HOW GOOD PEOPLE MAKE TOUGH CHOICES
RESOLVING THE DILEMMAS OF ETHICAL LIVING

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Chapter One
(Please note: The page numbers in this text refer to the page numbers from the actual book.)

Overview: The Ethics of Right versus Right

All of us face tough choices.

Sometimes we duck them. Sometimes we address them. Even when we address them, however, we don't always decide to resolve them. Sometimes we simply brood endlessly over possible outcomes or agonize about paths to pursue.

And even if we *do* try to resolve them, we don't always do so by energetic self-reflection. Sometimes we simply bull our way through to a conclusion by sheer impatience and assertive self-will—as though getting it *resolved* were more important than getting it *right.*

This is a book for those who want to address and resolve tough choices through energetic self-reflection. Those are the people, after all, whom we often think of as "good" people. They are good, we say, because they seem to have some conscious sense of vision, some deep core of ethical values, that gives them the courage to stand up to the tough choices. That doesn't mean they face fewer choices than other people. Quite the opposite: Those who live in close proximity to their basic values are apt to agonize over choices that other people, drifting over the surface of their lives, might never even see as problems. Sound values raise tough choices; and tough choices are never easy.

That was the case with a librarian who, several years ago, was working the reference desk at the public library in her community.

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The phone rang. The questioner, a male, wanted some information on state laws concerning rape. The librarian asked several questions to clarify the nature of his inquiry. Then, in keeping with long-established library policy designed to keep phone lines from being tied up, she explained that she would call him back in a few minutes after researching his question. She took down his first name and phone number, and hung up.

She was just getting up to do the research when a man who had been sitting in the reading area within earshot of the reference desk approached her. Flashing a police detective's badge, he asked for the name and number of the caller. The reason: The conversation he had overheard led him to suspect that the caller was the perpetrator of a rape that had happened the night before in the community.

What should she do? On one hand, she herself was a member of the community. She felt very strongly about the need to maintain law and order. As a woman, she was particularly concerned that a rapist might be at large in the community. And as a citizen, she wanted to do whatever she could to reduce the possibility that he might strike again. After all, what if she refused to tell— and another rape happened the following night?

On the other hand, she felt just as strongly that her professional code as a librarian required her to protect the confidentiality of *all* callers. She felt that free access to information was vital to the success of democracy, and that if people seeking information were being watched and categorized simply by the kinds of questions they asked, the police state was not far behind. The right of privacy, she felt, must extend to everyone. After all, what if this caller was simply a student writing a paper on rape for a civics class?

The choice she faced was clearly of the right-versus-right sort. It was right to support the community's quest for law and order. But it was also right to honor confidentiality, as her professional code required. What made the choice so tough for her? The fact that her values were so well defined. Had she been less concerned about the confidentiality of information—which, in its highest form, grows out of a desire to respect and honor everyone in her community—she might not have hesitated to turn over the name to the detective. She might have bowed so entirely to the authority of the officer—or sought so willingly to help him bring the criminal to justice—that she would never have noticed how quickly, in her mind, "the caller"

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became "the criminal" before he had even been questioned. On the other hand, had she been single-mindedly committed to her profession as a gatekeeper of society's information, she might

never even have considered her obligations to the larger community. She might simply have stood on the principle of confidentiality, and seen no conflict with the urgency of a social need.

Tough choices don't always involve professional codes or criminal laws. Nor do they always involve big, headline-size issues. They often operate in areas that laws and regulations don't reach. That was the case for a corporate executive with a nationwide manufacturing firm, who faced such a choice shortly after becoming manager of one of his company's plants in California. Every year, he learned, the producer of one of Hollywood's best-known television adventure series shot a segment for one of its shows in the plant's parking lot. Every year, the upper management at his firm's corporate headquarters allowed the crew to do the filming free of charge—typically on a Saturday, when the lot was empty. And every year Mr. Gray, the former plant manager, had given up weekend time with his family in order to be on location and assist the television crew.

