, I will eclectically make use of some of their insights, play with their different meanings and agendas and see where this leads us.

One of the most basic concerns both Levinas and Derrida inherited from Heidegger is the way in which our language structures and our knowledge systems inhibit our understanding of reality and ourselves. Both Levinas and Derrida display frustration with attempts in the history of philosophy to deal with this problem. Kant's strategy doomed us to the unbridgeable dichotomy between subject and object, Hegel's dialectic system doomed us to dialectical oppositions and totalizing metanarratives synthesizing the whole of reality under the simplistic believe in the Absolute Spirit's ascent to absolute knowledge through human progress. Taylor (1986:346) explains that Western philosophy coincides with the disclosure of the other, where the other, in manifesting itself as a being, loses its alterity. As Levinas himself puts it: "*From its infancy philosophy has been struck by a horror of the other that remains other - with an insurmountable allergy.*" Philosophy became obsessed by immanence, autonomy, with the comprehension of being as its last word. Not only does the world understood by reason cease to be the other, but everything that is an attitude of consciousness, all feeling, action, labor etc. is in the last analysis self-consciousness, that is

identity and autonomy. Hegel's philosophy is according to Levinas the logical outcome of the underlying allergy of philosophy. Levinas asks us to put into question the thesis according to which the ultimate essence of man and of truth is the comprehension of the being of beings, a thesis to which theory, experience and discourse seem to lead. Levinas urges us to seek an attitude that cannot be converted into a category, whose movement towards the other is not recuperated in identification and that does not return to its point of departure (Taylor 1986:348).

In its capacity as the said, language is both our doorway and our barrier towards reality. Complex linguistic structures function to reduce the unknown to the known. Because of Western philosophy's belief in the autonomous reason of the self-conscious being, this "knowledge" is the result of mirroring the other in the same. Language remains the only way in which we can make our world comprehensible, and yet it is precisely the fact that we are completely dependant on language that makes the world inaccessible to us. Levinas agrees with Heidegger that in the modern world, knowledge becomes power through technology and its extension in the authoritarian state. In fact, as Taylor (1987:201) aptly describes it: "saying unveils through revelation". This happens because reasons seek the relationship between terms, between the one and the other showing themselves in a theme, insisting on coherence, despite their difference. Insofar as the said is the systematic totality in which all parts are integrated, thought and being is assembled into a rational construction that is defined by a comprehensive and comprehensible theme. Levinas (1985:42) indicates that he is disappointed with Heidegger's attempt to see language as wisdom that must be clarified, since to him, Levinas, the *said* does not count as much as the *saying*. If reason becomes so all-powerful, the world becomes a penal colony, because the said declares war on every difference that does not conform to identity and every other that does not return to the same (Taylor 1987:198). [This results in what Lyotard would call a metanarrative.] Levinas questions the assumption upon which such a thematization rests, namely that all diachrony can be synchronized (Taylor 1987:200).

Taylor (1987:187) introduces Levinas's critique of Hegel by referring to Anti-Climatus's view that the self is not autonomous and self-positing as Hegel would have it. Rather, self-

relation is possible only by virtue of the relationship of the self to "an Other" (et Andet). The self is not autonomous but is in fact posited by an Other, which is explained by Kierkegaard, as infinitely and qualitatively different. The desire for the other, which is according to Levinas (in Taylor 1986:350) our very sociality, is not a simple relationship with a being where, according to our formulas, the other is converted to the same. The movement unto another, instead of completing and contenting me, puts me into question, empties me of myself, and does not let off emptying me, while at the same time uncovering for me ever new resources. In fact, Levinas is of the opinion that since the subject is not autonomous, the self's relationship to itself necessarily entails its relation to an Other. The return to and of this Other is the eternal recurrence of the alterity that decentres the subject (Llewelyn 1995:68-69). In contrast to the active subject of modern philosophy, Levinas speaks of a subjectivity of bottomless passivity, made out of assignation, like the echo of a sound that would precede the resonance of this sound. The active source of this subjectivity is not thematizable. Levinas uses the term *ille* to suggest this nonthematizable source of the subject. Illeity links up with the "Other", "Infinite" and "Alterity" to form a metonymic chain of signifiers intended to evoke what cannot be designated. This alterity escapes binary oppositions because the Other cannot be rendered merely the opposite of self, since the relation with the Other is in fact bound up with the constitution of the self.

Ricoeur (1992:337) criticizes Levinas' arguments as being in the philosophical style of hyperbole. The way in which the ego is described in *Totality and Infinity* as being possessed with the desire to form a circle with itself, to identify itself, and in *Time and the Other*, where it is described as a stubbornly closed, locked-up, separate ego creates the impression of absolute interiority versus absolute exteriority between the self and the "Other"

Ricoeur (1992:139) argues that if interiority were indeed determined solely by the desire for retreat and closure, how could it ever hear a word addressed to it? Ricoeur is also critical of Levinas' description of the "Other" as an executioner that demands responsibility for the "Other" to the point of substitution. Ricoeur (1992:340) feels that Levinas underestimates the importance of a sense of selfhood and sameness as precisely the means by which the self is able to relate to the other. Van der Ven (1998:17) notes that Ricoeur does not explicitly refer to the distinction Levinas makes between *being with* and

*being for*. Levinas being a Jew exposed to the reality of holocaust-atrocities sees this a crucial distinction. Being *with* others is understood as basically just living past one another in the world, ignoring the existence and humanity of other human beings, whereas being *for* others is to allow oneself to be addressed by the existence of others. Being *for* the other refers to the same openness to the other that Ricoeur advocates in his defense of a certain type of friendship, which is not oriented toward utility or pleasure, but which is rather based the mutuality of being *for* the other.

Yet Ricoeur (1992:183) is making the important point that for an individual to be able to respond to the other in a moral way, this individual has have a sense of what would be a moral response. Ricoeur (1992:182) argues that the individual can only have this sense if he or she has a certain sense of self-esteem, which is in fact connected to what this individual believes constitutes "the good life". How this sense of the good life forms part of how we develop our moral metaphors, will be dealt with in more detail later on in the chapter. The virtue of true Aristotelian friendship is in fact according to Ricoeur the transition between the individual's self-esteem, based on his/ her sense of the good life, and justice. Ethics is according to Ricoeur (1992:172) made up of these three things, the individual's sense of the good-life for herself (self-esteem), with others (solicitude) in just institutions (justice).

Levinas, being very wary of the "strong self" that he so directly experienced in Nazi-arrogance, believes it is very necessary for the self to be decentered by the Other. Levinas believes that another's alien existence can concern us, can contest us, and can in fact elect us for a debt that can never be repaid. For Levinas, the face of the other is a trace, a trace lost in a trace. The face that the I/ eye encounter is always the face of another. The other I face is the neighbor, which is near but never present, comes close without arriving. Because the face as such is not present, it escapes representation, it is the very collapse of phenomenality. Levinas explains that only the meaning of the other is irrecusable, it forbids the reclusion and reentry into the shell of the self. Levinas' *il-y-a* echoes Heidegger's *Es gibt*. There is no necessity attached to this gift, it is contingent, like the throw of a dice. And it condemns the subject to guilt. Through the infinite, which comes to pass in the face of the neighbor, the subject is condemned by what nonetheless is "the Good". Levinas

argues that the "Good" is before being. The Good assigns the subject according to susception, reception that cannot be assumed, to approach the Other, the neighbor. In this assignation, responsibility is antecedent to freedom. The subject's freedom is manifested in its response-ability, i.e. in the subject's ability to respond to the call of the Other. Being-for-self is always being-for-other, which issues another aspect of responsibility, that of a response to the approach of the neighbor (Taylor 1987:212).

What does this "subjectivity as the other in the same" mean in terms of the moral character of individuals? Does it mean that the self is no longer autonomous and that one can no longer make independent moral decisions based on one's value-systems and principles? In my view Levinas' idea of the passive subject and the subject that is forever uprooted and decentered by the Other wants to make us aware of the relational character of our moral selves. These relations have various sources. As was argued in Chapter 2, they originate from families, from cultural beliefs and activities, from societal institutions such as schools, businesses and churches. In fact, I think that Levinas would make a strong argument that the *Ganz Andere* is in fact God, that is revealed to us in the face of every other we meet. The most important relation that reveals to us something beyond ourselves, something that transcends ourselves, is in fact our relationship with God.

Some other philosophers have in fact questioned whether interpreting the Other in terms of the Transcendent does not in fact once again betray the temporary character and the facticity of all human claims to truth. John D Caputo, in his *Against Ethics*, makes some interesting points against Levinas that we might consider to see if they will enrich our perspectives on morality in the workplace. First of all one must make clear that Caputo in fact argues along very similar lines to that of Levinas' moral theory. Yet there are some important differences. Caputo (1993:13) explains that he is against ethics since ethics stands in the Greek tradition of constructing metaphysical structures and universalizing statements. As Caputo (1993:4) puts it: ethics lays the foundations for principles that force people to be good, it clarifies concepts, secures judgments and provides safe guardrails against the slippery slopes of factual life. Caputo wants to replace these foundational certainties by appealing to something else, another moral impulse that he describes as



obligations that happen to us, that arrive in the Heideggerian sense of *Es gibt*. Obligation is a feeling, a feeling of being bound, which overtakes me, in which I am caught up, by which I am taken hold of by something else, something other. Caputo (1993:8) explains that the otherness of another, the heteronomic force of the other, is the dislocating site of obligation that disrupts me, that knocks me out of orbit. One can see the similarities between Levinas *il-y-a* and the face of the Other and Caputo's views on obligation.

Against the Greek conception of universal good, Caputo uses the biblical character of Abraham, the Jew, to illustrate the type of moral impulses that he describes when he speaks of obligation. When Abraham is called on to kill his son, he does not try and get on top of this command, to penetrate it, to see through it, he just takes it, in the accusative, receives it, accepts it, stands under it and allows it opacity and impenetrability (Caputo 1993:11). This obligation that in fact "happens" to Abraham lacks the Greek spirit of beauty, autonomy and intelligibility. Caputo describes it as ugly, Jewish, Abrahamic. This obligation is the ugliness of discord and subjection, of being disrupted and disturbed by a call that comes from without. Ethics and metaphysics abhor the singularity and the incomprehensibility that Abraham has to face. Obligation happens in the density of particularity and transcendence - it clogs the gears of ethical reasoning and jams its judgments (Caputo 1993:15). The problem with ethics as it is practiced from within the Greek tradition of metaphysics is that it attempts to contain what it cannot contain and to harbor what it cannot protect, and that is the ineffability of the individual.

The individual cannot be contained in the repeatable, universal terms of our language. Therefore Derrida (in Taylor 1986:413) indicated to us in his explanation of *differance* that there can be no reference-without-difference, that meaning constantly defers, it is forever delayed or postponed, it never arrives. Furthermore meanings differ, it is always different, it celebrates otherness and alterity. Derrida refers to the formula that Levinas uses to qualify the trace and the enigma of absolute alterity - "a past that has never been present", in order to indicate that one cannot make of temporization a simple dialectical completion of the living present as an unceasing synthesis that is constantly directed back on itself. As Derrida (in Taylor 1986:415) explains: "*Always differing and deferring, the*



*trace is never as it is in the presentation of itself. It erases itself in presenting itself, muffles itself in resonating, like the a writing itself, inscribing its pyramid in difference".*

Up to this point it seems as though Levinas, Derrida and Caputo have the same agenda, and are in agreement on the fact that language and truth can never represent reality. Rather, truth arrives as a gift (Heidegger's *Es gibt*), or as an obligation in Caputo's terms, or as the *il-y-a* in the face of the Other, that Levinas refers to. Because it reveals itself when it unveils itself, it can never be finalized, systematized or categorized. The diachronic dimension can never be taken out of this arrival in order to universalize a statement, principle or truth. When time is taken out of the equation, or when it is inscribed as part of the synthesizing process, truth becomes dogmatism and ethics loses its capacity to guide the ineffable individual in the facticity of its existence.

Yet, it seems as though there is no consensus on how one should understand this alterity, this otherness that arrives, that obligates, that deconstructs the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity. Caputo (1993:83) writes that the absolutely other is a poetic and hyperbolic name for the fact, as it were, of obligation, of heteronomy, that we do not belong to ourselves but that we are held in the grip of something absolutely *heteros*. Yet he believes that Levinas goes a bit too far in weaving a fabulous, poetic story about absolute alterity, the infinitely, ab-solutely Other which is not being-otherwise but otherwise than being. Levinas posits absolute alterity on the one side, the side of the Other, and on this side, our side, the side of the same, he puts absolute altruism. Somehow Levinas believes that our relationship to this Absolutely Other and our absolute altruism are correlates. Caputo (1993:82) is of the opinion that Levinas wants to hold on to a dream of a world without *differance*, without textuality, without phrases, without horizons, contexts, settings and frameworks. Caputo himself holds that it is impossible to embrace absolute altruism because of some Absolute Other, because that would mean getting completely, absolutely outside, outside of the facticity of the self. Rather, Caputo thinks that the Other is finite, fragile, not infinite and absolute. The Other is not an absolute, not a transcendental fact, not a fact of pure reason, but a factual fact that is construed by a hermeneutics of facticity (Caputo 1993:85). Caputo's idea of ethics wants to uphold the

facticity of the human self in which we are all contaminated. He refers to his version of ethics as a jewgreek ethics, includes an idea of *eudaimonia*, of a certain *fröhliche Wissenschaft*, of certain self-love and self-interest, which goes along with a sense of obligation. The two work together in heteromorphic-heteronomic tension. It is heteromorph in the sense that we have more than one game to play, and that more than one game is playing us (Caputo 1993:124).

The question I want to pose is whether what Caputo says about the facticity of the self and the contaminated nature of all human existence categorically excludes the possibility that we are also addressed by Something/ Someone that transcends us. Is it a question of all or nothing? *Either* we are addressed by God/ some other transcendent Being *or* we are addressed by something of the other in its human facticity, something contextual? One does not have to be rid of all facticity, all self-interest, all humanity to be addressed by the Transcendent. In fact, how else could we be addressed? How else could we voice what we experience but as a relationship with that which transcends us? I would want to argue that obligation indeed arrives, it happens, as a gift that we cannot predict or even retrospectively explain. Obligation cannot be pinpointed as the result of either God or human facticity, but is probably rather the result of whatever relationships we enter into. If our relationships are restricted to human beings, concrete events, and economic systems, then the face of the other will probably arrive in and through those relationships. If our relationships include a relationship with the Transcendent/ God, the face of the other might sometimes be that of God, sometimes that of God showing herself in the face of a human being, sometimes our own self-interest pretending to be God. Obligation is not always God-given, God-ordained, but that does not mean that it never could be. Each concrete situation reveals obligation because of the relationships in play in that specific context, and should be treated as such.

I agree with Caputo (1993:173) when he says that obligation happens in living flesh and in rotten corpses, wherever the power of the powerlessness surges towards us and touches us. Obligation arises from those with or without names, and I would want to include those with or without bodies. Obligations can arise from our memories, our subconscious, and our

beliefs in mystical forces. Obligations can also arise from things that do not have bodies or corpses or spirits, but which are merely the structural effects of our activities in this world. Therefore obligations can arise from political systems, from the workings of economics, from organizational structures and cultures, and from job descriptions. What I am arguing is that if we want to understand how moral judgments operate in the workplace, we have to understand how all these relationships in and through which we go about our daily activities, might mitigate how we think and act. If we want to create a space within which obligation can arise, we must not think of some impartial position from which we can objectively judge the situation according to universal principles. We must open ourselves to be addressed by the relationships in which we stand. If we want obligation to arise, we must be careful not to exclude certain relationships because they make us uncomfortable or because they do not neatly fit into our chosen course of action. We must allow ourselves to be addressed by the full complexity of what constitutes our obligation in that specific situation.

Caputo (1993:225) makes us aware of the fact that there are no stars to guide us through the flux of events. In terms of ethics I think this means that we do not have any one set of principles that stand above reason or doubt, that we cannot simplistically leave it up to God/ another transcendent being to always provide us with a clear-cut answer to our dilemmas. Caputo argues that obligation happens with and in terms of the singularity of the individual. I want to argue that this singular individual stands in many relationships that are very difficult to pinpoint and therefore very difficult to explain. I agree with Caputo (1993:227) that obligations are strictly local events, sublunary affairs, between us - matters of flesh and blood. Yet I believe that the relationships in which we stand not only sometimes place unbearable guilt and obligation on us, they often also provide us with support and guidance, however contextual, temporary and limited it might be.

To quote Caputo (1993:246) on the value of these contingent, fragile and temporary glimpses of morality:

*"Obligations are fleeting, finite victories over the anonymity which is older than us, which is stronger and deeper than us, which is before we are. Obligations are our hyperbolic act of*

*affirming infinite worth, of attaching hyperbolic significance to the least among us, of answering infinite demands, within the frail, finite, fragile bounds of our mortality".*

It is interesting to note that where Caputo tries to steer clear of an ethics, and rather appeals to some moral sense of obligation, Paul Ricoeur argues for the primacy of ethics over morality. Under "ethics" Ricoeur (1992:170-172) understands the aim of a good life with and for others, in just institutions, whereas "morality" is understood as the articulation of this aim in norms characterized at once by the claim to universality and by an effect of constraint. In the distinction between the aim and the norm two distinct heritages are easily recognizable, namely on the one hand the Aristotelian heritage where ethics is characterized by its teleological perspective, and on the other the Kantian heritage, where morality is defined by the obligation to respect the norm, described as the deontological point of view. The "good life" is, for each of us, the sum-total of ideas and dreams of achievements with regard to which life seen as fulfilled or unfulfilled. We therefore relate our most important decisions in our careers, love life and leisure to our idea of the good life as we understand the whole and the parts of a text in terms of the other and this constitutes the ongoing process of the formation of the self. On an ethical plane, self-interpretation becomes self-esteem. Ricoeur (1992:171) argues that whereas the ethical aim corresponds with the notion of self-esteem, the deontological sense of morality corresponds to the notion of self-respect. Self-esteem is the sense of the self as it develops as part of the reflective movement by which certain actions are evaluated and judged. This sense of self-esteem remains abstract as long as it lacks the dialogic structure, which is introduced by the reference to others. This dialogic structure, in turn, remains incomplete outside of reference to just institutions. Therefore, self-esteem assumes its complete sense only at the end of the meaning traced out by the three components of the ethical aim. These connections between the self (in its otherness), other people and institutions forms a narrative unity of life, or life-plan which, as Gadamer indicates, instills in us a certain Aristotelian *phronesis*, practical wisdom and knowledge of practices that guide us in our thoughts and actions. Ricoeur (1992:178) explains that the word "life" indicates reference to the person as a whole, in opposition to fragmented pieces.

This indicates the biologic rootedness of life and the unity of the person as a whole, as that person casts upon himself or herself the gaze of appraisal.

This phronesis is a practical wisdom that does not provide us with quick fixes for all our moral dilemmas, but which rather equips us with some tools on how to think about them. These tools are a combination of our views on the good life, which in itself is the product of various processes and influences, and some normative guidelines on how we are to go about achieving these goods. Ricoeur connects the three elements of ethics, namely self-esteem in personal life, friendship and solicitude in interpersonal life, and justice in institutional life with three groups of moral criteria that form the deontological parameters by which we can try to realize our vision of the good life in practical situations. They are: autonomy in personal life, respect for others in interpersonal life, and procedural justice in democratic institutional life. The good life must be worked out in the historical facticity of life, a life that is according to Ricoeur determined by "fundamental indeterminacy" (Van der Ven 1998:177). In this process of dealing with each moral dilemma in its singularity, we need the insights of many approaches and paradigms, we need to expand our tools as much as possible.

Whether one chooses to use the terms ethics or morality to indicate the moral sense that both Caputo and Ricoeur allude to is perhaps not so important. What is important is that both Caputo and Ricoeur want to argue for a rootedness of the moral in the biological and factual existence of human beings. Furthermore, as is indicated in the last section of chapter 3, we will be wise to acknowledge the relationship between the teleological notions inherent in any deontological argument, just as we will have to identify and define moral norms and its content in reference to the good we are seeking. The two cannot do without one another. The other ethical approaches critically evaluated in chapter 3 also provide us with important perspectives, such as the narrative unity of community mores and norms. We will now attempt to use a combination of the available ethical approaches and the twentieth century philosophical insights to come to a new theoretical approach to dealing with morality in the workplace.



#### 4.5. The narrative structure of our moral metaphors:

Ricoeur's (1992: 179) views on the narrative configuration of the self and the narrative unity of life gives a certain priority to the connectedness brought about by the structure of events, which Ricoeur regards as the touchstone of the analysis of the self. Characters, are in fact in themselves plots. The narratives of which we are all part submit our identity to imaginative variations. It does not merely tolerate these variations, it in fact engenders them, and seek them out (Ricoeur 1992:143-148). Not only are our moral selves the result of complex configurations of the events and influences we are exposed to throughout our lives, combined with innate ability and characteristics, but the narrative structure of our lives necessarily implies constant interaction with others and institutions. Since it is very unlikely to form a plot on one's own, our ideas on the good life are formed and transformed within our interaction with others and the institutions we live and work in. It therefore never develops in isolation from other people and institutions. In return, our interaction with other people and institutions change these interpersonal relations and the institutions within which we live and work.

Lakoff and Johnson's (1999:290) explorations of cognitive science and cognitive semantics provides us with the means of a detailed and comprehensive analysis of what our moral concepts are and of how their logic works. Our cognitive unconscious is populated with an extensive system of metaphoric mappings for conceptualizing, reasoning about, and communicating our moral ideas. These metaphors are grounded in the nature of our bodies and social interactions and are thus not arbitrary, but are rather grounded in our various experiences of well being, especially physical well being. For instance, it is better to be healthy, rather than sick, it is better to breathe pure air, rather than contaminated air, it is better to be strong, rather than weak, better to be free, rather than to be restrained or coerced, better to live with order, rather than chaos etc. Therefore, we use moral terms such as moral purity, moral strength, moral freedom, and moral order. Our moral sense is directly linked to the fact that we conceptualize well-being as wealth. We speak of leading a rich and meaningful life, of investing in our relationships and our societies, or on the other hand, wasting our lives. Yet it is interesting to note that for a very long time, the physical

and economic realities that form the reference base for our moral metaphors were seen as something that belong to a sphere separate from morality. We used to argue that some activities are value-free, some have some objective logic and mechanism that should not be contaminated with value-statements. One could argue that the strict dichotomies between facts and values and public and private robbed us of a proper understanding of what morality really entails.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999:333) argues that because our moral understanding comes, via metaphor, from a broad range of other domains of experience, and since we apply these metaphors to different experiential domains, we should be wary of compartmentalizing. In fact, the cross-domain mappings of the metaphors suggest an intricate web of connections between most spheres of our lives. The interconnectedness of our moral reasoning has a number of implications. In the first place it becomes impossible to practice moral reasoning without situating it within a specific time and space. Because morality is directly linked not only to our bodiliness, but also to our relationships and the institutional structures we operate in, it becomes impossible to define "the good" universally. Since our sense of well-being determines our views of the good-life, "the good" is something that has to be negotiated by all involved and that should be open to renegotiation as circumstances changes. Does this lead us to a theory of radical ethical relativism, where no moral judgments can be made on what is good outside of the specific context? Yes and no. Yes, it is impossible to judge whether a system, a country, or an institution has behaved immorally without looking and understanding the unique contextual realities, relationships and power configurations operative in that context. No, in the sense that every situation lends itself to evaluation, if the best interests of the parties involved are brought into play. We can see that in our basic definition of the good we use a certain teleological notion of what constitutes the "good", namely that which serves the interest of all the parties involved. Yet we need to go beyond this teleological notion. One important caveat is that a discussion on morality should never exclude one of the parties involved, since then evaluation of the system will become impossible. We see that here we are building in some Kantian safety valves - never treat anyone as a means to and end, but always as an end in itself. We therefore have to refer back to our conclusion in chapter 3 that some combination of

procedural and substantive form of justice is necessary. Since we came to the conclusion that substantive and procedural aspects should be interrelated, one comes to the conclusion that if the good is defined contextually, so should be the procedure. What this means in the practice of business and institutional communities will be discussed in Chapter 5. We will develop an alternative approach to "the good" in the business world, attempting to get rid of the dichotomy that causes business ethics to be considered an oxymoron. In fact, it will be argued that negotiations on what constitutes the good in a particular business practice for all involved in that practice will restore the narrative unity of our lives, and allow us to practice sound ethics.

If the provision that no one person or party may be excluded from discussions of what constitutes the good in that particular context, remains the prerequisite for these negotiations, we will need more than a form of Kantian universalism and utilitarian notions of what goods always trump others in a 'means to an end' type of relationship. We have seen that calculating harms and goods becomes virtually impossible because of the complex nature of moral relationships. The cause and effect relations are so diffuse, and the meaning of the moral terms we use are so deferring in character that we need the advice of the French philosophers to see us through. We have to acknowledge the fact that in our constructing of moral "goods" we always run the risk of creating closed-off structures of meaning, metanarratives if you will, that because of changing circumstances and power relations come to exclude the interest of some and protect the interest of others. How do we guard against this reification of morality, especially in the context of business organizations and other institutions?