So this year the new plant manager did the same. The shoot went as planned. At the end of the day, the producer came up to him, thanked him for his help, and asked how the check for five hundred dollars should be made out. Surprised, the manager replied that it should be made out to the corporation. Surprised in turn, the producer said, "Oh, okay. In the past we've always made it out to Mr. Gray. Shouldn't we just make it out to you?"

Tough choice? In a sense, yes. The corporation, which incurred no expenses and sustained no losses because of the shoot, neither asked for nor expected any payment. The plant manager, on the other hand, had given up an entire weekend day with no additional compensation. Yet the asset that made the shoot possible belonged not to him but to the corporation. Whose money was this? Was this a payment to the corporation or a contribution for his personal services? If the latter, was it a bribe to ensure that the same site would be available next year, or a gesture of appreciation for his helpfulness? Furthermore, if he *did* turn over the check to the corporation, would that lead to questions about what happened to last year's money and cause trouble for Gray, who may have reasoned out the issue in a different way and felt comfortable accepting the payment? Or might such an investigation

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lead to the discovery that this incident was part of a deceptive pattern established by Gray, who might have been regularly using corporate assets to produce personal gain? The manager knew that many people in his position would have pocketed the check with a murmur of appreciation and a live-and-let-live shrug. For him, it was hardly that simple—because of his core values of honesty, integrity, and fairness, and his desire to avoid even the appearance of evil. All in all, he felt that there was some right on both sides—that it was right for him to be compensated, and yet right for the company to receive whatever payments were made.

Tough choices, typically, are those that pit one "right" value against another. That's true in every walk of life—corporate, professional, personal, civic, international, educational, religious, and the rest. Consider that:

- It is right to protect the endangered spotted owl in the old-growth forests of the American Northwest—and right to provide jobs for loggers.
- It is right to honor a woman's right to make decisions affecting her body—and right to protect the lives of the unborn.
- It is right to provide our children with the finest public schools available—and right to prevent the constant upward ratcheting of state and local taxes.
- It is right to extend equal social services to everyone regardless of race or ethnic origin—and right to pay special attention to those whose cultural backgrounds may have deprived them of past opportunities.
- It is right to refrain from meddling in the internal affairs of sovereign nations—and right to help protect the undefended in warring regions where they are subject to slaughter.
- It is right to bench the star college quarterback caught drinking the night before the championship game—and right to field the best possible team for tomorrow's game.
- It is right to resist the importation of products made in developing nations to the detriment of the environment—and right to provide jobs, even at low wages, for citizens of those nations.
- It is right to condemn the minister who has an affair with a parishioner—and right to extend mercy to him for the only real mistake he's ever made.
- It is right to find out all you can about your competitor's costs and price structures—and right to obtain information only through proper channels.

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- It is right to take the family on a much-needed vacation—and right to save that money for your children's education.
- It is right to speak up in favor of a minority viewpoint in your club—and right to let the majority rule.
- It is right to support the principle of creative and aesthetic freedom for the curator of a photography exhibition at a local museum—and right to uphold the community's desire to avoid displaying pornographic or racially offensive works.
- It is right to "throw the book" at good employees who make dumb decisions that endanger the firm—and right to have enough compassion to mitigate the punishment and give them another chance.

Right versus right, then, is at the heart of our toughest choices. Does that mean that there are no right-versus-wrong choices? Is "wrong" only someone else's definition of what I think is "right"?

No. The world, unfortunately, faces plenty of right-versus-wrong questions. From cheating on taxes to lying under oath, from running red lights to inflating the expense account, from buying

under-twelve movie tickets for your fourteen-year-old to overstating the damage done to your car for insurance purposes—the world abounds with instances that, however commonplace, are widely understood to be wrong. But right-versus-wrong choices are very different from right-versus-right ones. The latter reach inward to our most profound and central values, setting one against the other in ways that will never be resolved simply by pretending that one is "wrong." Right-versus-wrong choices, by contrast, offer no such depth: The closer you get to them, the more they begin to smell. Two shorthand terms capture the differences: If we can call right-versus-right choices "ethical dilemmas," we can reserve the phrase "moral temptations" for the right-versus-wrong ones.

When good people encounter tough choices, it is rarely because they're facing a moral temptation. Only those living in a moral vacuum will be able to say, "On the one hand is the good, the right, the true, and noble. On the other hand is the awful, the wicked, the false, and the base. And here I stand, equally attracted to each." If you've already defined one side as a flat-out, unmitigated "wrong," you don't usually consider it seriously. Faced with the alternatives of arguing it

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out with your boss or gunning him down in the parking lot, you don't see the latter as an option. To be sure, we may be tempted to do wrong—but only because the wrong appears, if only in some small way and perhaps momentarily, to be right. For most people, some sober reflection is all that's required to recognize a wolflike moral temptation masquerading in the lamb's clothing of a seeming ethical dilemma.

The *really* tough choices, then, don't center upon right versus wrong. They involve right versus right. They are genuine dilemmas precisely because each side is firmly rooted in one of our basic, core values. Four such dilemmas are so common to our experience that they stand as models, patterns, or paradigms. They are:

- Truth versus loyalty
- Individual versus community
- Short-term versus long-term
- Justice versus mercy

The names for these patterns are less important than the ideas they reflect: Whether you call it law versus love, or equity versus compassion, or fairness versus affection, you're talking about some form of justice versus mercy. So too with the others. But while the names may be flexible, the concepts are not: These four paradigms appear to be so fundamental to the right-versus-right choices all of us face that they can rightly be called *dilemma paradigms*. These paradigms are more fully explained in Chapters Five and Six. Here, however, is an example of each:

Truth versus loyalty. As a professional working for a large defense electronics firm, Stan found himself riding a roller coaster of concern about layoffs. Every few years, it seemed, top

management slashed jobs as work slacked off—only to hire again when things started looking up. So when Stan and his team members noticed that the executives were again meeting behind closed doors, they suspected the worst.

Stan's boss, however, was a good friend—and also a voluble talker. So Stan felt no qualms asking him about the future. His boss

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explained the contingency plan at length—mentioning that, if layoffs were needed, Stan's team member Jim would be slated to lose his job. He also made it plain that Stan was to keep that information confidential.

Not long after that conversation, Jim approached Stan and asked whether he could confirm what the rumor mill was saying: that he himself would be the target. That request landed Stan squarely in the truth-versus-loyalty dilemma. Because he knew the truth, honesty compelled him to answer accurately. But he had given his word to his boss not to break a confidence, and felt a strong loyalty to that relationship.

Whichever course he chose, then, would be "right." And he could not choose both.

Individual versus community. In the mid-1980s, the administrator of a residential care facility in California received a letter from a nearby university hospital, where his elderly residents typically went for medical attention. The letter reminded him that five of his residents had recently had surgery at the hospital. It also informed him that the medical staff suspected that some of the blood used in their transfusions may have been tainted with the HIV virus. While making it clear that the probabilities of infection were low, the letter asked him to call the hospital immediately and arrange further testing for these five.

That letter, he recalled, presented him with a stark and direct question: What should he tell, and to whom should he tell it? Given the public and professional ignorance about AIDS—this was, remember, the mid-1980s, when the disease was little understood and legal regulations offered him no clear guidance—he felt certain that, if he told his staff, their fear would be so great that they would refuse to enter the rooms of those five, making it impossible to deliver even minimal care to them. But suppose he did not tell the staff and one of them contracted AIDS: Surely he would be culpable.

As it happened, none of the five ultimately tested positive. But that crucial fact was unknown at the time. What was he to do? He knew it was right to honor the individual rights of each of those five residents—the privacy of their medical histories, the expectation of high-quality care at his facility, their dignity as individuals. It was right, in other words, to say nothing.

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On the other hand, he knew it was right to protect the community from disease. The staff had not signed on for hazardous duty. Most of them saw themselves as unskilled hourly workers, not members of a life-endangering profession to which they had been called by noble duty and prepared by intensive training. Never mind that they might all phone in sick the day after the announcement: They deserved protection so they could continue to deliver care, with full regard for safety, to the many other residents who were *not* among the five. So it was right to tell them.