We need some of the suspicions of Heidegger, Derrida and Levinas to keep us aware of the fact that human beings tend to close themselves off to realities that make them feel insecure, at risk or unstable. We have to accept the deferring character of our moral language and see it as a strength, rather than a weakness, allowing us to keep in touch with those notions that constitute a meaningful life. We have to allow the Other, those that often seem strange and make us uncomfortable, to appeal to us, to address us, even to oblige us. In this way we keep from closing our sense of the "good" off from the interests

of others, who may be affected, directly or indirectly, by how we think or act. The way in which we affect others and the way in which our actions today affect our future and those of future generations, may seem too distant and abstract for us to conceive of. However, this is precisely where we have to allow for our subjective interest to be transcended by something "other" than ourselves. Sometimes we may find the "other" within ourselves if we allow it to address us, sometimes we will have to allow ourselves to be open to others that may address us from unknown quarters.

Keeping our awareness of the metaphorical character of our moral terms in mind, we have to acknowledge the fact that this openness is not easily achieved, and that the process of reifying our moral notions is in fact very natural and almost inevitable since it involves our sense of well being. Yet some of the gravest immoral ideologies, practices and legitimations have been the result of precisely this process. How do we guard against it? One characteristic of this process is the way in which the individual and the particular is subsumed and ignored within some grand narrative of ideology or institutional policy. What we therefore need is to guarantee in some way the existence of individual voices, of difference, of alterity, within our organizations and institutions. We have to encourage and protect difference and dissensus, instead of seeing it as a threat. If we come to see it as a threat, we will unconsciously eradicate it from our notion of the "good", and this "good" will in fact ironically become inhuman and immoral in character. To protect both the individual and the other, while at the same time trying to accomplish communal, organizational or institutional goals is no easy task. Yet it is in this process that our insights from the natural sciences come in handy.

It is in fact, biologically and scientifically necessary to allow for the complex interactions of various parts and elements within structures that do not always form seamless coherent wholes, react predictably and operate according to set rules. In fact, the operations of the virtual world, into which each of us are drawn on a daily basis, operate exactly in this seemingly "chaotic" way. One can describe this union of personal and collective goals as a non-totalizing structure that function as a whole (Taylor 1997:329). Networks and webs are not controlled by principles that are either integrative or disjunctive but are regulated by

rules displaying the strange logic of neither/ nor. These webs or networks are neither hegemonic nor fragmenting though undeniably haunted by tendencies in these contradictory directions. These non-totalizing structures that nevertheless act as whole are allelomorphs. Taylor (1997:330) explains the meaning of allelomorphs as "any group of possible mutational forms of a gene". Genes are data-structures, but are yet not completely prescribed. This idea also extends to cultural networks within which it is inscribed. Bodies are prostheses of machines as machines are prostheses of bodies. "Morphing" is the perpetual condition that keeps all in flux. Instead of holding on to Kant's transcendental "Ding-an Sich", we must rather acknowledge that we are part of an immanent web of relations, a multiplicity of relationships, properties and activities. It is in and through this immanent web of relations that everything arises and passes away (Taylor 1997:291).

In order to understand this immanent web of relations, one has to acknowledge where we all come from, and in acknowledging our particular and specific histories, value-systems and interests, we must negotiate common ground with others as we go along, which will in turn change the web and reconstitute and reinvent the self. In this way the individual and the group live together in a flux where subjectivity and objectivity dissolves in a constant renegotiation of positions. This dissertation aims at providing some suggestions as to how we as individuals entering the 21st century can work, play, and make decisions together whilst at the same time avoiding ideology and systemic injustice. In order to do this, we have to understand the conditions by which and despite which we live in this world that in a very real sense has become a "global village".

For this to happen, virtual spaces must be created where people interact around certain issues long before the virtual meeting or set of e-mail correspondence that will determine the final decision takes place. This discursive space should allow individuals to share personal values, background information, and emotions with the group if they so wish. The goal of this inclusive conversation is to soften and expand the fast-paced "rational" and abrupt character of e-mail to include other aspects and facets of communication. These discursive spaces must allow more than just logocentric interaction, by allowing employees to post photographs, graphic images, symbols, comic strips, and video- and film excerpts



that infuse the discourse with images that enrich moral discourse. Instead of restricting conversation to one-liner e-mails, narratives around where the company comes from and why it was originally established, tales of moral heroes who set exemplary examples, and even events that the company is ashamed of, can be posted. In this way the organization is creating a sense of history and context within which employees should make their moral decisions.

The reason why this sense of community history and context is so important has been explained by Alasdair MacIntyre in his book *After Virtue* (1985). He indicated that in most cases modern day individuals are expected to make moral decisions without having access to a moral vocabulary with substantive content. MacIntyre calls these individuals "ghostly selves" who uses a moral vocabulary that is fragmented and lacks any community context to fill it with content. Some of the principles that are often referred to within a working environment have never been discussed in terms of what it really means within the context of the work that the organization does, the organizational structure, or the interests of people that work there. Abstract principles have no use if they are not defined, redefined and renegotiated in terms of the organizational goals and purposes, the employees' personal goals and their reasons for associating with the organization, and the interests of all the other stakeholders involved with the organization. This is also not a once-off process, these webs of meaning changes as the organization grows, as its external context changes and external pressures increases or decreases, and as the composition of the workforce changes. These changes impact on how principles or values are understood and these changes should be acknowledged in an ongoing moral discourse. In this way, Cyberspace becomes the virtual reality within which the organization constantly reinvents itself by means of the diverse inputs and expertise of all involved. It is also the context in and through which their employees are actively engaged in the process of development and growth. This process creates a community within which mutual trust, responsibility and discretion are acknowledged, constantly reaffirmed, and practiced.

Taylor (1997:326) provides us with a number of rules which define the contours of non-totalizing structures when they function as a whole. Certain of these rules are especially

valuable in understanding and structuring the context of moral discourse on the Web. I will rephrase and apply some of these insights to electronic moral discourse and indicate the value that it may have for business organizations.

- **Rule of association: *"Getting to the way we do things around here"***

Non-totalizing structures are no longer all encompassing, they tend to be flexible, never permanent or fixed. In the current business environment one tends to find an increase in volatility, innovation, and mobility. Individuals tend to associate with an organization while it suits the individual's goals and preferences, and would move on if this was no longer the case. The result of it is an ever-changing workforce, and a constant re-evaluation of what constitutes a good worker and a good organization is therefore necessary. Whereas job stability was considered a virtue in the past, now variety of experience, international exposure and interdisciplinary background are seen as recommendations. In the past, organizations would have a much more permanent, all-encompassing identity and structure and therefore also determined the individual's career and lifestyle. Currently it seems as if it is up to the individual to associate in terms of his/her own perceptions of identity. It is important that the moral discourse within the organization addresses these changes, and allows the individual to express his/ her conception of the good. This individual perspective should be brought into dialogue with the organizational history, culture, practices and the collective definition of the good as it has evolved over time. The individual should have the opportunity to express dissent, ask questions, and interact with others within the organization to ensure that he/ she feels comfortable with the way in which the company conducts its business. The company should in turn be open for innovative suggestions on how to strengthen, enrich or adapt its practices. It should value the diversity of perspectives operative in the work place and attempt to integrate them in such a way that enriches the company culture.

- **Rule of distribution: *"A chain is as strong as its weakest link"***

These structures tend to function bottom-up rather than top-down, they are characterized by parallel rather than serial structures, and there is no centralized power structure.

Instead of being hierarchical and consolidated, they tend to be lateral and dispersed. The

increased emphasis on empowerment and participation in decision-making, has distributed power to complex networks of power relations that are much harder to manage, because it lacks linear structures. Because of this characteristic of non-totalizing systems, moral discourse in Cyberspace makes a lot of sense. Not only does it allow all to participate and eliminate hierarchies, but it can also ensure anonymity for those who prefer it that way. This does not mean, however, that all forms of identifications and cultural, gender and religious characteristics should be eliminated. In fact, in some cases these details will provide the much-needed context for understanding each other's perspectives and should be encouraged in certain circumstances. The choice to disclose personal information must however always reside with the individual. The added benefit to the development of moral skills on the web is that it allows the organization to manage its employees by the building of mutual responsibility and trust, instead of excessive controls and monitoring.

- **Rule of allelomimesis: *"Unity and stability without sacrificing individuality and change"***

These structures coordinate without necessarily unifying, they allow proximity, yet maintain a critical distance. Moral discourse on the web has the effect of ensuring participation in the collective discourse on values, thereby eliminating the dangers of fragmentation and the maximizing of self-interest that have become real dangers in the virtual world. This form of moral discourse values different perspectives yet relates them to the organizational culture, its goals and sense of purpose, thereby creating some sense of unity and stability within the flux. It cannot force consensus, but it can give employees the skills to think moral issues through and provide them with various guidelines on how similar problems have been dealt with in the past, and how the relevant values are understood within the organization.

- **Rule of non-linearity: *"Staying in touch with reality"***

Non-totalizing structures consist of complex non-linear structures that integrate feedback loops and create an extreme sensitivity, yet it is not a circularity that is self-reflexive or self-referential. The web is the ideal place to engage both internal and external

stakeholders into discussions about values and organizational practices. This develops a context-sensitive organization that takes the opinions of various stakeholders seriously.

- **Rule of aleatory: "*Unpredictability leads to innovation if there is trust*"**

Networks are riddled with gaps and therefore leave room for the unexpected. Control is always insecure and knowledge is uncertain. This lack of predictability is definitely a characteristic of the current workplace. We have looked into the possibility of dealing with these risks and unpredictabilities by increased monitoring, supervision and control. Not only do these practices undermine human dignity and freedom, it also becomes counterproductive because it creates an environment of mistrust, suspicion and maximized self-interest. People who feel mistrusted and slighted will find their own ways of beating the system and seeking out the loopholes. People who are trusted are empowered to be innovative and responsible.

- **Rule of volatility: "*Complexity stimulates creativity, not fear*"**

Non-totalizing structures foster disaster as well as novelty. The speed with which these networks operate causes a decrease in stability and therefore becomes more complex. Many changes occur simultaneously and should be managed in conjunction with each other. Because the interaction between these changes cannot be predicted it causes anxiety. This anxiety can arrest the positive process of creativity and novelty and should therefore be addressed. The best way to address these challenges is to create an environment of trust that fosters innovation and creativity as was indicated earlier in this paper. People as moral agents should not be seen as liabilities in times of change, but rather as the organization's most important assets.

- **Rule of vulnerability: "*Networks increase mutual responsibility*"**

Vulnerability is the function of interrelation or connectivity. The recognition that the system can run wild can provoke a siege of control through tactics of surveillance, administration or management. Furthermore, an awareness of the fragility of networks creates prospects of subversive or even terrorist activity. Yet the vulnerability of the interconnected world is also the space within which people come to recognize their

responsibilities towards each other and the company and the importance of their personal discretion. This can be used as an opportunity for both personal and organizational growth.

- **Rule of contestation: "*Disagreement can stimulate mutual understanding*"**

Contestation can sometimes turn violent, because increasing connections do not always enhance harmony. It increases conflicts, disputes and renegotiations. This characteristic is probably the most definite indication that organizations are going through certain dramatic and intense changes. Conflict and disagreement need not always have destructive consequences for the organization. If the disagreement is dealt with through dialogue and interaction, it can become a valuable resource in creating increased understanding, respect and tolerance. This process can however only succeed if management leads by example and deals with dissent in a positive, productive way that makes all feel their contributions are valued, without sacrificing the goals and values of the organization. It is a balancing act that is difficult to sustain, but which in the end fosters mutual trust and cooperation.

#### **4.6. Conclusion:**

The stated goal of this study is to develop an ethical framework that is able to both accommodate individual moral differences, and maintain unity and cooperation. The insights developed in this chapter could inform the development of such a framework. Before we pursue this goal in Chapter 5, let us briefly review those aspects that are most relevant and important to the development of a framework for dealing with moral values in pluralistic working environments.

##### **4.6.1. Embodied morality rather than transcendental principles:**

A holistic approach to understanding the way in which individuals make moral decisions in the workplace is supported by the views of Merleau-Ponty, Lakoff and Johnson, as well as that of William Frederick. All these writers emphasize the importance of the fact that one's world view and the beliefs and values that inform it, is more often than not the result of one's daily struggle for survival, for acceptance and for the best possible way of going



about one's life task. Allowing all the aspects of a person's world view to infuse the moral decisions he or she makes at work, enables the various beliefs and values that this person has selected from a variety of sources (be they religious, cultural, philosophical or scientific) to provide guidance in terms of the best possible course of action. If one acknowledges that the days are over when most ethical dilemmas in the workplace could be anticipated and addressed by clear-cut rules, one has to reinforce the individual's resources when he or she has only his or her discretion and moral reasoning skills to count on.

It has become clear that most of the philosophic approaches to business ethics succumb to the temptation to provide universal, timeless and context-less principles that should then be applied to moral dilemmas in the workplace. This approach to business ethics gives philosophers a bad name, since it places us in an ivory tower of abstract ideas that provides little practical guidance for real life moral issues in the workplace. Some attempts at marrying universal principles with contextual realities have been made, such as the ISCT-theory discussed in chapter 3. Frederick (1995:272) praises the ISCT for retaining part of the moral relativism that is consistent with observable socio-cultural behavior, while giving full reign to the transculturally-legitimated conventional principles of applied philosophy. As he puts it *"Voilà! Nature-based socio-culturally elaborated human experience is married to philosophy's most cherished principles."* He does however also acknowledge the fact that ISCT suffers analytic imperfections, as was indicated in Chapter 3. ISCT can't get away from the fact that even the hypernorms they speak of is subject to contextual interpretation and therefore to relativity. He also criticizes ISCT for displaying the remnants of positivism's now declining heritage, namely value-free intellectual deliberation. Donaldson and Dunfee deny explicitly that economic behavior has any roots in nature-based processes. Frederick (1995:272) argues that the "naturalness" of economic behavior underlies many of the "commonsense moral conviction and preferences" of people in business.

#### 4.6.2. Complex systems and networks of relations

The relatedness and intersubjectivity that determines the creation for knowledge and truth need not lead to relativism. In fact, complex systems have their own built-in safety valves preventing the systems from self-destructing. We may however want to make sure that these safety valves are reinforced by strong moral values, so that the glue that holds the system together is indeed the values that are shared by all belonging to the system. Calas & Smircich's (1999:663) analysis of recent developments in postmodern organizations indicates the similarities between actor-network theory (ANT) and Foucault's notion of power/ knowledge as power relations. The idea of individuals being involved in networks which are conceived as a very dispersed and very decentered chain of ongoing and mutant activities destabilizes the idea of the isolated rational decision-maker in the workplace. Rather, networks include social, technical and natural actors. All elements of the network are actors, since they are capable of acting on one another. ATN highlights at least two issues, the actor and the network are not just things out there that can be objectively apprehended and described by the researcher. Rather, actor-network is in itself a conceptual frame - a way of understanding social and technical processes. In the second place, thinking about networks requires conceiving of relationships among things in particular ways. Networks are constituted by scripts and need to be translated if its moves are to be understood. The irreducibility and relational character of networks make the search for essences and facts obsolete (Calas & Smircich 1999:664).

In the context of the current reconfiguration of time and space of organizations, it becomes essential to be able to find moral guidelines within the networks of relations that permeates reality. The "Web" or virtuality, has become part of everyday working life, and our interaction with the machine begins to define our life experiences. In order to be able to navigate one's way through these networks, one needs to acknowledge the interconnectedness of relations within the workplace and be aware of the unexpected and unpredictable ways in which these relations may play out. The idea of networks within the workplace can however play a very important role in the unity and integrity of the organization. It can bind employees and other stakeholders to the organization in such a way

that it facilitates cooperation, loyalty and trust without attempting to create a permanent structure that might suffocate change and adaptability.

#### **4.6.3. Relational character of truth statements and the importance of deconstructing time-less truths**

Rorty (1993:21) argues that the Western philosophical tradition has been seduced into believing that its role is to function as "the mirror of nature". This metaphor led to the view that philosophers are those who investigate the structure of the mind and the conditions of knowledge. Variations of this metaphor, as well as (unsuccessful) attempts to escape it, can be found in "transcendental philosophy", from Kant to Apel, the rational psychology" from Descartes to Fodor and "naturalized epistemology" from Hume to Quine. Rorty (1993:56) argues that pragmatism has led us to a post-philosophic position in which there is no particular portion of culture setting the standard for what constitutes truth or knowledge. In fact, all participate in setting the criteria, and all criteria become temporary resting places constructed by a community to facilitate its queries (Rorty 1993:60).

The correspondence theory of truth and the judgment of the rational subject have been criticized in both 20th century continental philosophy and the American pragmatist tradition. Not only do many contemporary philosophers agree that our human attempts to grasp truth are no longer picture-perfect accounts of reality, there is also a measure of agreement on why this is the case. Rorty (1993:34) selects the following quotes to indicate the consensus between American pragmatists and Continental philosophers on the ubiquity of language (my selection of longer quotations):

"Man makes the thought, and the word mean nothing which the man has not made it mean, and that only to some other man" (Pierce)

"Pierce goes very far in the direction that I have called the deconstruction of the transcendental signified, which, at one time or another, would place a reassuring end to the reference from sign to sign" (Derrida)

"... all awareness even of particulars - is a linguistic affair" (Sellars)

"It is only in language that one can mean something by something" (Wittgenstein)

"Human experience is essentially linguistic" (Gadamer)

"... man is in the process of perishing as the being of language continues to shine even brighter on the horizon" (Foucault)

" Speaking about language turns language almost inevitably into an object and then its reality vanishes" (Heidegger)

Both the American pragmatist tradition and the Continental tradition of post-humanism, post-structuralism and (later) postmodernism have been accused of nihilism, and the destruction of Philosophy in its essence. Yet, the post-philosophical, or rather anti-metaphysical tradition of philosophy has important contributions to make in terms of man's search for truth and meaning. Frederick (1995:274) indicates how three of the most important writers in the field of business ethics invoke the ghost of John Dewey, the instrumental pragmatist who long advocated that values and valuational processes stem from the realm of human experience lived in human communities. Edward Freeman, the father of the stakeholder theory in business ethics, acknowledges the fact that one cannot divorce the idea of a moral community or a moral discourse from the ideas of the value-creation activity of business. Donaldson and Dunfee's theories about the links between micro-contracts and macro-contracts also acknowledge the fact that moral principles bubble up from human experience. Pragmatism wants to acknowledge the fact that all our truth claims are embedded in our experiences and relations with each other within the natural world. The possibilities opened by the tradition of pragmatism is explained well by West (1989:209): *"The goal of sophisticated neopragmatism is to think genealogically about specific practices in the light of the best available social theories, cultural critiques, and historiographical insights and to act politically to achieve certain moral consequences in the light of effective strategies and tactics."*

Another product of the pragmatist's labors is that it invalidated the widely held distinction between the "soft" human sciences and the "hard" natural sciences. The basic difference is not that the human sciences are self-defining (or self-reflexive) and the natural sciences are context-free (or repeatable). The difference rather lies in the relative stability of normal vocabularies in the natural sciences as opposed to the relative instability of those in

the human sciences. Furthermore, the irreducibility of one vocabulary to another is not indicative of an ontological difference or methodological distinction, but reveals a functional difference, i.e. different human aims of prediction and meaning endowment (West 1989:203). Rosenthal & Buchholz (2000:404) attempt to revisit the relationship between normative and empirical business ethics in view of the fact that pragmatism, with its emphasis on broad empiricism and ontological emergence, allows both facts and values to emerge as wedded dimensions of complex contexts that cannot be dissected into atomic bits. The question as to what constitutes truth has been redefined by recognizing that the value qualities that emerge from contextual contingencies are as real as all other qualities in nature. Rosenthal & Buchholz (2000:405) explains: *"Normative claims are rooted in a sense of concrete human existence and immediately had value qualities included therein."*

#### 4.6.4. The narrative structure of moral metaphors

Metaphoric language impacts on the way in which we relate to and describe reality. This can be illustrated by referring to various examples from a variety of disciplines. One well-known example is Derrida's (1982:218) reminder that even the most natural, most universal, most real, most luminous thing, the apparently most exterior referent, the sun, does not completely escape the general law of metaphoric value as soon as it intervenes (as it always does) in the process of axiological and semantic value. Not even the value of the signifier "sun" can be fixed without considering its surroundings, so much so that in some languages it is impossible to "sit in the sun". The value of any term is therefore always determined by its environment.

Derrida's explanation of "justice" illustrates the narrative structure of moral values. In Derrida's view, one should address oneself to the singularity of the other, and to oneself, as another, within a performative situation, in order to speak justice. An assertion of general justice - "this or that is just", almost inevitably ends up being unjust. Justice is therefore characterized by an attendance to singularities. It is always situational, circumstantial, and actual (Letiche 1998:124).



It is also important to note that this chapter indicated that it is impossible to pinpoint the meaning of our moral metaphors without taking into consideration that the meaning of the metaphor that we are using defers constantly. This is the case because of a variety of second-order metaphors that we use in structuring the meaning of the first-level metaphor. Instead of pretending that our moral metaphors generate stable, fixed meaning, Alvesson (1993: 131) argues that we have to contend with the ambiguous and slippery play of metaphors on various levels. This is especially important when we use moral metaphors, since it could assist us in allowing organizations to fill their values with new content by exposing it to other meanings. This could be done by changing or reinterpreting the second order metaphors. In this way, organizations can prevent values from stagnating or becoming irrelevant, yet allow an organization to have some continuity in terms of keeping certain first-order metaphors.

This chapter provides us with insights that will forever change the way we think about moral values. It argued against transcendental principles and made us acknowledge the embodied character of our moral values. Furthermore, the connectedness of our webs of meaning brings us to a relational understanding of truth, which makes the temporary, ever deferring character of moral truths inevitable. Finally, moral values can and should never operate in an isolated, contextless sphere. The narrative structure of moral values, and the role that Others, and groups of Others play in the process of value-creation, should never be ignored.

## Chapter 5: Framework for dealing with moral values in contemporary organizations

The philosophical insights developed in the course of this dissertation will remain abstract ideas if not related to the specific context of contemporary organizations. It has been established that our view of diversity in pluralist environments has to be reframed in terms of the reality of distributed selves and moral *bricoleurs*. Individuals draw on a wide variety of value sources in their moral decision-making. Acknowledging this reality makes the untenability of traditional modernist approaches to ethics apparent. Twentieth century philosophy, physics and information technology offer some alternative perspectives and the prospect of a more suitable approach. But how do these insights translate to contemporary organizational practice? A contextual framework needs to be developed that addresses the most pressing needs of contemporary organizations. This chapter will attempt to do just that.

A useful moral framework needs to reflect contemporary organizational trends. To understand the current context, it is imperative to explore some of the changes occurring in contemporary organizations. Some refer to these changes as part of the demise of the modern organization and the rise of the postmodern. Because of the difficulties of defining the modern and the postmodern in any precise way, it seems wise to refrain from labeling contemporary organizations "postmodern". Yet the considerable body of literature developed around the theme of "Postmodernism and Organizations" will prove helpful in understanding the changes and challenges facing contemporary organizations. Various changes in the environment within which organizations operate, changes in technology, as well as various economic and political realities impact on the way organizations are structured and operate. The suggested framework aims at addressing these contemporary challenges. Interestingly enough, the framework can also be aligned with the theoretical insights developed in the current business ethics debate. The suggested framework is therefore supported by both contextual realities and theoretical trends. Three South African case studies will be used as illustration of both contemporary trends operative in the South African business environment and the applicability of the suggested framework

to its unique challenges. Finally, practical suggestions for dealing with this specific case will be put forward.

## **5.1. Conclusions on the contemporary organizational context of business ethics**

Organizations' view of corporate identity as well as the identity of individuals and groups, has changed the way they are structured and operate. A number of paradigm shifts have taken place in terms of individual and corporate identity with important implications for the way moral values are dealt with in the workplace. This section will indicate how this dissertation views individual and organizational identity.

### **5.1.1. Individual identity:**

- **Identity configurations:**

The modernist concept of the integrated self, with the ego acting as master of the household, seeking to integrate the competing demands it faces, made sense in terms of the modern ideals of unified wholeness, progression, and the theories of governance and authority within the Western world. With these ideals disintegrating at the end of the 20th century, different ideas of identity have started to develop. This dissertation supports the posthumanist, poststructuralist alternative, namely the subject who is multidimensional and without center or hierarchical integration. The poststructuralist notion of the self conceives of a continuity and interdependence of self and other. When making a distinction between the self and the other, one has to acknowledge the fact that the self is inhabited by what is and what it is not. Therefore this distinction is to be understood as heuristic and paradoxical (Willmott 1998:99).

One of the implications of the multidimensional self is that the particular way in which the individual formulates his/her identity is not predictable. Power, as Foucault explains, is more than just the repressive force that distorts what and how we know. Power produces the way we know ourselves. Power here constitutes us as self-aware subjects, able to know and act on ourselves and on each other (Brewis 1998:63). But because power is fragmented in its

operations, the variety of discourses present in the individual's identity configuration leads to a continual 're-articulation' of individual identity (Brewis 1998:63). In order to understand our decisions and actions, one therefore has to unravel the complex character of our relationships with ourselves, the effect of our exposure to various discourses and our resistance to them.

This would imply giving up on the search for timeless, universal truths, since one comes to see truth as a discursive construction, or a particular way of being which is no more or less "true" than any other. Does this mean that any judgment on what is morally right or wrong becomes impossible? No, Foucault would argue that ethics is precisely that process by which the individual becomes conscious of the processes of self-formation at work in him/herself, as well as in other people. Ethics becomes a process of self-policing and self-conscious self-analysis rather than the process of conforming to abstract ethical codes (Brewis 1998:65). The moral character of this self-conscious activity lies precisely in the fact that we are willing to put ourselves at risk, question our own prejudices, and break through the isolation and obsession with self-interest that could so easily result from the fragmented world we inherited from the world of modern specialization.

- **Distributed selves in dialogue**

Two distinct forms of postmodern strategies emerge from amongst the host of writings labeled "postmodern". Whereas some forms of postmodernism emphasizes fragmentation and the incommensurability of distinct life-forms and groups, other postmodernists argue that every self and every group is not a distinctly identifiable unity, but rather an eclectic configuration of very specific and contextual characteristics. The former ends in fragmentation, while the latter tries to deal with difference in and amongst people in creative ways.

Falzon (1998:91) argues that postmodern strategies should go beyond fragmentation. Postmodernism is often thought of as a strategy which treats differences in a relativistic way by emphasizing fragmented, incommensurable world-views, each with their own unitary

and all-embracing form of thought and action. Such a viewpoint sustains the metaphysical notion of unity, since it assumes that certain structures display certain essences of ideas and theories, which exist separately from other isolated structures. This view betrays an important aspect of the postmodern movement, which defies abstract, universal structures. This version of postmodernism that Falzon (1998:93) calls the postmodernism of fragmentation, is also strongly reminiscent of the liberal position, one of the positions that other forms of postmodernism aims to surpass. The liberal position tolerates difference and diversity by essentializing the identity of groups and keeping that identity intact. This constitutes a failure to acknowledge our existence in dialogical relations with others and therefore arrest the ongoing dialogical interaction of competing interpretations that organize and reorganize one another. Kirsten (1988) refers to this strategy as a "postmodernism of reaction", which displays certain neoconservatist tendencies.

Postmodernism is often accused of deconstructing and thereby undermining human attempts to make the world comprehensible and livable, without replacing it with another strategy for coping with the realities of the human condition. How does one, for instance, deal with the problem of moral dissensus in pluralistic societies in a viable, postmodern way? I would like to suggest an intersubjective strategy of **unapologetic dialogue**. "Unapologetic" must be understood in two ways: it involves witnessing to one's own religious, cultural, political (etc.) values without excuse, but it is also unapologetic in the sense it is not an exercise in apologetics. One should not be pitting all one's emotional and rational powers against another set of values or beliefs. Religions and cultures should no longer be seen as competing value-systems, but rather as ways in which a pluralistic society can be infused with mutually enriching perspectives on morality. As Streng (1993:97) argues: *"...once we allow conceptions of selfhood, and procedures for self-consciously identifying authentic selfhood, other than those given in our immediate cultural context, we can appreciate alternative modes of actualizing an authentic self."*

Falzon (1998:96) distinguishes the dialogical position advocated by Foucault from a postmodernism of fragmentation. A postmodernism of fragmentation precludes organized, unified movements of resistance and only permits purely local struggles. The dialogical



position does not necessarily deny that there is a need to question the notion of a global, 'revolutionary' movement of liberation. We do not need to give up the idea of concerted, unified forms of struggle. In resistance there is also the possibility of unity and solidarity. But these should always remain contingent alliances, unions of forces that have been created, forged, and negotiated through the process of dialogue. The ethical and critical task would be not to reject all order but to avoid producing or contributing to forms of domination (Falzon 1998:96).

Unapologetic dialogue tries to promote this form of intersubjectivity, but distances itself from the communitarian ideal of consensualist common values. The way in which the Communitarians find a consensus and then proclaim it the essence of the specific group runs the risk of arresting the constant process of redefinition, criticism, change, and creativity that must always remain part of the dialogue. These dangers stem from an attempt to find some ahistorical, acontextual, objective and non-negotiable set of criteria for unifying people.

Jacobson (1995:357) indicates the need to decenter rationality and to dislocate modernity by a non-traditional understanding of cross-cultural (and in my opinion, cross-sexual, cross-political, cross-religious etc.) interaction. Maria Lugones's concept of "world-traveling" provides a possible starting point. World traveling implies an alternative view of both individual subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The plurality of worlds in a multi-cultural society leads to a plurality of identities that persons animate in various worlds. This may then lead to the dissolution of a completely coherent self-narrative (or identity) into an ambiguous and internally multiplicitous set of narratives (or identities). This multiplicity and ambiguity opens new moral possibilities by allowing for resistance to otherwise reified categories and structures of domination within and among worlds (Jacobsen 1995:358). What is being deconstructed within Lugone's argument is the existence of coherent, integrated and isolated selves that became reified in terms of traditional categories and politically laden value judgments. She doesn't argue for the absence of a sense of identity, but for a more distributed, flexible and negotiable version of identity. We should thus engage in a process of self-awareness and the realization of the self-transcending "other".

- **Power relations:**

Power-relations were forever changed with the realization that no single grand narrative provides a comprehensive and coherent explanation of social reality. This represented the internal erosion of the legitimacy principle of knowledge. The process of delegitimization was ironically fuelled by the demand of legitimization itself, since more and more language games entered the race to provide the perfect legitimization, in the end only proving the futility of all pursuits of final knowledge. The social subject itself seems to dissolve in the dissemination of language games. The social bond is linguistic, but is not woven with a single thread. Rather it is a fabric formed by the intersection of an indeterminate number of language games (Lyotard 1984:3).

The question that becomes a pressing concern is whether the loss of the grand narrative dooms us to relativity and nihilism. Does the deconstruction of the power of the grand narrative render us powerless in the flux of varying language games? It depends on one's view of power. If power is seen as the ability to dominate, repress and unify contradictions within a seamless whole, we have indeed become powerless. But power is not intrinsically repressive. Rorty (1994:63) indicates the similarities in the positive view of power in the work of both Foucault and Dewey. Foucault's vision of discourse as a network of power-relations and Dewey's vision of it as instrumental, as one element in the arsenal of tools people use for gratifying, synthesizing and harmonizing their desires, indicate that power can be a positive force in working out the praxis of living together in an ever shrinking world.

Hassard (1993:15) indicates that one of the implications of Derrida's theory is that it replaces the grand isolation of the modern subject with the notion of agency as a system of relations between strata. Instead of being self-directing, the subject now becomes the convenient location for the flow of various discourses. Because the agent of propositions and actions is seen as a de-centered subject, who is not the center of the universe and whose decisions and actions are not the sole determinant of events, the role and function of

for instance a manager can be interpreted in a very different way. The words of managers are like authorless texts; once they have been set in motion, the manager ceases to control its exact meaning. Relational theory suggests that managers' "rationality" becomes the product of collective action. Power is a matter of "social interdependence" and is affected through the coordination of actions around specified definitions.

The implication of the relationship between power and knowledge is that power exists as a condition rather than a property. Knowledge is constituted as an outcome of the systemic articulations of language grounded in social practice. Power is therefore implicit in all aspects of organizational discourse, structuring the rules and the procedures that determine different forms of knowledge. Therefore it is involved in the delimitation of what can and what cannot be said, the definition of distinct fields and the emergence of various "subject positions" which distributes and hierarchizes the field of unequal relations. Discourses emerge as regulated systems of statements that have both ideational content and implications for social practice. Organizational culture therefore functions as discourses that establish certain internal and external boundaries (Linstead 1999:63). These functions can be abused in order to exclude certain voices from the organizational discourse. Yet from a postmodern perspective this will be a return to grand narratives that will eventually stifle organizational growth. Rather, discourses should be seen as something that can be reproduced, can be resisted and is subject to change and negotiation. Care must be taken to create the conditions that enable the continual reproduction of organizational forms as ongoing discourses, in order to facilitate growth and adaptability to changing environments.

The problem is that many professionals who have been raised in a western, capitalist culture are still functioning within the impoverished moral culture of the "rational moral agent". Parks' (1993:190) study of moral attitudes of 90 MBA-students indicated that they could only take into consideration the individual, the individual corporation and the individual nation. They do not as readily recognize the social-ecological-political fabric within and upon which individual organisms and organizations must dwell and depend. They cannot recognize the dynamic relationships among sectors of society that constitute the rich

interdependence that they are subject to and that they will shape. It is very important that the interdependency of various groups on one another should be recognized, especially in the pluralistic organizational environment of South African companies. The impact of the company on various other systems is also of extreme importance for the reconstruction of South African society.

What Parks (1993:178) suggests is that we encourage the replacement of individualism with more communal, interdependent convictions. She argues that this becomes possible when we broaden the imagination of people in the working environment. Virtue is predicated on purpose, image and imagination. People should be brought to realize the scope of their power in a profoundly interdependent world. To enlarge the moral imagination, we should offer people an initiation into complexity and ambiguity, we should create situations in which the individual is confronted with the "Other", and where previous clear-cut guidelines are deconstructed. This process becomes possible within a pluralistic working environment such as is found in South African organizations.

- **Motivation:**

Modern motivational theories relied on the objective rationality of scientific knowledge, but skepticism about the neutrality of objective science soon brought these theories into disrepute. What is of particular significance in postmodernism is that it has replaced belief in the one and only rational explanation with a belief in the subjectivity of rational explanation (Carter & Jackson 1993:87). Expectancy theory is considered the closest that modern motivational theories have come to a "postmodernist" approach. Most modern theories on motivation attempt to motivate people by increasingly sophisticated incentives, without addressing the underlying problem of low motivations (as managers perceived it). Expectancy Theory broke with this tradition by emphasizing the key factor of individual understanding/ perception. Motivation was a function of the individual's desire for a particular outcome, and the perception of how likely it is that a particular course of action would lead to that outcome. Job satisfaction and job performance should be regarded as joint functions of individual differences in motives and cognized or actual properties of

work roles (Carter & Jackson 1993:92). Treating workers as homogeneous groups whose needs are assessed from a managerial perspective becomes impossible within this approach.

### 5.1.2. Organizational identity

As Hassard (1999:21) indicates, the postmodern plot thickens when it becomes clear that there are multiple meanings for the everyday terms used in organizational power networks. These terms are polysemous since they have been used in many contexts and thus bear 'the trace', as Derrida will call it, of many other terms in the network of significations of which it is part. Organizations as a symbolic product are written and can therefore be regarded as texts. Yet these texts have no integrated originary author. Rather, the text is formed by the overcrossing of other traces, other meanings, and other texts. The text has an intertextuality, a multiplicity of meaning which is inherent, rather than a result of a variety of interpretations. Organizations are partly constituted by the subjectivity of all those involved in their production and functioning. In turn they seek to constitute the subjectivity of those involved with it. Both the authors and readers of the text of the organization, both the creators and consumers are bound together in, and are constituted by, the continual process of the emergence of meaning (Linstead 1999:60).

Letiche (1998:143) describes Lipovetsky's analysis of the shifts in consciousness pertaining to ethics in the new highly individualized era. During high modernism, a so-called "first degree of perception" prevailed. Everyone saw, and acknowledged, more or less the same things. There was some shared reality under the control of various political, cultural, and economic elites or centers. But as modernism advanced, and the variation of individual perception became recognized, people evolved into the second degree of perception. Perceptualism, the story as a text chosen by the speaker, developed. Currently we are dealing with the third degree of perception, which allows for the individual to make use of his/her text as a means to express him/herself. According to Lipovetsky the ethical universe of the postmodern world is characteristic of the third degree of perception. The contemporary, postmodernist self functions as a self-sufficient source of ethical action. According to Lipovetsky, just as the principle of chaos reveals how a myriad of seemingly



atomized elements really possess order, individualist postmodern society possesses an ethical logic and identity.

During the modernist era, ethics was the sacrifice of the self to the collective good. In the postmodern era, the pursuit of the self, and not the abnegation of the self, is the route to ethical action. Therefore, Letiche (1998:146) makes the interesting observation that postmodern organizations try to be pleasurable, they are places of learning, challenge, creativity, and achievement. Identity-formation takes place as negotiated processes of interaction. The self will seek responsibility and opportunity for self-realization. Whereas modern employers focused on being rule-driven and compliance orientated, the postmodern employer needs commitment and creativity. To succeed, they will have to recognize and engage the employees' self. It is however much easier for employers to initiate ethical audits and codes of conduct than to address the self in the workplace. It is much safer to lay down the law and punish transgressions and to insist that employees "fit in" with "the way we do things around here" rather than to facilitate the type of dialogue that opens up the proverbial Pandora's box of difference and dissensus. Yet, in the increasingly decentralized context of global, multinational organizations, and virtual work environments, the lack of physical proximity and supervision and unprecedented new moral challenges, make individual discretion and independent moral thinking essential. Top-down ethical rhetoric, as part and parcel of "corporate communication" enacts a mere simulacrum of the self and can only serve to uphold artificial power relations and manipulative mechanisms to improve short term results. The alternative is for managers to learn new negotiating skills, wherein they really take on the challenge of seeking moral congruence and self-development within a more flexible and creative organization (Letiche 1998:147).

Postmodern organizational identity has a very specific character because of its recognition and protection of Otherness. The seemingly negative experience of Otherness can play a significant role in the creation of meaning within the organization. Interaction with the Other becomes the principle which structures meaning. The existence of another in the organization brings it to the continual realization that it is not complete. The fundamental, intractable compulsion of social life to reconcile this difference, to fill its own lack and



desire for recognition drives the organization towards continual reassessment and creative adaptations. Difference is therefore not dealt with by insisting on sameness, rather the Other functions to subvert restrictive rational arrangements.

Postmodern organizational theory emphasizes the paradoxical nature of organization. Not only does it hold together a range of unique individuals with a variety of skills, competencies and backgrounds, but it also links a number of diverse functions with one another whilst interacting with a constantly changing environment. Traditional organizational theory values "shared meaning", because it views the organization as a definitive cultural form that should embody the consensus. Postmodern organization theory stresses the fact that shared meaning is in reality impossible, and always incomplete. Shared meaning is nothing more than the deferral of difference. When organizational culture is viewed in this way, one should expect it to be paradoxical. In fact, strong cultures may be an indication of strong internal division.

Viewing *organizational culture* from a postmodern perspective is particularly interesting in terms of one of the main issues in this dissertation, namely the question of how one goes about linking unique individuals to organizational structures which function as collective without undermining individual freedom and particularities. Both culture and organization can be regarded as mediating terms between the determination of generalities and the agency of individuals. Describing culture means accounting for both the instabilities of social order and the rules of disorder (Parker 2000:4). For a long time, "culturalism" was regarded as the answer to management's prayers, since it allows them to solve the organization's problems by manipulating the beliefs, rituals and language of their employees. However, it has since become clear that a simplistic view that sees organizational culture as something that is "manageable" and that seamlessly ties the whole organization together as a homogeneous social bond, is untenable. Parker (2000:1) suggest that organizational cultures should be seen as "fragmented unities" in which members sometimes identify themselves in terms of the collective and at other times as divided individuals. Organizations are "fragmented unities", or patterned collectives with distinctive cultures

which each derives from elements such as its particular histories, geographies, and key actors.

An enquiry into the origins and development of the terms "organization" and "culture" reveal that they were initially used as verbs, and not as nouns. To use "organization" solely as a noun is to ignore the fact that it is first and foremost a verb and therefore a practical accomplishment (Parker 2000:50). Nowadays culture is usually used in reference to a state of affairs or an entity, but its medieval meaning was that of a process, i.e. the tending of natural growth, or cultivation. When one looks at culture from this perspective, it becomes clear that it is responsible for structuring the memories, identities and analogies of those who participate in it. These memories, analogies and identities indeed only really make sense within such a framework. Culture provides a skeleton of assumptions and a historical context. In the process of structuring the world in this way, one makes use of language, which as the poststructuralist argue so convincingly, have an endless array of possible meanings depending on the context. What's more, language can be used in a wide variety of ways. Regional, occupational, ethnic and other divisions give rise to particular local lexicons, turns of phrase and grammatical constructions. These are subsets of the overall language and are usually referred to as 'dialects'. Organizational cultures both resemble and deviate from the general context, and are therefore both similar and unique. Every organization responds to the generalizable 'structural pressures' of the broader society, such as the economy and culture, but at the same time each organization mediates and reproduces these pressures in a local manner (Parker 2000:92). Organizations are institutions that structure industrial societies and individual experience, but they are also themselves structured by industrial society and individual experience. This suggests multiple crosscutting dialects and hence many possible interpretations of the "cultures of" the organization. Members define their particular organizational culture when they describe it in their vernacular dialect. The interpretive strategies that members and analysts employ to classify sameness and difference therefore become of paramount importance to describing organizational culture. Yet, it has to be acknowledged that the actors within the organizational environment are heterogeneous and that it therefore becomes essential to situate any description within a historical context. Culture, structure, and power are described by Parker (2000: 94) as

contested relations, not material things. This however does not mean that they cannot "do" things to achieve various projects or that they do not represent strong forces within the organization.

Parker's (2000:188) analysis of the fragmented character of organizational cultures, point out that various types of divisions within the organization can cause a seemingly homogeneous culture to display huge internal disputes. Parker identifies three variables that may cause these divisions. They are spatial or functional divisions, referring to geographic and/or departmental divides ('them over there, us over here'); generational, that is age and/ or historical divides ('them from that time, us from this time'); occupational/ professional divides ('them who do that, us who do this'). Parker (2000: 108) illustrates how managers and doctors working within the same hospital have different perceptions on what the organization stands for and how it should operate. This was due not only to their occupational differences, but also the introduction of new information technology that the doctors failed to see the need for within the context of their daily functions. Behind the "team" rhetoric that was constantly emphasized in the organizational culture, Parker (2000:117) found clear differences, even antagonism. In the case of a manufacturing company, the divisions were mainly along departmental, geographical, and historical lines. Whereas the upper management had cozy, homely offices, the factory managers' offices were impersonal and functional. In addition, the upper management was relatively "new" to the company, whereas the old-timers down in the factory had been part of the company "family" all along. When considering this, one begins to appreciate the fact that the company's "family" rhetoric was no more than a nostalgia for "the way things used to be", and that it did not accurately reflect the reality of a fragmented company culture (Parker 2000:154).

When discussing diversity in an organizational setting, one tends to think in terms of ethnic, gender or religious plurality as the main issues. However when speaking to the managers of South African businesses, it soon becomes clear that when they use the terms "us and them" it is often in reference to other variables, such as differences in training and education, professional background, perceived status, the spatial organization of the

workplace, as well as geographical factors. All these differences should be accounted for when considering value-systems in the organization.

Alvesson (1998:115) makes a similar point in when he warns that a single prominent metaphor such as a "family" or a "team" cannot adequately describe organizational culture. Such references usually represent an over-simplification of the social reality. He argues that metaphors provide no more than a broad and imprecise impression of a phenomenon, so that many "hidden" metaphors are needed to support the main metaphor by giving it meaning and direction. Alvesson (1998:118) refers to first-level metaphors which function as general designators of the company cultures, and second-level metaphors, which structures the understanding of the metaphors. This interplay between various metaphors represents a distinct advantage because of metaphors' ability to stimulate creativity and new insights. Two different organizations using the metaphor "game" in describing their organizational culture may have very different second-level metaphors. For instance, in a hierarchical organization the game-metaphor can be supported by metaphors such as "competition sports", with each player assigned a certain "position", "playing by the rules". In another organization, the metaphor may be supported by "creatively play", being a "free child losing oneself in the game", having "fun" etc. These two cultures will clearly be very different, even though they may use the same first-level metaphor. Alvesson (1998:124) calls this metaphorical drifting. In a postmodern organization, this needn't be a problem, since the use of second level metaphors allows an organization to creatively reassess and redefine their culture in changing circumstances by adding new second-level metaphors. It enables newcomers and visionaries to provide inputs into the organization and thereby stimulate growth. Employees become aware of the fact that they can creatively interact with their institution. This stimulates them to reassess and redefine what the organization really stands for and where it is going.

## **5.2. Framework for dealing with moral issues in the workplace:**

Many criticisms are leveled against the use of 20th century continental philosophy in the field of ethics. One of the most common accusations is that it is so disillusioned with the

rational powers of the transcendental subject, that it ends up deconstructing all possible suggestions substituting it with any concrete proposals of its own.

It is therefore important to provide at least a framework, or agenda, for dealing with moral issues in pluralistic organizations. The framework should allow the instilling of values and creation of guidelines for moral decision-making in the workplace to take place. This should be done without suppressing the individual's moral values and background, or allowing the organization to disintegrate because of a lack of shared moral values and practices.

### **5.2.1. A holistic view of the relationship between bodiliness, nature, technology, language, and moral values is necessary.**

Thinkers such as Merleau-Ponty, and contemporary writers such as Lakoff and Johnson emphasize that morality and moral judgments are not the product of transcendental rationality but rather have to do with the embodied nature of human beings. It is about survival, and serves the purposes of both organizations and individuals.

Related to this is the fact that our perceptions of the world is not something we can divide into tidy categories such as facts and values, public and private, professional and personal. Our perceptions of the world can more accurately be described as "universal flesh", or as a network of relationships. Things commonly thought to be "objective" realities, may in fact be just further dimensions of variation. This has some bearing on our view of language as a relational network. Words indicate the differences between signifiers, and are not "pictures" of reality as the earlier Wittgenstein had us believe. Rather, words are part of language-games by which we define and redefine meaning in the ongoing play of signifiers.

Differences that may have determined the categories by which we divided our world and ourselves in the past are now acknowledged as interfaces. The ethical, political, social and economical are interfaces of the same reality rather than separate spheres governed by separate rules. In dealing with moral values we must therefore conceive and realize complex structures that can function holistically.

**5.2.2. Moral values should neither be dealt with as totalizing structures that repress difference, nor as oppositional differences that exclude commonality:**

The relational character of moral values implies that people define "the good" as a result of complex interactions. Positive/negative feedback, evaluation and re-evaluation and effective relationships all play a role in an individual's conception of what is morally good.

Instead of referring to a subject's "core" or assuming a "centered self", this dissertation came to the conclusion that most people display distributed selves. Most people operate according to a relational subjectivity, in which their relationships with others and their interaction within certain context allows them to "change gear" or to shift their emphases in terms of what constitutes their identity in any given situation. It would therefore be meaningless to refer to a subject's core or assume a centered self. The web of values that the individual draws on in different circumstances cannot be pre-determined. This may be the case when an employer disbars personal or religious values from the workplace. An individual's selection of significant values remains quite unpredictable and random.

Moral discourse is the process by which people define and redefine the "good" in terms of the nature and purpose of their individual and collective pursuits. These moral values form webs of relations by which individuals are aligned to the collective, but from which they can also distance themselves as they develop new insights. The concept of "Mitsein" designates the interaction with others that determines one's moral values and disposition. This process assumes and relies on an ongoing dialogue as to what values are held in common by the collective and what constitutes "moral free space" within which the individual can hold private norms and beliefs. It allows the individual some latitude for dissociation whilst acknowledging the possibility that there should be sufficient consensus. In some cases, the individual may however have to sever his or her ties with the collective.



### 5.2.3. Truth is seen as a function of networks of relations and guidelines for moral behavior are temporary in nature:

Moral discourse in pluralistic environments can only function effectively within certain parameters. Many philosophers have searched for moral minimums and universal values, but this dissertation does not support this approach as main paradigm for practicing ethics in organizational contexts. However, it has to be acknowledged that broad principles provide a framework within which a pragmatist has room to maneuver, and, without which, the process of renegotiating substantive values would be impossible. The following substantive parameters support the version of pragmatism suggested by this dissertation.

- **Temporary meaning**

A pragmatic approach to moral issues in the workplace has to allow for the fact that every context, situation, and person is unique and that there is therefore no one solution to any ethical dilemma. When it comes to solving moral dilemmas, many approaches, principles policies, structures and guidelines rub shoulders in the workplace. Therefore, no single principles should enjoy absolute priority or exclusive consideration. When dealing with an ethical dilemma, guidelines should be used as precisely that - something to guide people in their moral decision-making, and not in a prescriptive or deterministic way. Advice should be sought, various perspectives should be considered, contextual variables should be taken into account. On-going discussion is the key to developing moral skill. Dissent on moral issues should be welcomed as part of the creation of a strong moral discourse and differences should be discussed. Doubts and uncertainty must not be viewed as moral weakness, but rather as moral seriousness and commitment.

- **Remaining connected:**

Individuals must see themselves as part of an ever-changing, ever-evolving web of relations with which to associate. These webs function according to the following precepts: 1) It relies on the principle of freedom of association: The individual must choose to be part of the web of relations based on certain shared conceptions of the good. 2) It must allow for moral free space. The individual must be allowed to be different from the collective in

certain respects without being judged or rejected because of it. The individual must be acknowledged as "distributed self" who is more than that which he/she shares with the collective and should be appreciated as such. 3) Diversity must be appreciated and acknowledged as strength, since it is only through difference that intersubjective interaction succeeds in correcting self-interested behavior and unbridled quests for power.