Both sides were right, and he couldn't do both.

Short-term versus long-term. When he graduated from college with a degree in science, Andy had found a solid job in his profession, married, and had two sons. Twelve years later, he moved to another company that promised steady advancement within its managerial ranks. A devoted family man, he admired his wife's dedication to raising the boys. But he also observed that his sons, approaching their teen years, benefited greatly from his fatherly friendship and counsel—especially as they approached what he and his wife realized could prove to be a difficult transitional period in their upbringing. So he made a commitment to spend plenty of time with them, playing baseball and helping with their schoolwork.

But he also loved his work, and did well at it. And it quickly became apparent that, to advance rapidly up the managerial ranks, he needed an MBA. A nearby university offered the degree in an attractive evening-and-weekend program that would allow him to continue full-time employment. But it would soak up the next several years of his life and throw most of the family activities into his wife's hands.

Andy's dilemma set the short-term against the long-term. It was right, he felt, to honor his family's short-term needs—to stick close to his sons at a time when a father's influence seemed so important. Yet it was right to build for the long-term needs of his family—to equip himself with an education that would make him a better provider in the coming years, when he would presumably need to pay college tuitions.

Both were right, and he couldn't do both.

Justice versus mercy. As feature editor for a major daily newspaper, I found myself in charge of a broad array of different

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departments. Like most newspapers, ours ran features on education, books, science, and the arts—as well as on cars, chess, stars, gardening, and food. I quickly learned that what makes any of these departments sing is the skill of the writing—and that even in areas where I had no discernible interest, a well-crafted story could seize and hold my attention just as well as a

breaking front-page sizzler. So we always sought to hire young staff members who, whatever other talents they might have, were good writers.

We had just such a young woman on the food page. She had come to us from one of the nation's finest colleges, and had progressed rapidly to the point where, as assistant editor, she wrote regularly. So one summer day, when I noticed that she had submitted a story on Maine blueberries, I was pleased to see it in the queue, awaiting publication in several more days.

The next day I looked up from my computer terminal to find the food editor herself—a woman with decades of experience, one of the best in the business—standing silently in front of my desk. In one hand she held a copy of her young assistant's story on blueberries. In the other hand she held a battered, tan cookbook some thirty years old. She laid each on my desk. And there, on the pages of that cookbook, was our young friend's story, printed word for word.

Among the few cardinal sins of journalism, one stands supreme: You don't plagiarize. Nothing should be drummed more insistently into the minds of young journalists; nothing destroys a career more rapidly; nothing defrauds your readers more egregiously; and nothing is more difficult to detect. This was no right-versus-right ethical dilemma. For our young friend, it was a pure and simple case of right-versus-wrong moral temptation—and she had chosen wrong.

For me, however, it *was* an ethical dilemma. I found myself torn by two conflicting desires. Half of me wanted to lunge from my desk, brush past the senior editor, and make a beeline for the assistant's desk—whereupon I would overturn it, scatter its contents across the newsroom floor, grab her by the scruff of her neck, heave her out into the street, and call out after her, "Never, *never* come back—and never let me hear that you are working in journalism anywhere else!" The other half of me wanted to walk over to her desk, quietly pull up a chair, and say, "What on earth has come over you? You know better than that! Is there something going wrong in your personal life

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that I haven't been aware of? Let's go have a cup of coffee—you and I have to talk!"

Half of me, in other words, wanted to see justice done in no uncertain terms—punishment swift and sure, the example emblazoned forever into the annals of American journalism—despite the fact that, were I to take such a course, half the newsroom might well line up on one side muttering, "Hard-hearted fascist, too rigid to care!" The other half yearned to be merciful, to extend the hand of compassion in a situation that seemed so desperately to need it—even though, were I to do so, I could foresee the rest of the newsroom lining up on the other side and muttering, "Bleeding-heart liberal, soft on crime!"

It was right to be merciful. It was right to enforce justice. And I could not do both at once.