#### **5.2.4. The individual subject must be exposed to others in order to avoid relativistic or self-interested, egoistic behavior.**

One of the main threats to moral behavior is the isolated individual, or the so-called self-maximizing individual of late-modernism. These individuals have internalized the division between various life-worlds advocated during the peak of the modernist era to such an extent that moral considerations are limited to the private sphere and any interaction with and responsibility towards others are excluded. When combined with a form of pragmatism that allows a measure of moral relativism, this radical individualism may lead to a dangerous form of subjectivity. Moral relativism can only be tolerated in a context in which individual subjectivity is continually decentered through interaction with Others. Both the ideas of Levinas and Caputo are relevant here. Levinas describes what he calls "the face of the Other" that calls one to responsibility. He also alludes to the powers a transcendental force (God) who breaks through my subjectivist closure through the face of the Other. Caputo refrains from appealing to God or any transcendental force, but acknowledges an obligation that bounds one, overtakes one, when one is confronted with the Other. It seems then, that intersubjectivity, whether through dialogue or the presence of the Other in some other form, is the only way to avoid subjectivist closure.

#### **5.2.5. The importance of dialogue:**

Some procedural guidelines stemming from the insights of philosophical approaches to business ethics, can provide the broad framework within which a more pragmatic approach can safely be adopted. The importance of engaging into dialogue on moral issues in the workplace relies on the following precepts: Every stakeholder involved with business practices has a conception of the good. The organization cannot function morally if these

conceptions of the good are not explained by every party, discussed, negotiated and renegotiated for each specific context. The dialogue must therefore be open to ALL involved parties. Furthermore, all involved must communicate openly, honestly, and freely. The existence of unequal power relations (the impossibility of Habermas' ideal speech situation) must be acknowledged and addressed in ways appropriate to the issue and context.

### **5.3. Support from current trends in business ethics:**

It is interesting to note that elements within the suggested framework are reflected in and supported by many of the current trends in the business ethics field. These are some of the important issues in the debate:

#### **5.3.1. A more holistic perspective:**

Frederick (1995:243) argues convincingly that economics and nature are but two sides of the same coin. Economizing behavior originated within natural evolutionary processes and continues to serve an anti-entropic, life-supporting function for humankind. The technology of economizing is in fact what makes that outcome possible. In his new normative synthesis he attempts to marry the normative approaches of business ethicists with the natural business values that he sees operative in the business environment. Frederick's theory therefore confirms the embodied character of values on various levels of the organization. He argues for instance that a manager's values are embodied in his or her perception, attitudes, and behavior, which in turn expresses the forces - both natural and cultural - involved in the formation and operationalization of values (Frederick 1995: 110). Value commitments express symbolic human meanings that are used to bring order and significance into human transactions. Because of the inclusive nature of people's value commitments, their individual life histories play a role in their decisions and actions and causes X-factor values which cannot always be accurately assessed or predicted (Frederick 1995:100). X-factor values refer to the variation that exists between individuals in spite of

the sameness imposed on the managerial scene by personal, organizational, and societal filters (Frederick 1995:121).

Frederick's holistic approach goes even (1995:56) further than the micro-ethical level (level of individual values, decisions and conduct) in that he links the basic nature of business operations to nature and the physical world. The three original values of what Frederick (1995:56) depicts as value-cluster 1, i.e. economizing, growth and systemic integrity, are rooted in the nature of the physical world and in the operation of its natural laws. It therefore has a vital and indispensable role in the continuation of life. He also identifies further value clusters. Power-aggrandizing values include hierarchical (rank-order) organization, managerial decision-power, power-system equilibrium and power aggrandizement. Ecologizing values include linkage, diversity, homeostatic succession and community. Technological values include instrumental pragmatics, cooperative-coordinative relations, technical expertise, public openness and participatory leveling.

Frederick (1995: 275) maintains that ethical business behavior has no single meaning; it is a thoroughly relative phenomenon. It is relative to nature's economizing and ecologizing processes, to varying socio-cultural conventions, to a company's culture and ethical climate, to a firm's commitment to power aggrandizement, to the practitioners' personal values, and to stakeholder participation. It does however have some substantive moral meaning, which may arise from any of the sources that Frederick distinguishes in his analysis of the various value clusters. Nature, culture, society, organizations, individuals, and stakeholders all contribute multiple ethical meanings that Frederick (1995:275) aptly calls the "ethics stewpot". It therefore becomes impossible to address moral issues in the workplace without a thoroughly holistic and pragmatic approach.

Gustafson (2000:442) also argues for ethical holism. He points out that because it is extremely difficult to predict an employee's ethical behavior, it is important to appoint people who see their work ethics to be an extension of their personal ethics. Gustafson (2000:442) believes that one has more reason to trust employees if their behavior is rooted in a deeper personal belief structure, since this belief structure forms the basis of a

person's character. Because employers are concerned about ethical consistency, rooted, holistic ethics that can be applied both at home and at work seem to make a lot of sense.

The problem with Gustafson's argument is that it assumes a centered self that will act consistently in terms of core beliefs. Personal beliefs are indeed important and should be allowed to play a role in the workplace, but not because it will guarantee consistent behavior in all circumstances. These beliefs broaden the "web of beliefs", on which the individual can draw when in need of guidance. In doing so, the individual may selectively emphasize various parts of the web of beliefs under different circumstances. There can therefore be no guarantee for completely consistent moral behavior.

Gustafson's (2000:446) holistic theory however makes a lot of sense in its recognition of the fact that the principles included in a person's holistic world view do not function abstractly, disenfranchised from the rest of the person's life. Rather, this world-view is epistemic in nature - it is what we know cognitively - but it also has habits of response associated by what are sensible. In a study done by Brytting & Trollestad (2000:62) on managerial thinking about values-based management, all interviewees agreed with the idea that working life is becoming more personal. They however expressed varying opinions on why this might be the case. They differed with regard to the possible motives behind increased interest in values in organizational and managerial thinking. Although some attributed it to social-deterministic dynamics, many others offered a so-called voluntaristic standpoint, which regards this personalization as the result of individuals' active choices based on values.

### **5.3.2. Moral frameworks as non-totalizing structures:**

There have been exhaustive debates on how moral values should be managed in the workplace. There are those who believe that ethics, like job performance, quality and safety standards should be managed by strict compliance procedures and exhaustive monitoring systems. Others have argued that the unprecedented challenges of information technology, the decentralization of the workplace and the increased emphasis on flat organizational structures and the empowerment of employees have made this impossible. Weaver & Trevino

(1999:316) conducted a study to assess the relative benefits of compliance, versus values-based ethics programs. They cite evidence which would indicate that programs emphasizing values, counseling, and responsible conduct are likely to have more desirable and long-lasting impacts than programs founded on rule-compliance. A broader survey of Fortune 1000 firms found that the compliance orientation of many American companies is the result of executives' awareness of the United State Sentencing Commission's Guidelines and the penalties to be paid if strict procedures, structures and programs are not in place to force compliance.

Weaver & Trevino (1999:318) concluded that values and compliance orientations need not be mutually exclusive. For example, a strong values-based ethics program can coexist with a number of rules and disciplinary mechanisms. On its own, compliance approaches do little to generate moral imagination or commitment, and they may lead to a kind of minimalist "don't get caught " motivation. Behavioral monitoring suggests distrust of employees, and creates the impression that rules are imposed "top-down" on employees, rather than by creating values through identification and internalization processes (Weaver & Trevino 1999:323). The upside of compliance-based programs is that they may generate behavioral conformity and provide newcomers with a clear picture of "how things are done around here".

Values-based programs have the advantage of focusing on shared values, which makes the employee feel valued and respected and which in return creates a sense of obligation to the organization's goals. Values-based programs encourage the employee's ethical role identity and create a greater perception of organizational support that in turn can influence the employee's social exchange relationship with the organization. Values-based programs increase the employee's awareness of and concern for, ethical issues. This increases ethical advice seeking, and a willingness to blow the whistle on unethical behavior. The message of trust and reliance on the discretion of employees increases the commitment that individuals feel towards the organization. Open communication about ethics also results in the improvement of moral decision-making skills in the organization (Weaver & Trevino 1999:322).



The question remains however how one succeeds in marrying a strong moral values approach to business goals and practices. In his analysis of the value-clusters that function within the business environment, Frederick (1995:205) places a strong emphasis on technological values that link the two anti-entropic processes of economizing and ecologizing. Because technological values are compatible to both economizing and ecologizing, it can serve as mediator when either of the two threatens the other. The economizing goal values, i.e. productivity, growth and organizational integrity are enhanced by the application of technological values such as pragmatic methods, technical expertise, cooperative-coordinative workplace relations, attitudes of honesty-trust-openness, and the full participation of technically qualified personnel. Technical expertise also function to reveal the ecological risks of runaway economizing and assists in creating safe solutions to these problems. Criticisms against Frederick's approach such as that of Danley (2000:116) accuse him of having too many independent explanatory variables, which renders his theory incomprehensible. Yet it is precisely in his ability to view the interactions and relationships between different values and processes within the workplace that the strength of Frederick's approach lies. Frederick's theory acknowledges the fact that moral values in the workplace operate within a complex system in which the network of relationships often makes it difficult to determine simple cause and effect relationships.

Frederick is criticized by Danley (2000:118) for using technological values as evaluative standard to mediate conflicts between the other value clusters. Frederick (1995:206) asserts that technological values resonate with other, better-known ethical principles and value orientations that are widely respected and consistent with established societal institutions and practices. For instance, most business ethics theories place a high priority on honesty, truthfulness, and openness and insist on full and open participation of all those who hold a stake in corporate actions. Dialogue, empowerment, cooperation and community building also seem to be important values in business ethics literature. These are all values on which complex technological innovation and the complex systems of information technology are based. Frederick therefore appears to be correct in forging an alliance between business ethics and technology. This alliance does not only make theoretical sense, but also has interesting practical possibilities in terms of value creation. This is not to say

that technological innovation cannot create severe ethical problems of its own, or to deny that it confronts business ethics with unprecedented challenges. This however may be even more reason to use the values on which technology is based to the best possible advantage for promoting moral values.

### 5.3.3. Temporary meaning:

Collier & Esteban (1999:178) describe contemporary organizations as open, dynamic systems in the sense that its patterns of interaction with the environment are constantly changing. Secondly, they are complex systems, groups of agents whose interactions, although rule-governed, have unpredictable outcomes. Despite this, the organizations does not disintegrate into total disorder and randomness. It avoids dispersion through purposefulness, that is, by its ability to align itself internally while simultaneously responding to challenges from the environment. It is the *connectedness* of the organization that assures that the inner coherence of its members around a developing common purpose is maintained.

There are different views on how this common purpose should be maintained within the volatile business environment. Some argue that maintaining a set of common values defined by the creators of the organization provides stability. Employees, partners, clients and suppliers who can identify with these values are brought on board, but the values are never renegotiated. Others, such as Collier & Esteban (1999:180) argue that in the participative organization, governance is no longer the responsibility of a few top managers who "steer the boat". Governance becomes a quality of the boat itself and the shared responsibility of all in it. Collier & Esteban (1999:180) argue that it is only through being responsive, adaptive and by continually learning that organizations "settle" in a rapidly changing environment in the same way that a boat settles and becomes stable in a raging storm. Adaptability requires continuous differentiation. However, to avoid complete dispersion as a result of this differentiation, a corresponding process of integration is necessary.

This process allows individual employees to contribute to the natural evolution of those values that keep the organizational boat afloat, whilst at the same time harnessing these

individual efforts for a common purpose. In order to create non-totalizing structures, individuality, freedom, and discretion must be allowed, whilst at the same time, keeping the organization's purpose, its collective goods, in view. According to Collier & Esteban (1999:183) decision-making in participative organizations is likely to be characterized less by consensus and more by the constructive management of value dilemmas. Value differences should be allowed because they create a "virtuous learning circle". According to Collier & Esteban this requires a sensitive, altruistic and charismatic leadership which can nurture and integrate a diverse and flexible organization by supporting the process of dialogue and working for the emergence of shared values while at the same time listening to diverse view-points and affirming their potential contribution.

Problems arise when values-based management is seen as a tool for ensuring conformity of behavior and consistency in a volatile business environment, as managers often do when they establish clear-cut consensus in terms of existing organizational values. Brytting & Trollestad (2000:61) reports that a manager explained the need for values-based management as follows: "*Since, due to new organizational structures, we can no longer control our employees the same way as before, we must find new ways. To create common values can be a pedagogical tool which may increase loyalty with the top level of the organization*". In fact, most interviewees in the Brytting & Trollestad (2000:62) study argued that their organizations and management has instrumental motives behind the widespread talk about values in working life.

Some respondents to the Brytting & Trollestad's (2000:62) study however argued that employees increasingly demand interesting and meaningful work with the possibility of personal development, participation and independence. In organizations where the majority of employees display these needs, instrumental abuse of values to create conformity and to serve management goals will not have the desired effect. Yet, it remains difficult to convince managers that the agreement on values in the organization is merely a postponed dissent, and that the long-term goal of gaining employees' loyalty through granting them autonomy, freedom and trust is worth the initial risk of involving all employees in a truly participative discussion. The "consensus" developing through this kind of dialogue may well

be only a very contextual, temporary solution, but it creates long-term benefits in terms of loyalty, trust and co-operation. This type of temporary consensus allows for new and innovative problem-solving and moral decision-making.

Vidaver-Cohen's (1997: 3) study of the moral imagination has shown that it becomes impossible for employees to develop the necessary moral decision-making skills to deal with unprecedented challenges if the institutional context of business-decision-making is not changed to accommodate challenges to the status quo. Moral imagination requires breaking out of the organizational problem-solving scripts and exploring a wide range of possibilities, including, most critically, new possible conceptual schemes. This cannot be left up to the individual's own moral values and conceptual skills, or the company's existing practices and procedures. An institutional re-orientation with regard to moral problem solving needs to take place. Vidaver-Cohen (1997:4) indicates two critical aspects in this process, namely that "challenging existing decision-making norms" and "considering the social or moral implications of managerial actions" must become institutionalized ways to approach organizational problem solving.

Vidaver-Cohen's study (1997:11) addresses both the context and the process components of the current American business environment. Globalization and the increased multi-cultural composition of work forces have left organizational value-systems in a state of transition. The organizational structures of many companies are moving towards eliminating excess managerial layers, promoting participation and empowerment and decentralizing decision-making. Technological developments also favor an approach that allows for individual discretion and creativity. The development of institutional parameters that support moral imagination in decision-makings may however be hindered by status conscious managers in less turbulent industries who limit the input of their employees and does not allow them to voice their concerns in a way that may influence business decisions (Vidaver-Cohen 1997:15).

#### **5.3.4. Being exposed to the Other:**

The truly participative organization exercises its freedom and creativity in reference to a communication framework that connects organizational "purposing" and individual

responsiveness. The ethical dimension of that communication framework is found in the fact that each individual is required to exercise moral judgment in decision-making. The individual decision however does not remain isolated from the rest of the organization. All voices must be heard in a participative environment. Because there is no acontextual, ahistorical overriding set of moral principles that tells the individual what to do, communities of discernment must be created within the organization. Within this community, freedom and creativity are exercised in a quest for what is just in a context where conflicting values exist.

Freedom as basis for participation within organizations is never merely arbitrary or self-justifying, but rather continually challenged by its tendency to reflect its origins. Collier & Esteban (1999:183) explains: "*Freedom does not constitute the 'world'; it allows participation in a world which is already given, and for which we are responsible.*" Responsibility defines our freedom, so that in order to understand our freedom we must seek the source of our responsibility. Levinas argues that the source of our responsibility is found in alterity, the "otherness" of the Other. Without the "other", the "self" would not exist. In organizations, responsibility is defined by roles and functions. That is - responsibility for initiatives and achievements and a greater or lesser responsibility for shared outcomes. But according to Collier & Esteban, participative organizations are also grounded in a more profound foundational responsibility. This responsibility is the deep commitment of each member to the good of the 'other', whose very existence defines his or her own self and with whom she or he shares a commitment to the overall task. According to Collier and Esteban (1999:184) the recognition of and respect for "otherness" is the ethical glue which strengthens integration and participation and in this way supports communities of commitment.

It could be argued that exposing the individual to the opinions, beliefs and needs of others could be critical to the development of that person's moral decision-making skills. Foucault's explanation of the "critical ontology of the self" makes it clear that the development of the self is in fact "kick started" by deliberate participation in "limit experiences". This involves putting our beliefs and values at risk at the table of dissent in



order to demonstrate to ourselves how our potential has been limited by the internalization of particular discursive practices (Brewis 1998:65). This initiates a process of self-formation in the individual's moral identity, instead of conformation to abstract ethical codes, which are external to the self. In this way, self-policing and self-motivation is made possible. Foucault describes this strategy of internalized values as "lived morality"

#### 5.3.5. Dialogue:

Dialogue presupposes the acceptance of both the notions that it is important to be exposed to and open towards the Other, as well as the recognition that all meaning is temporary and revisable. This is because of the fact that dialogue is an intense interaction between individuals, in which new meaning is created or at least new insights into previous meanings are stimulated. Dialogue may however easily be undermined by various contextual realities. Habermas has for instance been severely criticized for his assumption that something like the ideal speech situation is at all plausible. In organizational settings one seldom reaches a situation in which all participants have equal access and freedom to participate in the conversation with their superiors. Hierarchies and power relationships also make a non-coercive environment hard to attain.

A study done by Ryan (2000:80) indicates how micro-political strategies within organizations, such as information control, flexibility and stagecraft, can influence genuine participation in dialogue and other participative strategies within organizations. Information control is concerned with the ways in which information (whether it is being given or received) is manipulated by the individual in order to bring about a required outcome. Flexibility refers to actions individuals take to maintain their freedom of action and keep their options open. Stagecraft involves various forms of impression management, and includes role-playing, which is deliberately undertaken for political purposes. All three these factors create a gap between the rhetoric of participation and its experienced reality. While senior managers may assert their support for the essential elements of participation, such as sharing information, their acquired political skills in terms of manipulating support prior to the conversation etc., may affect or inhibit true participation in the dialogue (Ryan 2000:85). Furthermore, true participative decision-making tends to make the behavior of



decision-makers less predictable, and the decision itself less clear, and may run counter to cultural values. Ryan (2000:85) warns that what is pragmatism and flexibility in one culture, may seem like a lack of commitment or principle in another. Thirdly, the pre-existing cultural milieu may present individuals with risks they perceive can only be dealt with by role-playing. This leads to the distortion of information being provided to others.

Because of all these factors, Ryan (2000:86) indicates the importance of recognizing the fact that information is not a matter of pre-existing facts to be found and interpreted through social interaction. Information creation is itself part of the process. Ryan (2000:86) found that 67% of managers employing participative strategies within their organizations thought that decision-making required the reconciliation of the claims of competing groups, but did not recognize that information is being created by the process itself. A true challenge to existing problems or the expression of honest opinions can only be realized if participants have the necessary skills and other political resources for making such a challenge, and where appropriate social processes are in place. Another aspect that increases the perception that true participation in organizational environments is only a matter of rhetoric, is the fact that 40% of the participants in Ryan's (2000:87) study admitted that formal meetings within their organizations merely endorsed decisions that were made elsewhere. Participative decision-making is aimed at broadening the spectrum of knowledge, and giving expression to the fact that alternative views on reality can give greater depth to the organizational knowledge base if allowed to be brought into play.

Many arguments against engaging in dialogue as part of values-based management have been made. One of the main arguments is that of a lack of time. Commitment and understanding about the organization's values is aimed at long-term gains and demands considerable time and energy over an extended period of time. Another problem is that of a fear of change. Many managers perceive open discussion about values as a considerable risk, undermining their sense of security and control (Brytting & Trollestad 2000:67). Other managers argue that dialogue is acceptable as long as it serves the purpose of making it clear to employees what the organization expects of them. In fact, Brytting and Trollestad (2000:65) report that top management defines what is commendable and what should be part of employees'

value system. A manager is reported to have explained it as follows: *"It is all about spelling out the goal, and then we communicate it downwards. We develop, dismiss, and recruit staff according to our values. Those who cannot join in have to find something else."* Clearly this approach sees dialogue not as part of the process of the development and definition of values, but as a way of ensuring compliance with top management's values.

Brytting & Trollestad (2000:65) did however find other managerial approaches to values-based management in their survey. Some of these assume that the process of dialogue is aimed at getting employees to buy into values already defined by top-management. In such cases, the group may discuss top management vision and break it down into sub-parts adjusted for each area of operation. Others seem to aim at a more communicative strategy where employees actually have the opportunity to influence and work out a common vision. One manager who believes in this kind of approach described it in the following terms: *"Openness is important to us, and that everybody is involved; to have a real dialogue with everybody and let them influence the organization's result."*

Collier & Esteban (1999:183) support this notion in their study of the survival of contemporary business organizations in volatile environments through participatory values-based management. They make it clear that this approach can only succeed in organizations where moral argumentation takes place in a climate of openness, where the freedom to express views is paralleled by the obligation to hear those of others, and where difference demands creative empathy, insights and intuition.

#### **5.4. Conclusion:**

This chapter indicated that developments within contemporary organizations necessitate a very contextualized approach to dealing with moral issues in the workplace. This approach needs to acknowledge the way in which individuals' distributed identities interact with power relations and other complex variables within the organization. Furthermore, a holistic view of organizational identity and culture as ever-changing, dynamic processes sets the scene for developing a framework for dealing with moral issues in the workplace. The framework



developed in this chapter addresses these realities by incorporating the following elements: a holistic perspective on how moral values operate in the workplace; an emphasis on non-totalizing value-systems; a view of truth as a function of networks of relations; the importance of confronting the individual with the Other; and a strategy of unapologetic dialogue. These elements also seem to reflect current trends in the broader business ethics debate. It is the conviction of this dissertation that this framework will enable organizations to respect and utilize individual diversity, whilst at the same time maintaining unity and cooperation. The practical implications of this framework for dealing with moral difference in concrete organizations, will be discussed in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 6: Case study discussion

The question often raised at the end of a dissertation is "So what?" Do the insights developed here present us with a better way of understanding our context and does it provide useful strategies for dealing with our unique challenges? This chapter is not at all an attempt to verify the insights developed in this dissertation. It is merely an attempt to reflect on contemporary South African organizations from the vantage point of the perspectives developed in this dissertation, and to make some preliminary suggestions on how the framework set out in Chapter 5 may shed some new light on the functioning of these organizations.

Due to the nature and scope of this dissertation, it was not possible to do an in-depth empirical study of the organizations involved. The analysis was in each instance based on a single conversation with a leading manager of each of the three organizations. It therefore represents a very incomplete impression of the way in which these managers facilitate unity amongst a work force that presents a number of diverse value systems. While this analysis may therefore not be comprehensive, it is an attempt to translate the theoretical views of this dissertation to practical insights about concrete situations. The choice of the organizations was based on the fact that they were thought to deal with different issues and present a variety of perspectives. The first is a secular business organization with a diverse composition led by a Christian manager. The second is an urban missionary organization that operates from a Christian confessional basis, but includes people from various denominations, cultures and languages. The third is a Dutch Reformed congregation, which operates under the auspices of a specific denomination, but includes various forms of spiritualities, ages, genders, as well as theological views. In addition, this congregation is also moving in the direction of becoming multi-cultural and multi-lingual. These organizations will be discussed in terms of: a) the extent to which they display contemporary organizational trends, and b) The way they deal with moral values in the workplace and how it corresponds or differs from the Chapter 5's framework for dealing with moral issues.

## 6.1. Case study 1: MBD

### 6.1.1. Background on MBD:

At the outset, it is important to establish how MBD views its vital elements (core values). Information from the MBD-web site is very instructive in this regard.

*As in life, so in law, vital elements must coexist and thrive to ensure continuing processes of sustenance and growth.*

Sensitive to this understanding, we at Munnik Basson and Da Gama (MBD) Incorporated orchestrate our own vital elements to deliver specialised legal services to the corporate world. Services that are masterminded to ensure our clients receive peace of mind and assurance of quality and commitment. Services have to be delivered with focus, discipline and precision to ensure dependable, value-for-money results.

In daring to be different from the legal pack, we always strive to go the extra mile. Our ethos of consummate professionalism is driven exclusively by the merits of the legal system and the specialised and often demanding requirements of our growing client base. While respecting and upholding the time-honoured traditions of the legal profession, we believe excellence in legal services today must also be driven by an ethos of innovation and a vision of the wider horizons.

Today's burgeoning global culture and our mounting quest to exploit new technologies, pioneer new business methodologies and seek to enhance the human condition are accelerating processes of change. Challenges are increasing in scope and complexity, thereby compelling us all to find smarter ways of doing things. We at MBD Incorporated believe we are a dependable, caring and innovative company of lawyers for discerning clients who also believe in the merits of going the extra mile.

Vital elements...blending and orchestrating the vital characteristics of freshness and alertness and knowledge, integrity, honesty and stability, inspiration, enthusiasm and motivation, and empathy, adaptability and supportiveness to ensure service excellence and sound growth for mutual prosperity.



## VITAL ELEMENTS

### *Thriving together for mutual prosperity*

At MBD Incorporated the fusion of vital elements is the imaginative and responsible orchestration of important values, skills and resources to provide our clients with tangible benefits in the form of expert knowledge, stable and dependable systems and energised people. Our offices and infrastructure provide refuge in a world of challenge, complexity and change - a sense of assurance that client needs and expectations will be met while we thrive and grow together in mutual prosperity.

In our culture at MBD water signifies our freshness, adaptability, empathy, support and care in our willingness and ability to support people, express positive emotion, solve problems and network across different yet connected interests, disciplines, needs and cultures to the benefit of our valued clients. We are the healing, cleansing waters to sustain our clients and provide beneficial solutions. Adaptable and fluid, we go with the flow.

In the distinctive culture of MBD air symbolises our vitality, freshness, alertness and knowledge in our willingness and ability to communicate, share, intellectualise, ideate and manage information to the benefit of our valued clients. We would like to believe that these qualities come as a breath of fresh air to our clients.

At MBD the element of fire is manifest in our culture of inspiration, vitality, enthusiasm and the energy to transform or transmute, as well as the passion in our willingness and ability to drive, energise and adapt our business to the benefit of our valued clients. We are a light of inspiration and a powerful force for tangible and beneficial change. Our fire warms, heals and illuminates.

At MBD we strive to nurture and manage a strong foundation of goodness and stability in our willingness and ability to build a fertile basis for growth and expansion without losing

sight of the need to maintain integrity, honesty and simplicity in all our client transactions. We are down-to-earth because we are honest, stable, unpretentious, giving and supportive.

#### **6.1.2. Verbatim of discussion with MBD's CEO: Frans Basson (translated from Afrikaans)**

MBD's Chief Executive Officer, Frans Basson, places a high priority on ethical business practices and talks openly and enthusiastically about his company's practices in this regard.

*Your company has a very diverse composition. How do you deal with the diversity of cultures, religions and languages when dealing with moral issues in the workplace?*

We tell our people that they are all like chests of drawers. You have a personal drawer and a business drawer. If you open both draws, the chest of drawers will fall over. You have to open one drawer at a time. If you walk in here, you open the business drawer and you close the personal drawer. In your business drawer is your business values, norms and principles. We cannot afford to accommodate all the personal values of people belonging from diverse cultures - that will never work. The in-business culture is devoted to the new South Africa, but is also committed to quality. Initially we were using the Christian values of honesty, integrity etc as our base, but since we have grown bigger, we have translated these values to principles. We have identified these principles in order to give our people guidance. Therefore we hand them each this key ring that is also a compass, to bring home the fact that these principles should guide their conduct.

We break down segregation through uniformity. All our staff wears uniforms. They are different but the same. Each one has his/her own task, with a specific job description. In order to ensure that this job gets done, we have a non-conformance procedure. Yet we don't ask the question: *Who did it?* We rather ask: *"What went wrong?"* We manage our value-systems in a different way. We do not use the non-conformance procedure, rather we engage in dialogue with all the affected parties, in order to manage the values by finding out the thoughts about ethics that lie behind it.

*It seems as if you don't attempt to force values down people's throats through compliance?*

No, we rather enter into conversation with the person, through coaching, we try to find out what people were thinking. We indicate our values as symbols. You can look at our web site [www.mbd.co.za](http://www.mbd.co.za). to see how we indicate our value-systems.

*You make a very clear distinction between the personal drawer and the business drawer.*

*Does it ever happen that the one spill over into the other?*

Yes, it does happen, but then we remind them, remember you must close that draw. We help them to do it. The moment you try to manage values on a personal level, it will fail. This is a very important point.

*Do you allow a person to draw on his/ her own cultural or religious background when making decisions?*

Yes, we even expose them to religious views by for instance showing the Jesus-film. We furthermore have a strong relationship with Campus Crusade for Christ. We used them to present a course on motivation, which was excellent.

We use the Tree of Knowledge as metaphor: this tree grows only if all the values are used. Work can provide the environment for the tree to grow in, but the person grows by him/herself. We use the principles of self-policing, self-management, self-motivation, but we give people the framework within which they can move freely. If somebody goes outside this framework, we investigate. From a business point of view, a procedural perspective, we use our non-conformance procedure to deal with the person. We ask: "What went wrong?" It could be that the framework was not properly defined, and then we correct that.

Moral aspects cannot be defined in the same, precise way. People must develop insight into these aspects, and use a lot of discretion. Here we use dialogue to bring the person towards seeing that his behaviour was out of line with what we as business expected from him.

*What do you think is the importance of leading by example?*

Yes, I do. Let me give you an example. When I started this business I left my previous employer who at that stage owed me a lot of money. Two employees decided they are

coming with me, even if I cannot pay them salaries straight away. They stole R 3 000 worth of stationary and brought it with them to my business, saying that we should take all we can because they owe us so much more. I didn't want to report the theft and have them prosecuted, but I deducted this amount from the money owed to me by the previous business.

*How did you deal with the employees?*

I explained to them that too strong loyalty can lead to dishonesty and that this is unacceptable and that I had to correct their mistake.

*What types of ethical issues do you encounter in your business?*

Mostly we need honesty, uprightness, and trust. Unconditionally. Some cultures condone certain lies. Here the principle of the drawers is applied again - its different at work than at home. Evaluate it according to the company's principles.

*How do you go about your value-creation process?*

We do it in a variety of ways. We do it on weekends away, but it is also an integral part of our circle meetings once a month. During these meetings, we try to develop a sense of the potential ethical problems that can crop up in the course of our work. For instance, in one of the circle meetings that was going on when we walked through the offices right now, they were discussing the access we have to the client's main frame and the ethical issues of dishonesty, etc that can crop up in these situations. Even closing a file involves many ethical decisions. We try to limit the temptations by having good systems and procedures in place. Bad systems are sometimes the cause of many ethical problems. We rectify the problem by addressing it in the business procedure.

*Would you say you are more rule-based than principled-based? When dealing with moral issues you seem to work more principles-based, whereas in terms of business practice you focus strongly on compliance?*

Yes, on the business side we tend to focus strongly on our non-conformance program and therefore on compliance. Yet we overlay compliance with a principles-based approach. We

deal with the two aspects separately when a problem crop up, but in practice the two go together. Moral issues that we identify when we do the non-conformance procedure are sent to HR. The person gets called in, and we conduct a conversation with the person in order to determine how the person thought.

*Does everyone always understand moral values the same, for instance, is there consensus about the meaning of honesty?*

No, let me give you a simple example. A line-manager did not communicate properly that Telkom's turnaround times had been changed due to retrenchments. Where they previously worked according to a 20-day turnaround, fewer staff meant that they were now on a 30 day turnaround. Our people were promising clients that their calls would be returned within 20 days, whereas we were actually only able to get back to them within 30 days. The clients complained that they were being lied to, or that they were misled. Whereas in fact it was a communication problem and our people did not intend to lie. Here ethics actually has to do with procedure. Proper procedure and ethics go hand in hand.

*Where is the emphasis in the company: rule-based systems or value-based systems?*

It's both really. There has to be compliance, there has to be certain rules, but we overlay ethical issues with procedure. The difference comes in how you manage the two: You manage your compliance through your non-conformance procedure, in line with your values and principles.

*Does your vision and mission keep people from diverse backgrounds together?*

Yes, we address moral issues by song and dance, we interpret it this way, very symbolic, very visual. People must buy into it, they must understand it. The only way to do this is through repetition, to make it visual and to make it fun, it must be understandable.

*People do not seem intimidated when you as CEO walk in. Why is this?*

Conformity is created through the similar uniforms that everyone is wearing. Everyone from myself to the person who sorts the mail wears it. You will notice that everyone feels on the same level.

*Do you think the African feeling of ubuntu has anything to do with this? Do you make something of African communal values?*

No, our principles originally came from the Christian values that were translated to pure business principles. Our vision is not to become yet another African Company. We want to compete internationally, we want to deliver quality service. That is why we benchmark internationally against ISO standards. We drive the ISO standards home through our compliance-system. HR and line-management drives ethics. If there is a problem, ISO drives our investigation, asking, "What went wrong?"

*You operate internationally. Did becoming a multinational company cause problems?*

It can cause problems, But once again: Sound Business Practices is the key. Every month we produce full financial statements for the whole board of directors. There is complete transparency, we look at profits and losses and we consistently benchmark against ISO standards.

*When I listen to you speaking, it seems as if quality and effectiveness is very important values to you. Do you think these values have a moral content?*

Quality and effectiveness matters to us. It is managed in a different way, but it is an integral part of our moral principles. I always say: "It's a sin to sell your client an inferior service. IT'S A SIN." Service matters morally. You manage the two aspects differently, but they form an integral unity.

*You see a lack of quality as a moral transgression?*

Yes, you touch the core of your clients being and his personal space. Bad service becomes a personal, morality issue. Moral judgments are made about your company. You cannot separate business and morality. The one, who separates the two, does not understand business. He does not understand his client. We deliver a highly specialized service that is non-tangible. Therefore the value we place on moral judgments must be so much higher. Our client cannot evaluate the quality of our service directly. We are the experts. They just don't have that knowledge and expertise.



*They must therefore trust you completely?*

Yes, and if we ask our client to describe MBD in a few words, and we have asked them this, you will consistently find the same answer: honesty, integrity and quality. We ask our clients, we do studies on our clients and ask them how they experience our quality, our integrity. We determined nine quality determinants, by which we test what is important to our clients. We measure perceived value, versus expected value, etc.

*Do you attempt to match your client's culture by having an employee from the same culture deal with him/her?*

It's about language. If you come across a person to whom you must speak on his level and you do not speak the language, you transfer the call to someone who does speak his language. Most employees speak 3-4 languages, James, whom you've met, speak all 11 national languages. Furthermore, we attempt to treat each person with dignity. Our style is to talk morality to people who owe money. "You know you owe the money, you have to pay it. It is in your interest to pay. We want to help you, how much can you afford?" or "You can't buy things and not pay for it. It's not right." We coach them. This person will rather pay us than our competitors who threaten them. We use morality to get our results.

*In the company itself, are there no issues about race?*

No, not at all, we've never had it. We make people understand we are all equal. That is why problems never become a race-issue. We look at it differently. I speak of the happys and the non-happys. Non-happy people's issues are addressed. It never gets degraded to a race-issue. We ask: "Why are you not happy?"

*How do you keep these communication channels open?*

Many times it comes down to communication skills. We try to develop understanding for each unique person by using the Mayer's Briggs analysis. You must respect your colleague. You must understand that he is different, but precisely this difference makes the team stronger.

*So you see diversity as strength?*

Yes, we have identified diversity as strength. Precisely because we are so many different cultures, we as team are formidable. We can speak all the languages, we can communicate with people, we can relate to them.

Our attitude is, if our grass is not green, you can do a few things. You can pull all of it out, by getting rid of people. You can throw fertilizer to treat the symptoms, or you can actually look at the roots to see if there isn't a worm or something there. Our approach is: get to the roots of the issue. Don't generalize, don't just use fertilizer. Get to the bottom of it. They know that this is our approach, to identify the issue. The only way to do this, is by getting all the "afflicted"/ affected parties together around a table. You will not believe how quickly the issue is identified. Many times the problem is that people cannot verbalize their problems. Sometimes they verbalize it wrong, and the wrong issue is being addressed. You can't hear all the separate stories, you must get all the involved parties together and you only mediate. Then you can listen to them and say: "You are all saying the same thing, you are just saying it in a different way." Dialogue is very important. We use it a lot. Because of the fact that we use so many different languages, one thing can mean a variety of things. In African languages, they use a lot of symbolic language. They will for instance say something that literally translates: I have a frog in my throat, which means they are sad.

*So someone must mediate these languages?*

Yes, you must remember that people are expressing their emotions in English, which is more often than not their first language. Someone listening to this person easily receives the wrong message. We use the transmitter-receiver principle to deal with communication. We explain to our people that it is the responsibility of the transmitter to make sure that the right message comes across. He must make sure you understand, he cannot just take it for granted.

Do you know what our other issue is here? We work with people who have anything from a St. 3-6 qualification and people who have three to four college or university degrees. The

level of intelligence, and training is totally diverse. So we work with diverse languages, cultures and levels of training.

*How do you avoid hierarchies?*

When each person does his/ her presentation annually, we acknowledge how important each person's unique contribution is. If the person sorting the post does not do his job properly, we have huge problems. So we acknowledge the chain of value, or the value-chain. We are all a chain and we are only as strong as our weakest link.

*And how good is communication between people of diverse levels of training?*

At the moment it is going well, because people are aware of it. It wasn't always good, its something we constantly have to work on. We have four external consultants - I like to get consultants to focus on specific issues. These consultants watched our staff presentations and said that they cannot believe some of these people have only St 3 to 6 training - it is incredible. It is a process where people uplift each other. I give you this video of our staff show. You'll think it is a professional show, and only the two soloists were professionals. It's nice for the staff to feel how it is to work with professionals. For instance one of our staff, Judith Mabika, you cannot believe how she sings - Whitney Houston can't compare. It's so motivating for them to be in this kind of show.

This year we are doing a video on the things we do as company in the community. For example, we are involved with the Endangered Wildlife Trust. We are marketing this perfume-series of which all the proceeds go to the Endangered Wildlife Trust. These programs are all part of our company's Social Responsibility Program. Do you know how business ethics fits into this? It's a good business transaction, because it conserves our nature, and for every four new tourists, a job is created. Its job creation on all levels, from the vendor selling his handmade beadwork, to the tour bus operator. We create so much wealth through this kind of project. We believe in the life-cycle, you can look at it on our website, it clearly indicates our values.

*Stability is also one of your values. How does it work in this fast changing business environment?*

In a business world that changes constantly, the company must continue to function, and display stability. An unstable organization cannot change, cause they don't know where they are.

### **6.1.3. Analysis of how MBD displays contemporary organizational trends**

#### **1) Organizational structure:**

MBD provides a service that requires that their clients trust them unconditionally. They often have access to their client's entire mainframe, as well as the authority and discretion to close files on the client's behalf. Even though they are responsible for collecting debt on behalf of their clients, their service is in a sense based on delivering certain intangible goods. They work with valuable information, and enter into negotiations on their clients' behalf. The potential for abuse associated with these types of services and access to important information exposes them to the same moral dilemmas many other contemporary companies face.

Although the type of services MBD provides requires a high degree of discretion, sensitivity and responsibility from its employees the company displays a very traditional organizational structure. The entire staff works together in one wing of a large office-building in Randburg, Johannesburg. Everyone therefore works in very close proximity to his or her colleagues. Supervisors exercise direct control over everyone in the call-center, since they can access any person's computer monitor directly. This is due to the fact that they often have to intervene when one of their team members has to deal with a difficult call. Everyone in the company wear stylish uniforms, which creates conformity in an otherwise very diverse environment.

MDB has a very low staff turnover rate, partly because the majority of their staff hold only minimal academic qualifications, but are highly skilled in terms of their current profession. Employees seem to be very happy working for MDB, and staff rarely leaves the

company, even though MBD's competitors headhunt aggressively among its staff. The only exception is the attorneys who do not seem to be so intimately aligned to the rest of the close-knit company. They have their own private offices and do not wear uniforms.

Many contemporary organizations display a high degree of fluidity, flatness, and trust. In some respects MBD is also characterized by flatness and trust. It has a very flat organizational structure and the CEO is very open and approachable. The interaction amongst the staff and between the CEO and his employees is informal and intimate. This may be partly due to the fact that MBD is a relatively small company of only 225 people, 80% of which are Black. Yet it is important to note that with regard to its business operations, organizational layout and turnover-rate, MBD displays much less fluidity and flux than other contemporary organizations.

## **2) Individual Identity:**

Considering the fact that 13 languages are spoken at MBD, one would expect cultural diversity to play a very important role in the identity-configurations of its staff. The position of its CEO with regard to diversity and difference is however somewhat ambivalent. On the one hand, MBD has identified diversity as an asset in terms of their business operation. According to the CEO, it is precisely diversity that makes them formidable as team. Yet certain of the company's managerial assumptions tend to limit the extent to which it appreciates and utilizes its employees' rich diversity. These assumptions are reflected in the CEO's use of the drawer-metaphor. According to this metaphor, one closes one's personal drawer and open your business drawer, when one arrives at the office in the morning. The CEO was convinced that allowing personal values to infiltrate the business sphere would "never work" in a culturally diverse setting. Yet the company acknowledges personal integrity (the unity of all the aspects of a person's self) when it promotes self-policing and self-motivation through the screening of Christian films, and its use of Christian based motivation sessions. The CEO also readily admits that his own Christian values formed the basis of the company's values.

The view that the personal drawer should remain closed at all times is characteristic of the modernist paradigm. The result is a paradoxical combination of the more "postmodern" self-policing and self-motivational approach, based on integrated personal, religious and cultural values, with a more modern, compartmentalized view of the self. Letiche's distinction between "first, second and third degree perception" may be helpful in understanding this situation. First degree perception refers to a situation where all people naturally see things the same. In a diverse setting such as MBD this would of course be unlikely. "Second degree perception", or "perceptionalism" implies that the story is a text chosen by the speaker. In other words, a subject chooses which drawer to open when. "Third degree perception" allows an individual the freedom to make use of any text to express him/herself. The ethical universe of the postmodern self is one in which the self functions as self-sufficient source of ethical action.

MBD's compliance approach seems to assume that procedures and rules function as frameworks within which employees are expected to police and motivate themselves. Their non-conformance procedure measures an employee's performance against his or her job description and the general expectations that the company has of all its employees. Yet their principles-based approach calls for a much more dialogical approach, which acknowledges different interpretations and the importance of individual understanding and buy-in. They proactively engage in symbolic value-creation through song and dance, visual stimuli and creative interaction. Reactively, they allow employees to explain how they think about ethics, when an ethical problem crops up. Dialogue becomes the vehicle for determining intersubjective meaning. It seems then that the value-side of the business can accommodate the distributed self of the postmodern identity configuration, whereas the compliance-side measures the extent to which employees conform to the company role expectations. These expectations do not tolerate deviation on personal grounds.

### **3) Organizational culture**

MBD's attitude towards individual identity may seem ambivalent, but ambivalence is typical of the postmodern condition. One of the biggest challenges for postmodern organizational



theory is to reconcile business organizations' need for teamwork, loyalty, stability and trust amongst employees with the flat organizational structures, ever changing circumstances, and decentralized chains of authority that have come to characterize the contemporary business environment. It tries to provide unity and stability amidst diversity and flux, by providing rules and procedures that do not stifle individual responsibility, creativity and motivation.

MBD seems to realize that it cannot deal with the type of information its employees have access to by merely relying on structures and procedures. The company addresses what it can through the implementation of sound procedures, but when something falls through the cracks, it relies on its principles to guide employees. It therefore runs a parallel process of dialogue, which in the words of its CEO, it "overlays" with its compliance measures. This principles-based approach infuses the process with religious values, symbolic references, and visual elements. The company's procedures seem to acknowledge the fact that the meaning of words defer. The words that describe the company's principles may therefore mean different things to different people. MBD tries to compensate for the limitations of language by placing the onus on the transmitter, or speaker, to make his or her message clear. This may not always succeed. That is why it may sometimes be necessary to get everyone involved around a table to establish the meaning of words intersubjectively.

Even though MBD certainly displays some of the characteristics of the more "postmodern" orientation towards diversity and value-systems, it certainly does not embrace the "fragmented unity" that Parker (2000) describes as typically postmodern. The company tries to establish unity through conformity. Clothing, perfume and shared symbolic experiences, such as making the company video, are employed in this effort. It drives this conformity home by barring the personal sphere from the business sphere, leaving only the unity that their common business values supposedly represent. This seems to make a lot of practical sense, but the unruly rule of contemporary organizations is not so easily repressed. For instance, it was very noticeable that the company's attorneys do not wear the corporate uniform, and that their offices look and feel different than the rest of the company. This may be indicative of the presence of some important differences in a company that

otherwise projects itself as a seamless unit. Such differences are sometimes caused by different levels of training, the different functions that people fulfil in a company, or even by personality differences. These differences also extend to employees' moral reasoning. They testify to the fact that people as *moral bricoleurs* draw on many value-systems for guidance in their daily work activities. Variables such as religion and personal problems influence people's interpretation and handling of moral dilemmas in the workplace. MBD once had a case where one of its employees had personal problems, which troubled him to such an extent that he became a disruptive influence at work. The very accessible CEO sat him down at a table with his colleagues to resolve the situation. Ultimately however, the company had no choice but to seek counselling for the employee in order to get him to become a productive part of the team again. Can one's personal drawer really be closed at work? Can a CEO who originally based his entire business practice on his own Christian values uphold such a distinction? Can MBD's "tree of knowledge" metaphor, with its emphasis on the holistic interconnectedness of values, business practice and society, ultimately be reconciled with such a strict division of life-worlds?

#### 4) Conclusion:

MBD is a company that certainly understands its business. It seems to be a company that people are happy to work for and clients are happy to deal with. It would be meaningless to classify MBD as either a modern or a postmodern organization. MBD employs a unique combination of approaches, which reflect the eclecticism that characterizes contemporary organizations. Postmodernism is no more than a self-reflexive and self-critical view of modernity, and MBD's combination of approaches therefore represents a pragmatic way of compensating for the limitations of clear-cut modernist systems and procedures.

The interconnected world of information technology and the decentralization that accompanies it have left employees with an unprecedented degree of freedom and discretion. At the same time, however, workers are struggling to come to terms with an increasingly complex and volatile 21st century business environment. A values-based approach that allows employees to define, redefine and express their own identities, value-systems and commitments will reduce the risk of random, self-interested behavior. Many

companies feel uncomfortable with a world governed by "unruly rules" that requires constant renegotiation and redefinition. Sometimes it seems as though our ingenuity for creating systems and procedures has finally caught up with us. We have created systems so complex that we have undermined our own capacity to carefully monitor and control them. In this context it is important that we help our employees to develop moral reasoning skills that will enable them to deal with the unexpected.

#### 6.1.4. Analysis of MBD's approach to moral values in the workplace in terms of the suggested framework

##### 1) Holistic perspective:

One's first impression is that MBD adopted a very dualistic view of life. Its CEO insists on separating of the working environment from the personal lives of its employees. This is made particularly clear by the CEO's insistence that life is comparable to a set of drawers, of which you close the personal drawer when you enter the workplace. Yet it is clear that the CEO's personal Christian values had been very central to the development of MBD's principles, on which their business practice is based. Moral issues in MBD are addressed through dialogue between all the affected parties. In these discussions the company places a high priority on understanding how those involved think about ethics and how certain key terms are defined. These differences in terminology, use of language and symbolism and so forth are due to differences in culture and training, as well as personal variables such as intellect, personality and gender.

The CEO's commitment to self-motivation and self-policing is cited as the reason why he exposes his employees to the Jesus-film and motivational sessions led by Campus Crusade for Christ. He clearly assumes that religious input will improve his employees' motivation, integrity and discretion and lead to increased self-policing. His views in this regard could be interpreted as a preference for the type of ethical holism that Gustafson (2000:442) argues for. Because employers are concerned about consistency in their employees' conduct, a set of rooted, holistic ethical principles that are adhered to both at home and at work seem to make a lot of sense. McCracken & Shaw (1995:303) also stress the importance of

character in moral decision-making. They challenge the assumption that people engage in rational decision-making based on utilitarian notions and contractarian responsibilities. Instead, they argue that virtue also plays an important role in decision-making. These virtues can only be cultivated through moral practices such as those envisaged by Aristotle. This implies that deliberations about what constitutes "the good" should be incorporated in the company's normal business practice (McCracken & Shaw 1995:307). Strong personal values is definitely an important prerequisite for the type of self-policing and motivation that the CEO envisages for his company. However, it would be unrealistic to expect complete consistency in behavior, even from someone with strong personal values. The relationships and factors that influence moral decision-making in the workplace is simply too complex. It is therefore important that employees engage in discussions about what they perceive to be "the good" that they individually and collectively aspire to. This will not only allow character-building, but also promote an awareness of the network of relations, commitments and beliefs that come into play when people work together

## **2) Moral frameworks as non-totalizing structures**

MBD's approach to ethics and compliance can be assessed in terms of the differences between values-based management and compliance-based management explained by Weaver & Trevino. It becomes clear that MBD attempts to combine a values-based approach with a compliance-based approach. The compliance approach can be seen in their non-conformance procedure. This procedure is used to ensure compliance with job descriptions, deadlines and quality requirements. When it comes to ethical issues however, MBD prefers to engage in dialogue with their employees. This procedure is consistent with a more values-based approach. The goal of these discussions is to try and find out how the employee thinks about ethics and defines ethical values. An effort is made to align these ideas with the organization's ethical values. MBD has open communication channels through which moral issues can be addressed. Everyone involved in the ethical dilemma at hand is allowed and indeed encouraged to participate in these discussions. In this way an atmosphere of self-motivation and trust is created. Sometimes ethical problems are attributed to procedural

problems, and when this is the case the problem is addressed by adjusting and modifying systems and procedures.

A further important aspect of MBD's ethics program is the creation of a common organizational value-system through visual, symbolic and ritual practices. Employees use song and dance to help create a sense of unity and conformity. Their work uniforms also contribute to a sense of equality and conformity. This strong emphasis on conformity tends towards a totalizing structure aimed at dissolving of differences. In MBD, this may however be seen as an advantage, since its staff displays such a diverse composition. There may however be dangers involved in forcing conformity through measures such as the wearing of uniforms. Some individuals or groups in the organization may feel uncomfortable with this emphasis on conformity. For instance, the attorneys do not comply with the wearing uniforms. There may also be more individualistic employees who feel that wearing uniforms intrudes on their freedom and individuality. This hypothesis can of course only be confirmed through an extensive empirical study of all employees, which falls beyond the scope of this dissertation.