This last situation offers two useful lessons. First, dilemmas have actors. Any analysis must begin with the question, Whose dilemma is this? For the young writer, it was a case of right versus wrong. For me, it was right versus right. For the senior food editor, I'm sure, it was a different sort of right versus right: Do I approach my young assistant directly, or do I take the case to a higher authority?

Second, the way this problem was eventually resolved illustrates an important point about solutions. Resolutions often arise when, in analyzing an apparently stark, rigidly bipolar ethical dilemma, we see a middle way open up between the two rights. In this case, we found that middle course. We learned that the young assistant was indeed having some serious personal problems. And since her blueberry piece had not yet been published, we had some latitude in our actions. So we moved her to an editing slot, with the understanding that she was to do no more writing. She remained in that position several years, eventually leaving to take a job outside journalism.

In listening to and analyzing hundreds of ethical dilemmas like these, I have found that they generally fit one (or more) of the four paradigms. But so what? How does this process of determining a paradigm help us make tough choices?

I think it does so in three ways:

- It helps us cut through mystery, complexity, and confusion—assuring us that, however elaborate and multifaceted, dilemmas can be reduced to common patterns. By doing so, it reminds us that *this* dilemma—the one that just landed on my desk in the middle of an otherwise ordinary Tuesday afternoon—is not some unique event created sui generis out of thin air and never before having happened to anyone in the universe. It is, instead, an ultimately manageable problem, bearing strong resemblance to lots of other problems and quite amenable to analysis.

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- It helps us strip away extraneous detail and get to the heart of the matter. Under this sort of analysis, the fundamental fact that makes this an authentic dilemma—the clashing of core moral values—stands out in bold relief. Looking at this clash, we can easily see why we have a conflict: Each value is right, and each appears to exclude the other.

- It helps us separate right-versus-wrong from right-versus-right. The more we work with true ethical dilemmas, the more we realize that they fall rather naturally into these paradigms. So any situation that fits one or more of the paradigms must in fact be an issue of right versus right. But what about those situations that strike us as ethical conundrums but resist every effort to fit themselves into the paradigms? Usually there's a simple reason they don't fit: They turn out to be right-versus-*wrong* issues. Any attempt to make them square with one of these four patterns typically mires itself in frustration. While one side immediately appears

right, the other side doesn't. Why? Because there's nothing right about it: It's wrong. In this way, the litmus of the paradigms helps us spot the difference between ethical dilemmas and moral temptations.

But merely to analyze a dilemma—even to fit it into the above paradigms—is not to resolve it. Resolution requires us to choose which side is the *nearest* right for the circumstances. And that requires some principles for decision making.

The three principles outlined here are drawn from the traditions of moral philosophy. Of the many theories that have been propounded for ethical decision making, these represent three that are particularly useful in helping us think through right-versus-right issues. Each gives us a way to test the twin rights of a dilemma. Each has a long and noble tradition behind it. Each, as we shall see in later chapters, has powerful arguments in its support—and significant refutations lodged against it. For clarity, we'll give them three shorthand labels: **ends-based, rule-based,** and **care-based.** These principles are more

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fully discussed in Chapter Seven. Here, in thumbnail detail, is the gist of each:

Ends-based thinking. Known to philosophers as *utilitarianism,* this principle is best known by the maxim *Do whatever produces the greatest good for the greatest number.* It demands of us a kind of cost-benefit analysis, determining who will be hurt and who helped and measuring the intensity of that help. It is the staple of public policy debate: Most legislation, these days, is crafted with this utilitarian test in mind.

At the heart of this principle is an assessment of consequences, a forecasting of outcomes. Philosophers typically refer to utilitarianism, in fact, as a form of *consequentialism*—or, more precisely, as a *teleological* principle, from the Greek work *teleos,* meaning "end" or "issue." Why? Because you cannot determine the "greatest good" without speculating on probable futures. Hence the "ends-based" label: Utilitarianism examines possible results and picks the one that produces the most blessing over the greatest range.