Generally speaking, MBD seems to have been successful in integrating employees from diverse cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds in a way that allows them to function effectively as a group. This may be due to the high degree of engagement of its employees in communal activities that interpret the company's corporate identity. From the data gathered during one visit to MBD it is impossible to determine whether this unity in fact suppresses differences. It is however doubtful that the company culture is the seamless whole it appears to be on the surface. But it is important to note that the symbolic interaction around values that this company's employees engage in, have bound individuals to the group in ways significant enough to allow close cooperation in the pursuit of corporate goals.

### **3) Temporary meaning:**

MBD's description of the vital elements of its business culture reflects the priority it places on interaction with its environment. Yet it is doubtful whether MBD is in fact an



open, dynamic system in the sense that its patterns of interaction with the environment are constantly changing, in the way Collier & Esteban (1999:178) describes. MBD does not display a high degree of complex interactions, and therefore its groups of agents tend to display rule-governed and often predictable outcomes. It therefore does not seem to run the risk of disintegrating into a state of total disorder and unpredictable randomness. Because a great percentage of its employees work in call-centers, where traditional organizational structures and supervisory relationships persist, there is seldom a danger of individuals losing focus on the main goals and purposes of the organization. The *connectedness* of the organization assures the coherence of its members with regard to their common purpose. This sense of connectedness is strengthened by symbolic elements that support conformity, equality and stability. These include the wearing of uniforms and key rings, which reflect the organization's guiding principles printed on compass. The compass, indicating "True North" symbolizes the ethical principles that should direct employee behavior.

In MBD has retained the Christian values of its CEO as a set of common values that provides stability and purpose to the organization, even though they have since been translated into broader, more inclusive business principles. Even though symbolic interaction, song, and dance ensure the buy-in of employees into this value-system, it is not clear to what extent they have been allowed to participate in its formation, adaptation and re-evaluation as the organization developed. MBD therefore does not seem to be a participative organization in the sense envisaged by Collier & Esteban. Collier & Esteban (1999:180) argue that in the participative organization, governance is no longer the responsibility of a few top managers who "steer the boat". Governance becomes a quality of the boat itself and the shared responsibility of all in it. They argue that adaptability requires continuous differentiation, which is brought about by in-depth discussion and the renegotiation of values. One may argue that MBD's efforts to keep all its employees on board in terms of its current values have succeeded in its context, which is a relatively traditional organizational set-up and traditional lines of command. Their dialogue about ethics mostly occurs in a situation where something has gone wrong. In such instances, the employees are allowed to explain how they thought about ethics only to enable the



organization to more effectively coach them as to what is expected of them. In this respect MBD confirms Vidaver-Cohen's (1997:15) observation that "managers in less turbulent industries may be relatively content with the status quo."

MBD's employees probably enjoy less individuality, freedom, and discretion than would be the case in a company with a non-totalizing structure. According to Collier & Esteban (1999:183) decision-making in participative organizations with non-totalizing structures, is likely to be characterized less by consensus and more by the constructive management of value dilemmas. Having said that, it has to be acknowledged that each organization has unique needs. In companies such as MBD a stronger emphasis on conformity, consensus and unity may actually be preferred. MBD's organizational culture would however probably benefit from a more holistic discussion of values in which all employees can define and redefine the organizational principles from the whole of their network of beliefs and values. This implies commitment to a process of dialogue and cooperation in developing shared values, while at the same time listening to diverse viewpoints and affirming their potential contribution.

#### **4) Being exposed to and open towards the "Other":**

One of the strategies that MBD employs in dealing with ethical problems in the workplace is to get everyone involved around a table to try and understand their perception of the problem and their processes of moral reasoning and decision-making. This is an excellent example of the deferring character of words and meanings in a corporate context. Having different meanings voiced in the presence of all involved, is an excellent deconstructive strategy. Not only does it lead to greater insight into the Other, but also into the self. The self only exists in relation to others. In confrontation with the Other whose meaning is different from mine, it becomes possible to develop a sense of responsibility for the Other which is not possible in isolation.

Unfortunately MBD uses these discussions exclusively as a vehicle for aligning its employees with a set of predetermined expectations. The meaning of MBD's values as determined by top management is not placed on the table as an open-ended interpretation to be re-

evaluated by those participating in the discussion. Instead it is set up as the measure to which all other interpretations must conform.

Another important limitation of MBD's approach is that it does not necessarily succeed in developing what Foucault would refer to as "moral selves" within the organization. Only when the self is rendered vulnerable by conversation with equal others, does it become aware of the limitations of its own understanding. When the individual interacts with the meaning(s) and truth(s) of others, he or she develops a moral self with internalized moral guidelines.

#### 5) Dialogue:

As mentioned before, dialogue about values at MBD often occurs in the context of an enquiry into something that has gone wrong within the organization. It is doubtful whether true equality or freedom of expression is really possible in these kinds of situations, since employees usually feel threatened by the prospect of investigation. One should however view this in the light of the purpose of these discussions with employees. They are aimed at establishing how an employee thought about the ethical problem at hand, not to serve as a way of assessing changes in the company values. What is commendable though, is the open-door approach of its CEO towards everyone in the company. He is very accessible, and welcomes discussions with his employees. Whether these interactions have any real impact in terms of allowing diverse perspectives to influence the organization and its goals, is another question however.

The company does however make good use of its moral metaphors. The powerful "tree of life" metaphor runs through many of MBD's business operations like a golden thread. Discussion in a non-threatening, empowered environment may however benefit employees by allowing them to verbalize their different understandings of the metaphor. Doing so would deepen and strengthen the first-order metaphor as employees interpret it in terms of the second-order metaphors living in their hearts and minds. The metaphor's natural emphasis on growth suggests that the company's principles should also be allowed to grow over time. This has resulted in a number of principles being added to the company's original principles. The CEO insists that additional principles will be adopted if and when they become

important to the company. The buy-in from employees in the MBD "tree of life" metaphor seems to be very strong on the symbolic level, which is a very powerful force within the African culture.

#### **6.1.5. Practical suggestions in the MBD context:**

One important disclaimer in making these suggestions is that it is aimed at a very specific company context and is not intended to provide a standard, or even a best practice example of what should be done in terms of moral discourse in the workplace. It is merely a contextual response to what MBD already has in place and how it may be improved.

##### **1) A holistic approach**

MBD goes to a lot of trouble to expose its employees to influences that may enhance their personal value systems. The Christian values that provide the basis for MBD's business principles, are reinforced by Christian motivational sessions and spiritual events. Yet MBD is not exclusively Christian, and this allows people from all faiths and cultures the freedom to associate with MBD. It is important that this inclusive, non-discriminatory culture be confirmed by interreligious events. Employees need to be given the opportunity to confess how their personal values, be they religious or not, influence their world-view, motivation and moral decision-making. Events that include other forms of spirituality not only create a non-discriminatory environment, but also promotes understanding amongst colleagues on moral issues. Interaction that confronts one with the truly "Other" places the self in a new perspective. As Foucault pointed out, the process of discovering and renegotiating the self in relation to the "Other" aids the construction of moral selves.

There is however an inconsistency in MBD's approach to values. The CEO's use of the "drawers" metaphor seems to contradict the company's adoption of the holistic "the tree of life" metaphor. Self-motivation and self-policing only really become possible in an environment where the individual is allowed to draw on all elements of his or her personal value-system for guidance when making moral decisions. Excluding these personal references may in fact deprive employees of important moral convictions, and foster

confusion. Although employers will always expect a certain degree of consistency and predictability with regard to their employees' behavior, it cannot be guaranteed by insisting on an artificial distinction between public and private. This approach in fact belies many of the other, more holistic metaphors that MBD employs. Interestingly enough, in seeking professional counseling for one of its troubled employees at company expense, MBD seems to recognize the fact that employees' personal problems can have an impact on their moral behavior at work. They dealt with this individual with the empathy, support and adaptability that their tree of life metaphor requires. The "tree of life" metaphor seems to be an accurate enough reflection of the company's guiding principles and values. In light of this it may have to consider abandoning its "drawer" metaphor completely in favor of a more holistic approach. As a Christian manager, MBD's CEO may find that a holistic way of dealing with the whole range of personal value-systems may in fact support elements of his business that he has always considered important, such a motivation, caring for this workforce and attending to the whole range of their needs. This approach will also witness to his own Christian belief and the way in which it informs and directs the way he deals with his employees.

## **2) A non-totalizing moral structure:**

"The tree of life" is an excellent first-order metaphor since it provides a lot of scope for the company to adapt and change through the development of appropriate second-order metaphors. The company's principles keep expanding and changing as time goes by, which indicates a value-system that is alive and well. It is important to get employees involved in the reinterpretation of the first-order metaphor. One way of doing so is to get them to participate in an ongoing dialogue, as will be discussed later in this section. There are however many other ways of uniting employees in a non-totalizing way. For instance, most, if not all MBD's employees work on computers and stare at screens daily. Competitions could be run for the best ethics slogan. They can then be used as computer screensavers to get employees thinking about what the tree of life metaphor really means and what aspects of it they associate with most. An Intranet chatroom could be established where ethical questions can be posted and employees can anonymously reply. In this way the company's

electronic connectedness can be utilized to stimulate discussions and create an atmosphere of moral sensitivity and awareness.

Self-motivation and -policing imply that employees be given the opportunity not only to associate, but also to dissociate from the company's consensus with regard to certain issues. They must be given the freedom to develop, express and defend their own moral perspectives amongst their colleagues. This may seem dangerous, and may even lead to a measure of dissent, but it could also strengthen employees' sense of empowerment and loyalty towards the organization. Short video-clips depicting the type of ethical dilemmas a MBD employee typically has to deal with could be shot to get employees' feedback on how they handle such situations. This could be accommodated within existing HR training projects, or incorporated in the company's team-building exercises. Differences in interpretation must be allowed and even encouraged, since the goal is not necessarily to give employees a timeless rule for all similar situations, but rather to develop their moral decision-making skills.

### 3) Temporary meaning:

Allowing company values to expand and develop over time is a prerequisite for growth and ultimately also for survival. A company that does not grow dies. But MBD's CEO is also correct in saying that: *"An unstable organization cannot change, because they don't know where they are."* Change and volatility should be balanced with sufficient stability if a company is going to transform itself successfully over time. Retaining first-order metaphors whilst encouraging employees to come up with as many new second-order metaphors is a good way to manage growth responsibly. MBD's second order metaphors currently include water, fire, wind and earth. Their meanings should always be left open to creative reinterpretation. Its ever deferring and differing meaning should be acknowledged. Simple team-building games can encourage creative thinking. For instance, a group of employees must each come up with a new interpretation of the organization's second-order metaphors. One employee starts by revealing his or her particular take on the subject. The second has to remember his or her colleague's interpretation and think of another. The third in line

must memorize both the preceding interpretations and add a third and so on. The first person to forget one of his or her colleagues' suggestions must sing a song, tell a joke or perform some other suitably punitive measure. It obviously works best in a relaxed environment free from time and work pressures. These exercises gets the message across that management encourages creative thinking about values, and that new ideas will be taken seriously.

#### **4) Keeping connected**

Electronic aids such as Intranet chat-rooms can be employed to create a non-discriminatory environment where people can interact about moral issues. But in an African culture where symbolism is very important and symbolic interaction sometimes speak louder than words, MBD's use of song and dance is very effective. These efforts should be encouraged and expanded. Employees could for instance be asked to write new words for the MBD song that is sung and recorded at the year's end function and a prize could be awarded for the best entry. Symbols could be developed to portray MBD's principles, whether they be drawings, hand gestures or sounds. Using a gesture that indicates dependability, such as two fists placed on top of one another as a greeting in the morning, may help strengthen the bonds between employees from diverse cultures. This type of symbolism often speaks louder than words.

By keeping employees connected in this way the company avoids forcing individuals into a straightjacket of company rules and procedures, and instead encourages loyalty to a number of basic values that tie everyone, regardless of culture, language, gender or position within the organization together. However, allowing employees the freedom to voluntarily associate with the company's values, has the implication that they should also be allowed to dissociate from them under certain circumstances. For instance, employees should feel free to dissociate from spiritual activities or motivational sessions based on religion.



## 5) Dialogue

On-going dialogue is a key component of a healthy moral business culture. It is also an extremely difficult process to manage effectively, especially in pluralistic working environments. The limitations of language, inequalities in training, intellect, and position within the organization effectively eliminate the possibility of completely free and open communication.

It has been argued that virtual reality allows people to interact without reference to their race, religion, culture, gender or status and therefore provide an environment in which all are equal and free to express their opinions. Yet, a holistic approach to moral values that allows culture, religion and power relations to influence the way moral language is constructed and moral decisions are made, precludes such impersonal solutions. In fact, face-to-face interaction with the other is important in the formation of the moral self. To eliminate prejudice and facilitate meaningful discourse, one has to establish certain parameters. Here, the long tradition of justice and rights, criticized for its contextless assumptions, could in fact be rehabilitated to provide some parameters for the contextual reality of dialogue. The rules, or at least its application, may however have to be adjusted for each specific context. In the context of MBD, dialogue could be structured in the following way:

- All interested parties are welcomed. No one is invited to the exclusion of another. For instance, people of other religions who choose to work at MBD must be allowed to contribute their views and inform their arguments from their own faith perspective.
- All voices must be heard, not in order of importance, position, gender or status, but in the order that hands are raised.
- All topics can be addressed, nothing is excluded from the agenda, although all agenda points must be posted before the meeting.
- Mutual respect, empathy and trust as well as the confidentiality of what is discussed must be ensured prior to the start of the conversation.

- All participants to the dialogue must be able to speak in their first language if they are uncomfortable in English, and a translator must be available. Drawings, metaphors, and symbols should be accepted as alternative ways of communicating.
- Dissent should be explored and not discouraged. It should be seen as a positive and necessary part of the dialogue.
- Consensus can be sought but not forced. If consensus is reached, it should be regarded as no more than a temporary point of unity that allows cooperation, but may be revised as and when necessary.

## 6.2. Case study 2: Pretoria Community Ministries (PCM)

### 6.2.1. Background on PCM:

The following was taken from PC's marketing material:

*We see whole, restored and empowered communities, where people flourish in God's presence*

*The challenge of the city:*

Inner city communities are often transitional and/or struggling communities, facing disinvestments and decay. The effects of urbanization, racial and cultural transition and diversity, socio-economic contrasts, and the battle between different powers and the powerless, all concentrate in inner city communities.

The challenge for the church is to establish an incarnational presence, demonstrating God's love and justice in practical ways, reversing global trends of inner city decay, and erecting bold signs of God's shalom (wholeness) in the city.

### 6.2.2. Verbatim of discussion with manager Stephan de Beer (translated from Afrikaans)

*Your organization is very diverse. How do you manage the diversity of cultures, religions, and languages that are represented amongst your staff?*

Let me use the example of the race issue to illustrate our approach. We consciously try to work with race as a reality that we have to deal with. At our retreats, we sometimes ask blacks and whites to meet separately, in order for them to discover where they come from. They have to identify their own prejudices. We therefore acknowledge diversity and difference. But we also emphasize that people have to walk the road together. For instance, in our Women's Housing project a white and a black woman may have to live in close proximity of each other. They experience conflict, but often the conflict relates to human issues rather than race issues. We try to show them that the issues they face are quite normal and often have nothing to do with race.

Another element of our approach to diversity is to identify certain common goals that transcend race, for instance, the issue of homelessness. We bring people to realize that they complement each other and that you can do more when you look at the issue from the vantage point of various traditions. Yet we still encourage our staff, who comes from 7 or 8 different denominations, to worship in their own congregations. We believe that even though we may worship in different ways, we can still work towards our common cause together.

*How much do you allow personal values to play a role in the workplace? Some businesses prefer to have people leave their personal values at home when they come to work? How do you see this within your organization?*

We believe differently, because one has to acknowledge that theology is never value-free. Everything that you have experienced in life comes with you to work. Therefore each person brings a lot of baggage with him. But we believe that the brokenness and suffering that lie in people's backgrounds make them even more effective. It can become a source of healing to others. We take a critical look at how communities are constructed and take background

seriously. Yet we still deal with people who find it hard to marry the business aspects of our organization with the ethics and theology that they see as part of their calling. For instance, some people find it hard to marry the business realities of our housing project with ethics. They think that if you get involved in that kind of business you have to betray your Christian values in some sense.

*How do you create and sustain unity in diversity?*

As I explained, we look towards bigger causes that transcend difference. But we do not have a structured program to create unity. One of the important things that we do every week is to spend 3-4 hours on a Friday morning on a devotional session and staff meeting, where we as staff come together and interact. Then we have our two retreats per year, one in November that is longer than the other. On these occasions we play, eat, and truly meet each other. We believe that if you journey together for long enough, the masks will drop. Some may criticize us for talking too much, because besides our staff meeting on Fridays the project teams also have separate sessions.

*Do you have strong rules in your organization? How do you maintain certain standards and values?*

We have had to develop better policies after we experienced a few crises a while back. We had waited 8 years before implementing strict policies. But our growth and diversity made it necessary. We realized that in order to deal with conflict situations effectively, we needed strict policies. We started out with a values-driven approach based on our foundational values. At the moment we have two sets of values. The first set is what we call our foundational values, which form the theological and philosophical base of all our operations. Our second set of values is our operational values, which were developed with the assistance of an external facilitator/ evaluator. The evaluation process helped us find a value behind all of our everyday operations. For instance, we pay people very small salaries. We decided that it would be our policy to keep salaries at that level as long as people are willing to work for those amounts. Our operational values deal with all the business aspects of our organization, such as the relationship between the Board and Management etc.

*Do you have a strategic plan, with a mission and vision? How do your values relate to this strategy?*

Our vision is to help create whole, restored and empowered communities, and therefore our vision is directly related to a certain ethical ideal. Both sets of values serve this purpose. We ask ourselves: How do we see the community from this theological and ethical perspective that underlies everything that we do? Obviously we often see the community differently from those in the private sector or in the city council, because of our theological and ethical vision. We are committed to the preferential option for the poor. This colors our involvement in the private sector. And our way of working seems to vary acceptable to even Dutch Reformed churches, who like to see that the gospel has certain practical implications. People quickly come to agree that political-economic realities cannot be divorced from the gospel.

*How do you keep the communication channels open?*

As I explained before, for a long time we had no set procedures or policies. It was done very ad hoc. But now, some basic policies allow us to deal with conflict much more effectively. It's basic things, some of which are already explained in the Bible. You know the principle that if you have a problem, speak to the person himself first, then get one more person involved, etc. Or practical things like that you have to deal with a conflict within 24 hours after it happened. So what we did was to start to manage communication.

*How does communication function when there isn't necessarily conflict, but when people are interacting positively?*

We do this in various ways, one example is to have people comment on each other's projects. We put up paper on the wall and ask everyone to state positive and negative aspects of a specific project. A lot of creative things pop out. For instance, someone in the housing project will look at the women's project and because this person is looking from a distance, he may have a totally different and valuable perspective.

*How does leadership work in your organization?*

We have a very flat organizational structure. We go to trouble to appoint black people in leadership positions, but we never put up faces just for show. We base our choices on merit and potential, and we expect from people to grow and develop.

Our organization operates according to the reversed triangle - bottom up, rather than top - down. Individuals on the bottom of the organization develop all the project proposals. It reaches the Board only after the people who are going to be implementing it decided on it. It is however important to make sure that everyone in the organization takes advantage of the opportunity to make suggestions.

*What type of ethical issues do you encounter?*

Well, one ethical issue pertains to the use of condoms among the prostitutes we deal with. The debate is still going on. We did hand out condoms as part of our work, but some people are not really comfortable with this. Abortion is another issue. We have no written policy about it, but we operate according to the principle that you must present all the available options to the person, but encourage her to look for other alternatives to abortion. There is however no way of really monitoring whether individuals really present all the options, or whether they actually just try to talk the person into seeking alternatives to abortion. Since I am also prone to the view that alternatives to abortion should be sought, I don't really feel strongly about monitoring this too strictly.

*Do you encounter business related ethical problems, such as the abuse of company property, theft etc?*

No, hardly ever. We have had two persons guilty of these offences before, but they are gone now. Since we have developed stricter policies and disciplinary procedures, this does not occur. We also have to make sure that we are in line with the labor law. This has enabled us to deal with such situations more effectively. One example is the case where one of our employees' boyfriend, a policeman, would come to our offices and play games on our company computer when he is supposed to be on patrol. Not only is he not doing his job, but he is also using our company property improperly and wasting our employee's time. We have now started a formal process of written warnings. Furthermore, the person responsible for



training in our organization is working with the employee to see whether they can work out issues of motivation, understanding of her job description, etc.

*Do people always understand ethical issues in the same way? Or are there some misunderstandings?*

Because of the diversity of our staff (also with regard to literacy) reaching the same understanding about issues takes a very long time. Within our organization we have a high measure of consensus, but still you have no way of knowing whether this consensus is actually internalized in exactly the same way.

Here it is important to take the prophetic role of the church into consideration. Conflict or disagreement is not always negative. Sometimes people agree on certain things in principle, but have to disagree on other things. In our inner city partnerships, we uphold a critical-solidarity. We agree on some things, but criticize other aspects. It is of course easier to deal with conflict and disagreement with external parties, such as our inner city partners. It is much harder to deal with it inside your own organization.

*How strongly does "ubuntu" function in your organization?*

It was interesting to look at the theology of the street festival that we recently had. Ubuntu featured very strongly. It was especially the black, illiterate staff members who brought this to our attention. They related perspectives on the "feast of the clown" (which was our theme) that can be understood from an "ubuntu" perspective. Yet, this feeling of community can also be understood from the perspective of Acts 2 or Genesis 1 / 2. The Christian community and the broader Berea and Salvokop community share certain of these values. We can for instance cooperate and share a sense of community with the atheist who runs a coffee bar, even though we disagree on certain matters.

*What about religious differences?*

Within our organization we are relatively homogeneous in the sense that we all belong to the Christian faith. But in our work in Marabastad we have developed a long relationship with the Muslims in the area. The important thing is a long-term presence during which people journey together and serve together. We have realized that if you approach Muslims as

people who want to reach similar goals, instead of wanting to convert and correct them, cooperation becomes possible. We have for instance backed the Muslims in their land claims. We stood next to them and helped them. Yet, we disagreed with them on the squatter issue. Of course, this interreligious process is one of constant renegotiations, in which we have to send constant reminders of what we stand for. They try to co-opt you, because you are working together. It is important to stand your ground and make clear where you disagree from them.

*Is language an important issue?*

Yes, definitely. We use English as medium, yet it is a fact that some people are more comfortable expressing their views in English than others. Some especially experience difficulty in expressing themselves in English within large groups. Therefore we often try to keep the discussion groups small. They are also encouraged to speak their own language and have someone translate, but it seems as if that makes them feel inferior.

*Is it a priority of your staff to learn more native languages?*

Some of our staff, like our counselor Wilma, finds it very important to understand the language in order to be able to do her work properly, and therefore made attempts to learn the language. For the rest of us it is easier to rely on translator, because they are so readily available in our work context. But it still constitutes a problem. For instance, one incident in which one of my staff members and I misunderstood each other illustrates this problem very well. He was briefing me on the plans for the street festival, and when I questioned him on certain aspects, he called me an "outsider". I interpreted this as an insult, but he later explained that he meant only that I was not involved in the planning process, not that I was considered an outsider. We realized that he was translating from his native language and probably used the wrong English word.

*Do differences in literacy and education constitute a problem in your operations?*

Yes, it certainly is a big issue. We have the whole spectrum - from primary school level to graduates - on our staff. We have now appointed a specific member of staff who deals with training. In deciding what training is needed, we look at the needs of the staff members.

Some need basic English, other have greater needs for Biblical studies. We have two people doing the Nehemia Bible courses. One woman, Brenda, who is the center of our operations in Marabastad, has improved immensely in the course of only one year. Wilma has been doing a Masters in Narrative Therapy, and one of our people did a training course in Housing Management. Our training person has also been on a Human Resource Management course, and he briefs us on certain HR issues such as job descriptions, staff induction etc. on a regular basis. In this way we see to it that the training that staff receive is fed back into our operations. Because we have a very limited budget, we have to make sure that the training we pay for benefits the organization.

We are very aware of how inequalities in education constitute a barrier for people to contribute to the organization. We do not always succeed in remaining aware of the power relationships constituted by these inequalities, but we do attempt to remind our staff, especially the men, of the importance of everyone's contribution. We consciously address the issue of power inequality by making our project leaders aware of this and getting them to empower their people.

*Why do you consider diversity strength?*

In the first place, it is strength in terms of our context. We operate in an inner city environment, in which a diversity of people live and work. In order to interact with our context with integrity, we have to reflect the composition of this community in our staff. We help each other to interpret our context. Sometimes, we gain access to communities because of our staff. Brenda, the women working in Marabastad has been there for 13 years. It is through her that we gain the right to be there and work there. The diversity of our staff gives us certain legitimacy in the community. One can also not forget that we as Christians have the underlying goal of communicating reconciliation and love. Our staff composition drives home what works cannot convey.

### 6.2.3. Analysis of PCM's reflection of organizational trends:

#### 1) Individual identity:

PCM empowers individuals who experience their lives as broken to contribute to the healing of others by exploring and utilizing their own brokenness. The lead article of their newsletter reads: "Wounded Healers in Broken Cities". They relate to the often unexpected and unlikely choices that Jesus made when selecting the leaders of his church. Despite this their vision is expressed as follows: "We see whole, restored and empowered communities where people flourish in God's presence". The metaphors of "brokenness" and "restoration" are not only used by individuals in the narration of their life stories, but it is very much part of the physical reality that PCM addresses in its housing and community restoration projects. The ideal of wholeness hints at ideals of integrated selves, and that of progression so typical of Western, modernist theories of identity and authority. The strategy within modern society was that of "educating" and "uplifting" those who live lives that do not correspond to Western ideals. Authority was seen as the privilege and responsibility of the "enlightened", educated few. PCM's ministry however witnesses to a different reality - one that is making a huge difference in Pretoria's inner cities. The leaders of the organization's projects are often those marked by a distinct sense of brokenness, who are willing to serve in and through their own brokenness. The fallacy of the "perfect minister", or the "faultless preacher" is powerfully broken down in this community of service.

In terms of gender, the fact that women may be perceived as inferior because of entrenched patriarchal attitudes in some cultures, is addressed in meetings and during informal contact. But the most valuable ways in which entrenched gender roles are challenged are reflected in the work women do in PCM. Brenda Masilela, who has lived in Marabastad for 14 years, forms the center of PCM's operations there. This is an excellent example of grass-roots leadership and the empowerment of women to act as leaders and symbols of hope within their own communities.

The power relationships that influence the PCM workplace, such as literacy, language, gender roles are acknowledged and people within the organization are reminded of the importance of everyone's contribution. Project leaders are constantly reminded of the influence of inequalities and are encouraged to empower their people.

## 2) Organizational identity:

When listening to Stephan de Beer narrating PCM's development, one is struck by the typically postmodern way in which its identity has been and is continually being constituted. Linstead (1993:60) described it as the process by which organizations are partly constituted by the subjectivity of all those involved in it. Both the authors and the readers of the text of the organization, both the creators and the consumers are bound together in, and are constituted by, the continual process of the emergence of meaning. Quite often in the conversation with Stephan de Beer, he explained that for a long time they had no set procedures or policies - it evolved as the need for it arose. PCM seems to be an organization that is in fact the product of its products.

A further "postmodern" characteristic evident in PCM's way of work is its recognition and protection of "otherness". The organization incorporates and values Christians from various denominational backgrounds, cultures and races as valuable assets and important contributors. In addition, it is also willing to cooperate and "meet" with the "Other", i.e. the Muslim and the atheist to work together towards common goals.

The diversity of the PCM organizational environment is not only displayed in its diverse staff composition, it is also evident in the diverse range of functions it performs through its various ministries. The "shared meaning", or goal, which is (in my view ironically) described as "whole, restored communities" is in fact realized through difference, partial successes, limited interventions and broken individuals.

Leadership in this organization is bottom-up, as is witnessed in everything from the way in which names are listed in the newsletter, to the way in which participative decision-making

is exercised. In this respect, PCM displays the "relational" nature of leadership in postmodern organizations. This kind of leadership is characterized by collaboration, stewardship, trust and care (Collier & Esteban 200:208).

Does PCM have a "strong organizational culture"? Yes and no. When considered along the modernist lines of sameness, seamless unity, consistency and predictability, the answer is no. But the strong sense of "ubuntu" in the company suggests that it does in fact have a strong and unique organizational culture. The organization's sense of community is so strong that it is capable of sharing certain experiences with people such as the atheist who runs the coffee bar. The organization does have a strong sense of common purpose. Its common purpose gives direction, whilst allowing considerable freedom and creativity. This makes it possible to accommodate differences between individuals on certain issues. The notions of "organization" and "culture" displayed within PCM are understood as verbs, rather than as nouns. Culture as verb means the structuring of the memories, identities and analogies of those who participate in the organization. The "organization" is the practical accomplishment of certain common goals, rather than a fixed entity.

Does PCM have a "fragmented" character in the postmodern organizational sense of the word? Yes and no. Yes, because it succeeded in allowing for difference and Otherness in its operations and in its organizational structures. No, because it does have a core set of foundationalist values that it considers non-negotiable. It can accommodate race, gender, and denominational differences, but because of its Christian witness, it cannot compromise certain foundational values in dealing with people from other religions. PCM is a fragmented unity, but a unity nonetheless - and a strong one at that.

#### **6.2.4. Analysis of PCM's handling of moral issues:**

##### **1) Holistic perspective**

PCM practices holistic ministry in the true sense of the word. Its wide range of ministries and projects target the multiple facets of urban life. Through its street ministry and work



in Marabastad, women and girls in need are referred to the Lerato House project. The women rehabilitated at the Potter's House can go to the Center for Legal Advice for help in re-establishing their lives, and can find housing through Yeast City Housing. These projects translate the message of God's love into practice by addressing the needs of the entire person.

PCM's view of its staff as broken and suffering individuals who commit themselves to the service of others, indicates that its holistic perspective extends to the way in which all aspects of the individual's identity come into play at work. The organization pays attention to the way in which communities are constructed and how they grapple with contextual realities. However, because of the spiritual nature of the organization, it does run the risk of upholding the dualistic distinction between the holy and profane. This is evident in the fact that some people find it hard to marry the business side of the housing project with their Christian principles. The organization's goals in fact contradict this dualism, since it is very much concerned with making the Christian gospel a reality by improving people's everyday lives.

## **2) Non-totalizing moral values**

PCM seems to take the relational character of moral values seriously - it acknowledges the way race, culture and denominational background can influence presuppositions and assumptions. The organization even allows its employees to explore these differences in their own cultural groups. However, PCM staff also seems to be able to transcend these differences not only in reference to their shared Christian faith, but also through awareness of the fact that many conflicts are in fact the result of basic human frustrations and contextual realities. Because of this, no one culture or even one faith can completely encompass an individual's identity. The reality is that people often overlap in terms of their faith, humanity or group alliance. These commonalities are explored to the benefit of the goals that the organization wants to achieve. The danger would be to assume that all differences among employees can be ignored or fused on the meta-level of religion. The organization seems to have avoided this pitfall, since it acknowledges differences, even

potentially sensitive differences such as race, and deals with it openly. Because it sees diversity as a valuable resource, it resists attempts to create artificial unity at any cost.

### **3) Truth as a network of relations, and the temporary nature of guidelines**

The organization's view of truth becomes explicit in the distinction it draws between foundational and operational values. The organization's foundational values seem to call for a very strong consensus about the philosophical and theological base of all operations. The operational values, the "the way we do things around here" have been developed from existing practices, and deal with the "business aspects" of the organization. The distinction between foundational and operational values indicates that certain values are perceived as more permanent and even "more true" than others. This is a common characteristic of institutionalized religion, and can easily cause exclusion and discrimination against other views of the truth and people with other forms of religious experience or knowledge. The organization's foundationalist values do intend to exclude certain people from membership. In terms of their functioning however, the organization is willing to cooperate and share with the "Other". The question remains whether they will allow the Other to enter their midst as a permanent member of their team, in order to be exposed to otherness on a more personal level.

PCM's Christian value-system forms a strong common motivation that holds a very diverse range of operations and a very diverse team of workers together. It does not seem to be a stifling unity. It allows people to contribute in their own terms, acknowledging who they are and where they come from. PCM encourages its members to continue worshipping in their own congregations. The organization's diversity or difference is therefore not undermined or discouraged by its insistence on a number of shared values or goals.

#### 4) Exposure of the self to the "Other"

The organization pays a lot of attention to "meeting one another" - not only by allowing for extensive discussions during its weekly meetings, but also through retreats where staff members are encouraged to interact socially and spiritually.

PCM's staff also works closely with the "Other" on projects, such as in the case of the Muslims in Marabastad. They often get to know these people as human beings with similar goals and needs, even though they are from a different religious or cultural background. However, during the course of their cooperation, PCM's staff continually reminds the "Other" who they are and what they stand for. Clearly the "common ground" established for the sake of practical cooperation shouldn't be misconstrued as comprehensive unity. PCM considers it impossible to abolish the religious principles between differentiates them from other religious groupings in the area. This is an indication of the non-negotiable character of the identity and witness that PCM expresses in their foundational values. In terms of organizational functioning, this can have a positive effect, by uniting the diverse members of PCM under a clearly defined set of shared values and goals. It allows an extremely diverse group of people to interact with an equally diverse environment, and yet maintain a sense of organizational integrity and purpose.

#### 5) Dialogue

Creating opportunities for dialogue is clearly an important priority within the organization. A lot of time is spent on weekly staff meetings, project team meetings and devotional sessions (3-4 hours), as well as on the biannual retreats. It is also clear that the opinions of everyone within the organization are considered valuable, and opportunities are created to reflect on one another's projects. Inequalities in terms of knowledge or status are acknowledged and addressed. There seems to be an appreciation of the fact that someone who is not directly involved in a specific project may be able to contribute fresh and valuable perspectives to that project. Each person brings a unique set of perceptions, skills and expertise to the organization and therefore there is no such thing as an "uninformed" or "ignorant" opinion. Every person contributes what he/ she can and that contribution is considered valuable.

PCM has learnt through experience that proper systems and procedures can be helpful in dealing more efficiently with work related conflict or problems. It is interesting to note, however, that these systems evolved spontaneously from the practical needs and natural growth of the organization, instead of being unilaterally implemented by management in a top-down fashion. Dialogue also informs and supports the disciplinary systems and procedures that were adopted. For instance, counselors use dialogue to detect motivational problems or misunderstandings with regard to expectations and job descriptions that may arise from such a multi-cultural context.

#### **6.2.5. Suggestions in the PCM context:**

##### **1) Holistic view:**

PCM's diverse range of projects fosters an awareness of how the Christian faith relates to all the various aspects of people's lives. However, PCM may even go one better if they were to undermine the dualism between holy and profane that seems to persist within the organization. For instance, the perception amongst certain staff members that building projects are profane, secular activities that could even threaten one's faith, is indicative of the fact that they still find it difficult to reconcile their Christian values with real-life realities such as business. In terms of a more holistic approach to organizational culture, it is important to indicate the interface and interdependence between good ethical values and good business. If these people can be brought to see their Christian ethical values as a powerful resource from which to draw guidance in their everyday business dealings, rather than something that causes unavoidable trade-offs, they may be encouraged to integrate their values with all aspects of their lives.

##### **2) Non-totalizing values:**

PCM's unity is to be found in all their members' common confession of Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This unity however allows for a great measure of diversity of spirituality, theology and moral views. Yet it should be noted that a certain individual staff member's interpretation of a certain issue might be allowed to prevail because the organization does

not create sufficient opportunities for such interpretations to be challenged or discussed. For instance, because the interviewee's view on abortion is that every possible alternative to abortion should be sought, he prefers to maintain the status quo of not really discussing how his staff feels and thinks about the issue. These may be unacknowledged or repressed forms of dissensus that may ultimately cause conflict, or at the very least uncertainty about how such cases should be dealt with. Other views on abortion may in this case function as "subjugated knowledges" that are never heard because the organizational status quo functions as a totalizing structure. Within Christian organizations, the fear of being accused of being unChristian or unfaithful to Christ may be very intimidating and may even cause people to refrain from stating their true opinions, doubts and fears. In Christian organizations open and frank discussions about moral values should be deliberately encouraged, and people should be assured of their right to their own interpretation of Scripture and their own contextualized opinion.

### **3) Truth as a network:**

The distinction that is made between foundational and operational values indicates that a certain priority is placed on foundationalist truths. It may be valuable to look at how the foundational values and the operational values influence each other and in fact constitute a whole network of truth within which it is impossible to separate the two from each other clearly. The structures, policies and procedures that is created by operational values influence the way in which foundationalist values are realized in practice. In the same way, foundational values, such as being servants of Christ who wants to restore inner city communities, influence the way in which salaries, job descriptions and other business aspects are defined and decided. PCM seems to acknowledge the latter, since they are aware of how their Christian mission and vision sets them apart from others who have strict business interests in the inner city. They do not however seem to realize how structural business realities, operational policies and functional considerations also infuse their foundational values in turn. The way in which truth is interpreted in practice is often the result of power interests, contextual realities, and real-life contingencies. Truth is not something that should be seen as something that exists in a vacuum, or on a transcendental plane beyond contextual influence.

#### 4) Meeting the "Other"

The reality of "Otherness", with regard to aspects such as culture, race and spirituality are generally acknowledged within PCM. However there remains the danger that religion can be used to transcend difference within the organization. Therefore, even though religion can contribute towards unity amidst diversity, it does have a number of inherent dangers that have to be guarded against. The greatest danger lies in assuming that a common faith creates a seamless unity. Even though staff members may have a common religious confession, they may have different ideas about what being a Christian means, they may interpret Scripture differently, or have unique moral views. The fact that people share a common faith does not necessarily mean that they have exactly the same views about abortion, or that they have a common work ethic. These differences that exist within the common denominator should be addressed and discussed. Furthermore, the discussions should also not be aimed at bringing all employees towards the same views, but rather to expose different interpretations and their implications for the organization.

#### 5) Dialogue:

The interviewee acknowledged how language can hinder dialogue within the organization. People feel inferior if they have to use a translator, and one cannot escape the fact that translated words are already interpreted once before the audience hears it. The problem of language is not an easy one to solve. Should all employees be forced to learn each other's languages? This is a long-term, costly and time-consuming process. An intermediate mechanism is to get people to informally explain to each other the contextualized, full meaning of words in their own languages, by referring to different meanings of these same word, explaining metaphors, and sharing narratives whenever possible. Of course, translation will still be necessary, but at least the broader context of words, symbolic references and narrative structures may be revealed. If people are allowed to explain how certain moral or religious terms are understood in their own languages they may just understand one another's views on certain issues better.



Inequalities in terms of education and gender bring definite power interests into play within the organization. Dialogue between people should sometimes be structured in such a way that it deliberately addresses these power interests. For instance, giving the least educated, female participant the first opportunity to speak may sound like a forced, unnatural move that might even make the individual uncomfortable, but it subtly conveys the message that all views are important. The opportunity to speak first can also be rotated on a weekly basis.

### 6.3. The case of a macro urban Dutch Reformed congregation

#### 6.3.1. Background:

Identifying particulars are being withheld to protect the individual and the congregation involved. It is however helpful to list the congregation's core values as indicated in their marketing material (translated):

**Mission:**

We are sent to live and work with God in the recreation of His world.

**Vision:**

We are a contemporary community church that, in Christ, serves the broader community (with a focus on Gauteng and Southern Africa)

**We believe:**

- In Jesus Christ, our only hope
- We live only through God's grace
- The Bible is the Word of God and source of all life

#### 6.3.2. Verbatim of interview with the congregation's leading minister (translated from Afrikaans)

*What type of diversity do you find in a big macro congregation such as yours? Do you find, for instance, that there are different kinds of spiritualities? What about age, does that have an influence on diversity with regard to spirituality? How do you deal with it?*

A first remark, that is probably relevant to all the questions you are about to ask, is that we are currently involved in a serious process of transformation, which makes it difficult for me to decide whether to answer you from the frame of mind and the goals towards which we are aspiring, or from the realities of our current situation.

The first aspect with regard to which one experiences diversity is spirituality, and here quite a radical diversity is present. Because the area within which we operate has quite a few charismatic churches, we are experiencing a rather big shift towards the more charismatic faith experience. At the same time, however, a recent census in our area indicated that the only church that is growing in the area is the Roman Catholic congregation. We don't really know what to make of it, because statistics can be misleading. But we started opening our church very early on a Wednesday-morning and invited people to come there to read the Bible, or pray. There is always someone present on these occasions who will serve you Holy Communion, if you feel the need for it. It seems to work. This may be a confirmation of the fact that there is a need for a more meditative spiritual experience. I have no doubt that there is a wide range of spiritualities within our church. That is why people do not want to concern themselves too much with dogmatic ideas when it comes to the church.

*What about the existence of a so-called "Reformed identity"? How do you interpret it?*

It is not an issue for us at all. Even among our older members who have more traditional expectations of the church, the issue is no longer that of Reformed identity. The issue is culture and sentiment - which is tragic. I haven't encountered an issue about Reformed identity with a single member of the church. In fact, they will make jokes about it if you try to steer the conversation in that direction. To them it is an issue for the ministers.

*And do the ministers still have a desire to deal with it? Do you find this kind of sentiment amongst your colleagues?*

Yes, you do find it, but then the question remains - what is meant by "Reformed"?

*And how do you deal with it? How do you keep people together? What provides unity?*

Our basic approach is to vigorously promote communication. Every member is invited to attend discussion-forums. Some members are sent letters up to four times if they do not respond to the first. At these forums we try to talk things through - we consider it important. We got rid of the old geographical divisions and now have cell groups that associate freely. We tell members: we are interested in the journey they are undertaking with God. God undertakes a unique journey with each and every person. We ask: where are you in your relationship with God? We want to guide you to find out who you are, and to find your place within the church and the broader community, so that you can integrate your understanding of the gospel with your life outside of the church. That is our challenge.

We also have a strong "member guidance process". We invite people to attend some seminars. Amongst ourselves we as ministers of this congregation drafted a document that we call (for the moment) our "vision-experience". We want to determine where God is working in our community. The secret is to find out where God is working and to join Him there. The purpose is to give people the idea of a kingdom perspective and to help them find a place in the congregation. We also have a whole range of other courses: discover your gifts, networking, equipment-seminars etc. It forms a whole process, and it is completely voluntary. In this respect we differ from the charismatic churches, which do not allow you to become a member unless you attend a series of seminars. We want to help everyone to discover his or her unique personality, place and role by using Mayers-Briggs etc. In this way we attempt to accommodate everyone, even though they are all very different.

As part of our new building project, we are going to have a little chapel that will be part of a walkway with various facilities. On Sundays there will be a 8:00 service with the normal traditional Dutch Reformed liturgy, a 9:30 family service, and Sunday evenings' service will be totally charismatic. While the 9:30 service is going on, there will also be an Anglican style English service in the chapel. We will try to keep the chapel open 24-hours a day so that people can come and pray, confess, or celebrate Communion. In this way we try to accommodate various kinds of spirituality.

*What about theological views with regard to Scripture? One often finds that what is taught at theological seminaries does not necessarily correspond to the normal church member's Scriptural views. This sometimes leads to problems. Some still want to uphold mechanical inspiration theories, while others use the historical critical method. How do you deal with this?*

You know, in the end we try to create space for everyone to be what they want to be. That means that you do not allow just anyone to preach on a Sunday evening - that specific crowd just don't understand some ministers. The crowd that attends the Sunday evening service understands nothing but fundamentalist language. It is a language game in the end, we are back at Wittgenstein, I guess. But it's a case of using the language that people understand, and if you are enough of a postmodernist, you won't have a problem with that I suspect. Of course it also depends on who plays a role at what stage. One does try to "educate" people in accordance with your own view of scripture and explain how you understand these things. There are a lot of diverse views on these issues. Diversity is no longer really an issue for me, because it is quite simply a fact of life around here. This is especially true with regard to people views about life, values, and their spirituality - it's just unbelievable.

*But do you find that people still expect unambiguous truths, and do you provide it when they ask for it? Do you not find it irreconcilable with your own views on Scripture, postmodernism and your concept of truth? If one truth does not exclude another, what do you tell someone who wants to know whether Jonah was really in the fish's belly, for example?*

I would reply like Ferdinand Deist once did: "Yes, Jonah was in the fish, the story tells you so." No, I don't think it is ever an uncritical thing, as if you wouldn't try to build in a measure of self-criticism in the course of the conversation. In the end though, everyone needs something to live by. People understand in terms of their own frames of reference, and we try and accommodate it. I think some of your older people are being influenced by the total change in the country. They find it very difficult to accept that the church is also changing and that it can no longer function as a last resort for Afrikaans speaking people.

These people want black and white answers and get upset when the church does not pronounce Christina or Sakkie Spannenberg wrong.

*So your church wouldn't do that, you wouldn't take a specific stand?*

What I do, is to write a Focus feature in the weekly church newsletter where I try and respond to what has been going on in the press during the week. All I do is to ask questions, to try and draw people out. It is about giving guidelines to help them think about the issues and not necessarily about providing conclusive answers.

*Do your members accept this? Have you managed to overcome these expectations?*

I haven't encountered any problems yet.

*How do you respond to the youth when they ask all kinds of questions about sex?*

I have to tell you, our youth does not ask these questions. I don't know why, but there seems to be only one concern left for these young people, and that is materialism.

*If you became aware of two young people who are definitely living and sleeping together, what would you do about it?*

I wouldn't do anything about it.

*What about the admonition of the church? Does it still function?*

No, not as it used to be understood. I think that some form of admonition still functions but not as people commonly understand it.

*But you as church no longer play that role?*

No, recently a well-known rugby player moved into our community and became involved with the church. He immediately reported to the church. On the form that he filled in during the service, he indicated that he and his girlfriend lived together even though they weren't married. They were both Christians, however, and wanted to become involved in the church. What am I supposed to say, if I don't even know what to think about it myself.

*What about the great homosexual debate that is currently raging in the church today?*

*What would you do if one of your ministers or one of the members of the church council suddenly admits to being gay?*

If that were to happen I think we would have a lot of trouble, because we have a strong fundamentalist group - not just older people, but also a group of young fundamentalist people who attend church in the evening. They are a young yuppie group, a typical modernist phenomenon, as you know. I really don't know what we will do, I don't even want to think about it. However, I doubt we would act in a way that would satisfy a fundamentalist understanding of these things. It is not our style. Our style is to accommodate, so we would probably accommodate this as well. We would deal with it in a very pastoral way. Our congregation has a decidedly pastoral sensitivity, so we would probably opt for a pastoral approach to it, rather than a dogmatic one.

*What about missionary activity and evangelism? Is Jesus still the only Savior in your conception and can it therefore be preached to people of other faiths?*

Yes, we do something along the lines described in this pamphlet, which state that we believe. (He points to one of their pamphlets)

*So that is your core values?*

Yes, that is probably what we understand as our Reformed identity. Those are our core values - we stop at that. It can of course mean different things to different people.

There are many people who are very excited about the fact that for the next five years we will be focusing on our immediate community. However, that will not affect our support for Action Belgium or Action Russia, which are typical missionary efforts. The Belgium guys come back every year to make us aware of the fact that there are supposedly no Christians in Belgium. In their view only evangelical churches are truly Christian. The Roman Catholics are not considered Christian at all. Should you disagree with them, they would probably question your faith as well. One has to try and accommodate them - that is our style. What I would personally do if I was in another set-up, I'm not sure, because one becomes so much



a part of the story and culture of your congregation that you come to accept the way it works. It is no longer a personal dilemma for me.

*Do you not find that it is a problem to admit that your religious truths exclude other truths on a certain level, and still argue against exclusive moral truths? Given your exclusive religious commitments, you must find it difficult to plead for openness about ethical issues. Is it not true that people want to apply truth consistently, and since they regard their religion as the only truth, they also expect it to provide them with black and white truths about other things. How do you deal with people's need for unambiguous answers about the truth - say for example about gay people?*

I find that it helps to speak to people in my personal capacity. To say - this is my point of view: stated loud and clear. If someone comes to me and asks me: "You are my minister, now tell me about gays", my answer probably wouldn't satisfy him, but our congregation's culture is one of accommodation, and he would understand that I can also accommodate his point of view.

A good example is a certain guy who organizes camping weekends for men, the so-called "promise-keeping" movement, you know. They tell the guys over the weekend that they are supposed to be kings and priests in their households. It boils down to a type of "submissiveness-theology". When they try it at home, their wives soon call me to ask: "Can this be right?". They ask me whether the Bible teaches that if one's husband arrives at home in the evening and demands sex, you are obliged to comply. This is a good example: The presenter comes to see me and I tell him that I am uncomfortable with certain things, but that he is entitled to his own views. We can talk about it, and about the Bible as well. I will write about it my Focus feature though, and state in no uncertain terms what my own views are and how I interpret the Scriptures. However, we are not going to force anyone to comply with our views. That guy will know, we are not going to stop him from organizing his camping weekends.

*But don't you find that innocent people go on these camps with the idea that they are "good Christian camps"? [Interjection: Who says that they are not good Christian camps? (laugh)]*

*But could such ideas not be mistaken for the church's official truth?*

The fact of the matter is that the church used to teach people along similar lines in the past. It does not reflect my personal opinions though.

*But is there at least some kind of a corrective somewhere, is there a critical voice, to make people aware of the fact that there is not just one acceptable version of the "good Christian view"?*

Yes, one does that, for instance in a conversation with a person I would tell them that I disagree with them, or I would write about it in my Focus feature. We will not stop a guy like that, however. There will be no centralized control or censure. We cannot tell someone that he cannot have his camping weekends, because we are worried about his teachings, where would you draw those types of lines?

*But the question is, do you draw lines in your sermons?*

Yes, you do, because that is you speaking.

*[Interjection: While you are standing on a pulpit which proclaims: "Thus speaks God?"]*

No, I am past that.

*But don't you think there is that kind of expectation? For instance, the case of the guy who was exorcising demons in your congregation. That was during one of your services, and he was acting as preacher during a liturgical service.*

The way we deal with it is - we allow it if there are people who want it. Within the ministerial team, there was total dissensus about it. Yet it also depends, since my involvement here, that guy has not been a part of our annual program. You play an individual role, you say what you believe, and you leave your mark, but that does not mean that you will not accommodate those who favor a different approach or other points of view. That kind of approach has always been a part of our culture. Someone who tries to exercise control or power, will never succeed here.

*That brings me to the question of your leadership structure. How does it work in your organization?*

It is unique but simple. Membership-empowerment is incredibly important. We try and empower the congregational council as far as we can with regard to policy and strategy so that they are ultimately the ones who decide these issues. We do not use the old system of dividing our members geographically with representatives for each area. The result is that you get people on the congregation council whose personalities, passions and gifts lie in this area. They are people who know about strategy and policy. We have seven of these. We have to comply with the official demands of the church, so these seven serve as seven elders. Then we also have six deacons (I will explain where they fit in later). That group of thirteen and I, without the other ministers, meets every Monday evening. This body has the status of an official church council.

Every quarter six ministry forums are held - one for every ministry. People are invited, not obliged, to attend these forums. We try to make people's attendance at these forums indispensable by discussing important issues such as their operating budgets. However, because people are not forced to attend, these bodies do not take on a life of their own. These are occasions where the congregation council communicates with the ministries and where they in turn have the opportunity to contribute to the bigger picture. The leaders of the six ministries are also the deacons who serve on the congregation council.

We have also decided it is impossible to have six ministers who all do everything. We have therefore started to specialize. One of us is the leader minister who has the mandate to change the job descriptions of all the others on a daily basis if he deems it necessary. He empowers each of the others in their own area of expertise.

*How do you manage to comply with the official church requirements regarding the functions that every minister has to exercise?*

We all do house-visitation. In the course of your work you cannot but visit people's houses and that is deemed sufficient?

*So you simply interpret it differently?*

Yes, there are no official interpretations of the church requirements, the church simply expects you to do house-visitation. If someone were to say to me that what I did was not house-visitation, then that would be his interpretation - probably based on how things used to work. So we work around these things.

*How is your relationship with the synod and the broader church structures in the country?*

*Do they hassle you about your interpretations or do they allow you a lot of freedom?*

At the moment, things are not too bad. There are of course some of our colleagues who question what we do at our annual meetings. Our congregation is sometimes considered a threat - it is a large congregation and it draws people to it. We also have an expert on church law who is very narrow-minded. At a recent breakfast, however, our colleagues in the area were very positive. There is sort of a feeling that our congregation should be allowed to experiment, so that the others can learn from our mistakes. We do make a lot of mistakes - that is inevitable.

*And how do you deal with these mistakes?*

The guys who are involved are strategically minded and they are not too concerned about our reformed character. Their main concern is to manage the whole thing properly. They make sure that things run smoothly. Monitoring and evaluation processes are part of this. These guys are used to making mistakes, and they don't mind it. Because it is an open community that is prepared to make mistakes, in fact, a community that rejects those who pretend to be faultless, we do not have a problem.

### **6.3.3. Analysis of how this congregation reflects certain organizational trends:**

#### **1) Individual Identity:**

The diverse composition of the congregation results in a multifaceted view of individual identity within the organization. Whereas the minister involved in the interview certainly displays a poststructuralist "distributed self" within which he can accommodate

fundamentalist thinking and sophisticated knowledge of philosophy and theology, without considering these aspects mutually exclusive. The poststructuralist notion of the self involves a continuity and interdependence of self and other. Therefore, it can even be argued that the minister's more "postmodern" views were manifested more clearly in the interview because of the fact that the interviewer herself displayed certain preferences for a postmodern way of thinking about organizations. This does not mean that he is acting without "integrity" as a modernist assessment of the situation would surely conclude. Instead, a totally different view of "identity" that allows for unpredictability, is manifested here. The minister also displayed a very contextualized sense of self, since he admitted that he was unsure what his position about certain issues would be if he was not involved in that congregation. He is aware of the fact that he is both the subject and object of the story that he is co-authoring with his fellow church members.

It is however doubtful whether all of the members of this congregation have the same sense of "distributed selves". The minister in fact acknowledged that there are certain young, fundamentalist members who will find it impossible to entertain the notion, for instance, that the church should accommodate homosexual people. There is a very real possibility that these extremely different assumptions may lead to conflict. Fundamentalists are not usually well disposed towards the value of accommodation. Despite this, the minister repeatedly described the congregation as very accommodating. The question then remains: can a postmodernist approach accommodate even fundamentalism? Isn't postmodernism precisely a critical voice against the metanarratives that fundamentalism creates and the discrimination and exclusion it supports? This question can be partly addressed by looking at the organizational identity of the congregation.

## **2) Organizational identity:**

The congregation's view of its own identity is determined to a large extent by its emphasis on accommodation. Because it wants to create space for a variety of individuals and groups, it cannot base its identity on certain dogmatic distinctions. It calls itself a community church, and the way in which it determines its actions is by looking at the various ways in

which the community presents opportunities for Christians to make a contribution. The identity of the church and its identifiable actions in the world is therefore not based on certain dogmatic prescription about what the Church of Christ should be. Instead it is determined by the congregation's contextual reality. The contextual reality of this congregation is one of spiritual, theological, racial, educational and material diversity. The premise that the congregation accepted is that every individual within this diverse congregation has a certain role to play. Playing a role within the congregation cannot be restricted to those who hold certain theological or spiritual views. The inclusive stance of the congregation can only function if diversity is valued as an important resource.

This approach acknowledges that no simple grand narrative provides a comprehensive and coherent explanation of reality. The minister mentioned Wittgenstein and the use of language games in "playing" with the various versions of truth and knowledge. The social bond within this organization is certainly not woven by a single thread, rather, it is a fabric formed by the intersection of an indeterminate number of language games. This complexity does not necessarily result in nihilism and flux within which people are rendered powerless. As the minister indicated, power in the sense of dominating and controlling is considered untenable, whereas power in the sense of empowering, setting free and risking unpredictability is seen as a productive force.

The congregation seems to refrain from giving people clear-cut rules, instead it assists them in arriving at their own solutions. There is no top-down rhetoric, but rather a process of challenging individuals to find their own place in their own terms, and to defend their own views on an issue. The congregation is even willing to take risks in the process. The exorcism and the "promise-keeping" movements within the congregation are not forbidden, even though a critical conversation about these activities continues within the congregation. The congregation consistently (ironically a very modernist characteristic) allows all kinds of spiritualities and theological viewpoints to find its place within the organization. This congregation definitely displays the postmodern trait of recognition and protection of Otherness.



A further characteristic of postmodern organizations is that they are able to hold together a diverse range of unique individuals and functions, while interacting with an ever-changing environment. The process of transformation that the congregation is currently involved in should not be considered as temporary. The goal should not be to arrive at some permanent state of affairs. The distinction made at the outset of the interview between the congregation's present reality and the frame of mind determining the future would be meaningless in a truly postmodern organization. In fact, the culture displayed in the transformation period is "culture" in the true sense of the word, because culture is a process, it is the tending of natural growth, or cultivation. This process should never stall in some final form. An organizational culture that is contested, responsive and ever changing will enable this congregation to deal with the diversities and contextual challenges that it faces.

#### **6.3.4. Analysis of how the congregation deals with moral issues:**

##### **1) A holistic perspective**

The congregation's view of the relationship between religious activities and people's everyday lives indicate a strong holistic approach. Not only do they want to assist people in integrating their faith experience with the rest of their lives, they also want to use people's occupational strengths, such as their knowledge and expertise, in the church and empower them to determine the church's direction and activities.

The new building project is also an indication of the congregation's commitment to a holistic ministry. The new facilities want to present church members with the opportunity to worship, socialize, gain knowledge and skills, and serve the community through the existence of a one-stop community center that houses a big worship-center, a small 24-hour chapel, a bookshop, coffee shop, conference facilities, job creation resources, a day-care center, and a kitchen for feeding the hungry.

The whole idea of a "community church" also reflects the congregation's commitment to responding to a community's needs and interests, instead of dogmatically insisting that the congregation adhere to the prescribed functions of the church. No church function or project is therefore imposed top-down on the church community. The absence of religious symbols on the congregation's pamphlets and marketing material is indicative of their efforts to undermine the dichotomy between secular and religious spheres. This is further proof of the fact that their approach is a holistic one.

**2) Moral values are neither totalizing structures that repress difference, nor oppositional differences excluding commonality**

The way the congregation deals with moral issues such as premarital sex and homosexuality indicates the way in which they approach difference and dissensus in their organization. They do not provide people with unambiguous moral directives based on some unshakable dogmatic conception of the truth. Yet they do not allow opposing viewpoints to undermine the sense of community that exists within the congregation completely. Instead of endorsing one view, which may exclude another, they assist their members in thinking through issues. They do this by helping people ask meaningful questions about issues and by discussing ways of interpreting Scriptural perspectives on the issue. The goal of this process however is still not to reach consensus.

The values that are used to create unity and commonality within the congregation are very minimalist. They stress the central position of Christ, the fact that we all live by God's grace, and the Bible as Word of God and source of life - nothing more, nothing less. These core values do not however rule out different interpretations of how the congregation should go about doing its work in the community. It avoids supporting only one interpretation of Scripture on certain moral issues. It wants to create unity, but a unity with plenty of room for diversity.

Minimalist core values should not be misunderstood as an effort to create at least some semblance of complete consensus in the congregation. Far from ruling out certain

interpretations through the endorsement of these core values, these generalized core values are an acknowledgement of the fact that values are always subject to interpretation. People have to decide for themselves what it means to say that Jesus Christ is your only hope, or what it means to live by God's grace. They have to find their own way to use the Bible as a source of true life. From the way in which these core values are actualized in practice, it becomes clear that these core values truly leave a lot of room for different interpretations. Does the fact that the Bible is seen as the source of true life support a fundamentalist view of the mechanical inspiration, or could it also reflect a more historical critical interpretation of Scripture? In this case, it is clear that the congregation didn't chose one over and against the other, but rather created room for both. It is accepted that there will never be a complete consensus on how these core values should be interpreted.

### **3) Truth is seen as the function of a network of relations and guidelines are temporary in nature**

The organization's way of dealing with truth displays the postmodern characteristics of multifaceted truths that are the function of a network of relations and guidelines. These relations and guidelines are responses to the specific context of the congregation. This includes the accommodating style that has always been a hallmark of this congregation. It also reflects the urban environment and the diverse composition of the people and interests it serves. No single principle can therefore enjoy absolute priority or exclusive consideration. When a specific moral dilemma arises, various perspectives are considered and contextual variables are taken into account. In the light of this, it is quite understandable that the minister was unsure about how they would deal with a homosexual minister. It is in fact impossible to predict, because their pastoral approach will take the specific person, the context and a lot of other variables into account before deciding how to deal with the situation at hand.

Individual opinions and perspectives are part of an ever-changing, ever-evolving web of relations with which they freely associate. There is a minimalist set of core values that the

individual associates with in order to be part of the organization, but there is also a lot of moral free space. The individual is allowed his or her own interpretation of these truths and can decide how to live accordingly. The congregation stands for a few basic things, and these are the only criteria for membership. No-one will be denied membership on the grounds of his or her specific spiritual preferences, theological perspectives or personal morality.

Dissent is not something the congregation shies away from. Instead, dissent is openly acknowledged in discussions and also in the weekly printed material that deals with contemporary issues. Because no one version of the truth can be endorsed, the congregation sometimes have to "risk" giving people freedom to organize their own events, where they teach and practice their own version of the truth. These "risks" are however part of the process of developing and practicing the truth. It is also not a linear developmental process that will come to a conclusion and present a "complete truth" or even a better-defined truth. Instead, it is an unpredictable process that will have its ebbs and flows and where progression is not the goal or the criterion.

The acknowledgement of various perspectives on the truth, and the acknowledgement of diverse opinions, can easily be misunderstood as part of a "truth-building" process. In this misconception, all the different perspectives and opinions are seen as the many pieces of a puzzle that we have only to piece together in order to get the completed picture. The metaphor of the blind men and the elephant is often used to illustrate this view. It is alleged that if a number of blind men should all touch various parts of an elephant and then compile all their different experiences, they will eventually be able to get a pretty good idea of how an elephant must look. A postmodern view of truth cannot support this theory, because it acknowledges the fact that some versions of the truth may in fact contradict others, and that all the pieces do not fit neatly into each other to form a comprehensive picture. A postmodern view of truth is one that accepts the fact that completeness, non-contradiction, and all the other ideals of a correspondence-theory of truth should be abandoned. Truth is not one, it is many, and it will not be without ambivalence and contradictions.

The congregation seems to operate according to this view of truth, yet it maintains an exclusivistic Christian character. The postmodern flux apparently still includes certain non-negotiables. The congregation's missionary activities, and its insistence that Christ is their only hope, do not allow for the accommodation of religious truths. It also refuses to acknowledge any other religious book or document as a "source of life". Another question that one might raise in connection with the postmodern character of truth within the congregation is whether its members share the minister's views on the nature of truth. They clearly welcome the way in which he, and the church structure, are able to accommodate their view of truth. It is another matter however whether they are in fact also accommodating in their views of truth. The minister acknowledged this problem when he spoke about a certain mission group's dismissal of even Roman Catholics, and the fact that they will consider anyone who tells them otherwise unbelievers as well. The challenge to the congregation is to manage, in a truly postmodern way, contradictory elements: on the one hand, its accommodation of all perspectives, including fundamentalist conceptions of truth, and on the other hand, its handling of certain elements that may undermine their style of accommodation because of its own intolerance.

#### **4) Exposing the subject to Otherness**

Even though the congregation celebrates difference and emphasizes the accommodation of difference, it doesn't necessarily follow that people will be exposed to "Otherness" within the congregation. Because various forms of spirituality can be accommodated in different liturgical services, people can associate freely with those who experience their faith in the same way. Because of this, people may never really meet the "Other" face to face. When you add to this the fact that the ministers try to accommodate and adapt to their different audience's views of Scripture and the expectations that exist of that specific service, it becomes clear that the neoconservative tendencies, that Kirsten (1988) describes as a postmodernism of reaction may be allowed to persist. This form of postmodernism deals with plurality and difference by allowing smaller groups to isolate themselves within their own circle where their views and lifestyle go unchallenged and conflict is avoided. This

neoconservatism is in fact a kind of nostalgia for modernist closure and sameness. The minister is therefore correct in calling the young fundamentalist group who attend the evening services and who refuse to listen to anything but fundamentalist language, a "typical modernist" phenomenon.

There are however other opportunities and activities which allow individuals in the congregation to meet the other. There is an open discussion of issues in the weekly focus, where different and even contradictory understandings of the Scriptures are juxtaposed. The congregation allows them to coexist, without attempting to fuse them into a unified new dogma. The congregation's pastoral approach to moral issues, such as homosexuality, shows a sensitivity for the importance of the specific context of each dilemma, which steers clear of dogmatism.

## 5) Dialogue

This congregation values dialogue and allows everyone in the congregation to express their own views freely. They are allowed to teach, practice and witness to the truth as they perceive it. There does however seem to be a recognition of the fact that not all forums are ideal for dissent, discussion and the juxtaposition of opinions. As the minister put it: "everyone needs something to live by". For that reason he chooses to accommodate fundamentalist expectations in the evening service, instead of exposing them to someone who would confront them with a different scriptural approach and incomprehensible views.

The question remains however whether it isn't sometimes necessary to allow dialogue in these forums as well. Many young people's involvement with the church may be restricted to their attendance of the Sunday evening services. Is it the best approach to give them what they came for - a weekly tonic in their preferred flavor? This does of course not mean that they cannot be challenged in the type of language, or style, that they understand. It does however imply that other views and perspectives must be aired freely and without hesitance - even in these services. If this does not happen, a neoconservatist closure, isolation and discrimination is supported that makes certain elements in the congregation intolerant



towards difference and undermines the dialogue and openness that would otherwise be the hallmark of this congregation.

### **6.3.5. Suggestions with regard to the Dutch Reformed macro congregation:**

#### **1) Holistic perspective:**

The idea of a community church that allows its activities to be determined by the needs and interests of its members and the community in which it operates, is truly based on a holistic view of the integral relationship between faith and life. This congregation plans to feed people because hungry people can't hear the gospel, and they plan to open up their chapel all week, because they don't believe that religion is only a Sunday activity. The congregation should be encouraged to explore this holistic perspective even further. For instance, the congregation has a large component of young and upcoming (yuppie) church members. One of its marketing posters proclaims that it stand for: "Cool guys, hot faith". Wouldn't establishing a gym on the church grounds be a wonderful way to undermine the dichotomy between faith and the other activities that young people engage in? This would not only illustrate the holistic precept that bodily and spiritual health goes hand in hand, it would also draw the diversity of young people to one physical space where they could meet one another. If people could be encouraged to meet "the Other" in such a way, it may help to reverse the neoconservative tendency to mix only with those who share your spirituality and theological ideas by attending only those Sunday services specifically geared towards it.

#### **2) Non-totalizing moral structures and exposure to "Otherness":**

It can hardly be argued that this congregation does not allow enough "moral free space". It certainly accommodates a lot of diverse perspectives within its broad confessional basis. It is however interesting to note how the pressures that result from church members' expectations, can lead to certain totalizing characteristics developing around certain services or ministries. For instance, it is accepted that certain ministers should refrain from preaching in certain services, because he is unable to meet the audience's

fundamentalist expectations. Another example is the missionaries who are allowed to regard Roman Catholics as non-Christians. These people are never challenged for fear of having one's own faith questioned. These tendencies tend to restrict certain activities and services to people with specific views. This is typical of totalizing structures. Does the emphasis placed on accommodation not in effect undermine that very same value in certain contexts? One may regard this as just another "interesting postmodern ambivalence", but it could become a very real and very serious problem if it is not subjected to the self-critical scrutiny and self-awareness that characterizes the postmodern style.

How can this be achieved? One way would be to place the "Other" in the midst of these closed ranks. The idea is not to challenge them in a way that antagonizes them on a Sunday evening, but to expose them to different viewpoints in creative ways. For instance, people tend to form cell groups with those who think and believe like them. Wouldn't it be helpful to encourage people to visit another cell group who represent another age group or spirituality two or three times a year? Two cell-groups could also arrange to discuss a contemporary moral issue like homosexuality together. Certain evening services could also be designated discussion forums and people with opposing views could be invited to debate a certain issue. The minister could also invite people with various points of view to comment on a certain issue in the weekly "Focus" feature. In this way opposing views could be juxtaposed in writing.

### **3) Truth as a network of ideas:**

Part of the challenge of handling difference in a postmodern way is dealing with people's expectations of unambiguous truth. As the minister rightly remarked: "People need something to live by". It has to be acknowledged that meaningful truths need to be formulated in order to give people a sense of direction and purpose. The critical deconstruction of truths therefore becomes irresponsible if it isn't replaced by something else. Of course, this "something" has to be thought of as temporary, preliminary, or "the best we can do with the knowledge we have".

All our attempts at grasping the truth are well-intended temporary, preliminary efforts of making sense out of things in our specific context. People should be made aware of the fact that, even though their views about truth is subjective in nature, it can become a valuable resource for the church's work in the community. People can play a valuable role if they are empowered to do so. The work of Christ demands the inputs of all kinds of people with different kinds of perspectives.

#### 4) Dialogue:

Dialogue in a diverse congregation such as this one, is never easy to manage. Besides the fact that various theological perspectives, spiritual preferences and generational gaps influence the language games that come into play during dialogue, there are also hidden power interests, insecurities and fears that threaten the process. It may be argued that the best strategy is to ensure that those who enter a specific dialogue are representative of all groups of people, in order to ensure that all voices will be heard. However this may cause misunderstandings and may even lead to conflict because people would not have adequate access to the assumptions, knowledge and experience that would allow them to grasp the other person's point of view. People may end up talking past each other. If the minister tried to mediate in these situations, he or she would once again become the center of the dialogue, the "objective voice" that translates everyone's views.

A better strategy might be to focus on narratives that can expose a certain group of people to a totally new perspective in a non-threatening way. One might for instance relate a narrative about a homosexual Christian who struggles with his sexuality, or even invite such a person to tell his story himself. People should be encouraged to look into the face of the Other, instead of making up their minds on an abstract, theoretical level.

The problem with face-to-face encounters is that it may be intimidating for some people. Power relations such as age or education often cause certain people to dominate, while others feel unable or unworthy to contribute to the discussion. Face-to-face interaction may therefore be supplemented with other, less personal strategies that still allow people

to put their own views on the table. To stimulate dialogue, one could make use of the various options that information technology and the multi-media offer. People can form online chat rooms about certain issues. They can go and watch a movie together and discuss it amongst each other over the web. It may even be worthwhile to get two cell-groups who have different views on a movie to interact in an informal debate on the web. People can log on, follow the debate and state their views. People can even vote online about an issue and statistics are immediately updated and available. To facilitate this kind of interaction the congregation may have to make computers available in the community centre, so that participation is not restricted to the privileged few.

#### **6.4. Conclusion:**

This dissertation wanted to deal with the problem of accommodating unique individual moral perspectives, while at the same time maintaining unity within an organization. The three organizations discussed in this chapter show how contemporary South African organizations have tried to develop strategies for dealing with diversity in a way that allows for the maintenance of unity and order. Some organizations, such as MBD, make use of common core values that are symbolically supported by means of clothing, song and dance to maintain unity. In other cases, such as PCM, differences are transcended by a common goal or purpose, such as restoring the inner city in the name of Jesus Christ. The macro Dutch Reformed congregation opted for very general core values that allow individual members of the congregation the freedom to interpret and apply them in any way they see fit. Each of these strategies has benefits and disadvantages.

This dissertation provides perspectives that support and reinforce the beneficial aspects of the strategies that organizations employ to deal with diversity, and suggests solutions to some of the problems regularly encountered in the course of these efforts. Discussing and analyzing the way in which these three contemporary organizations deal with diversity have illustrated how the insights developed in this dissertation applies to the practical challenges of organizational life. It has however also created new perspectives and opened new avenues to be explored by further research. It confirmed the contention of this dissertation that

developing strategies for dealing with moral issues in the workplace should always be a very context-specific exercise. A further implication of this fact, is that the specific nature, goals, and culture of an organization will determine what strategies would be viable in that organization. For instance, an organization such as MBD, with its specific goals and needs, may strive for a more comprehensive consensus, than would the Dutch Reformed congregation. In the case of the Dutch Reformed congregation, decentralized activities and a variety of functions can accommodate diversity in a very "postmodern" way, an option that may not be available to a centralized organization such as MBD, or a smaller organization, such as PCM. Further research will be necessary in order to explore how various variables will influence the strategies chosen for dealing with moral values in the workplace. Another limitation of this study is the fact that the discussion of the three cases studies was limited to analyses of managers' views on their organizations. It may also be necessary to do more in-depth research on whether employees on all the levels of the organization view the organizational culture, its values and its functioning, in the way the managers do. This may provide interesting perspectives on whether all employees have ownership of the assumed consensus that operates, or the strategies that were decided on.

The findings of this dissertation have important implications for Christian managers dealing with moral values in the workplace. Christian managers in pluralistic working environments no longer have the option to draw solely on moral values originating from a single religious perspective. In fact, when one comes to realize how moral decision-making operates, it becomes clear that even Christian managers draw on a variety of diverse perspectives when making moral decisions. The unique character of each individual's moral configuration makes totalizing group distinctions impossible. There is no one "Christian perspective" that can guide managers who see their Christian religion as an important part of their identity in dealing with moral values in the workplace. Insight into the moral configuration of all individuals who operate as *moral bricoleurs* in the workplace can however assist managers in understanding the complexity of the process of moral decision-making. It can also sensitize Christian managers to the dangers of totalizing moral structures, and create openness for the Other. It can, and should strengthen managers' commitment to ongoing dialogue about moral issues in the workplace.

This dissertation argued that the balance between respect for individual moral views and organizational unity can be struck if the organization's need for meaningful truth and values is juxtaposed by an awareness of the temporary, context-specific nature of both individual and collective interpretations. This does not undermine the value and meaning of these truths in any way, but enables it to address the unique challenges of the South African context. People's need to associate and disassociate freely should be acknowledged, but at the same time, these groups should never be allowed to become totalizing structures that exclude contact with the Other. Various ways of supporting an ongoing dialogue about truth and values should be explored. The fact that South Africans continue to find it important and meaningful to discuss these issues indicates our commitment to the moral reconstruction of our South African society.

Conclusions to studies such as these can satisfy neither the expectations of the researcher, nor that of the reader. If a study on dealing with moral values in the workplace can be concluded in a paragraph or two, it would have failed. This dissertation would have served its purpose if it created an awareness of the contingent, context-specific nature of all moral deliberation, and the responsibility it places on all of us to continue laboring for a holistic, non-totalizing, revisable, dialogical moral culture in the workplace.



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