Rule-based thinking. Often associated with the name of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant, this principle is best known by what Kant somewhat obtusely called "the categorical imperative." Kant put it this way: "Act only on that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law." Simply put, that means, "Follow only the principle that you want everyone else to follow." In other words, act in such a way that your actions could become a universal standard that others ought to obey. Ask yourself, "If *everyone in the world* followed the rule of action I am following, would that create the greatest good or [in Kant's words] the greatest `worth of character'?"

This mode of thinking stands directly opposed to utilitarianism. Arguing that consequentialism is hopelessly flawed—how, after all, can we ever imagine we know the entire consequences of our actions?—the rule-based thinker pleads for acting only in accord with fixed rules. Never mind outcomes: Stick to your principles and let the consequential chips fall where they may. Based firmly on duty—on what we ought to do, rather than what we think might work—it is known among philosophers as *deontological* thinking, from the Greek word *deon,* meaning "obligation" or "duty."

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Care-based thinking. Putting love for others first, this third principle comes into play most frequently in the Golden Rule*: Do to others what you would like them to do to you.* It partakes of a feature known to philosophers as *reversibility:* In other words, it asks you to test your actions by putting yourself in another's shoes and imagining how it would feel if you were the recipient, rather than the perpetrator, of your actions. Often associated with Christianity—Jesus, after all, said, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. 7:12)—it is in fact so universal that it appears at the center of every one of the world's great religious teachings. While some philosophers (including Kant) have disputed its standing as a practical principle, it is for many people the only rule of ethics they know, deserving consideration for the moral glue it has provided over the centuries.

How do these three principles apply? First, some hypotheticals. You're walking through an outdoor shopping mall one day when the woman ahead of you opens her purse and pulls out a handkerchief. Unknown to her, a ten-dollar bill floats out of her purse onto the pavement. You pick it up and hand it back to her.

From the Kantian perspective, you have just invoked a rule or maxim—in this case, "Don't ever steal"—that you would wish to see universalized. It's not hard to see that, if everyone in the world did what you have just done in similar circumstances, the world would indeed be a better place.

But suppose it's later in the day and you're eating an ice-cream cone. You've nearly finished, except for the soggy, damp, and altogether unappealing butt-end of the cone. You're worried that, if you hold it much longer, the melted ice cream will begin running down your hand and along your arm. There's not a trash container to be seen. There is, however, a low hedge beside you, under which are lodged a few bits of trash. You consider chucking the cone into the hedge—but not until (being in an unusually philosophical mood) you ask yourself what the three resolution principles would counsel you to do.

Start with the utilitarian principle. A quick assessment of consequences suggests that (1) the mall probably employs sweepers to clean up trash, and (2) the hedge is probably visited regularly by squirrels,

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birds, and ants, and (3) there's no one else around eating a cone. Your little butt-end will make hardly any difference to the hedge or to the general neatness of the mall: It will, in other words, be a largely inconsequential act. So throw it away.

Not so fast, says the Kantian. Remember, you are setting the standard for the entire world. Throw it in the hedge, and you must be prepared to have *everyone,* from now until eternity, chuck away the butt-ends of their ice-cream cones under hedges, until shoppers all across the malls of the world are up to their eyeballs in soggy cone-tips. An extreme example? Certainly. But it helps remind us that the only reason we feel we can "get away" with the utilitarian principle is that there are only a few others who will do what we've just done, and that our tiny act will be of small consequence in a large universe. Yet is that, the Kantian would ask, any reason to break rules? Is that really the way you want others to behave?

Which, of course, is just what the Golden Rule would instruct: Don't do what you don't want others doing. How would you react if that woman ahead of you flipped *her* cone-end into the hedge? What about the rest of her hot dog? What about her cigarette butt? What about the entire contents of her sack of fast-food leftovers? Would you not be even slightly offended that she was degrading the orderliness of *your* experience? Then what about the woman behind you as you toss away your cone—and for that matter, what about the child she has with her? Do you want other adults to set good examples for your children, even in situations where an action that might be construed as a *bad* example is probably pardonable and might even by justified?

The point, here, is not to perform three tests and then vote to score a three-to nothing or two-to-one victory. The point is to reason. The usefulness of these principles is not that they will deliver an airtight answer to your dilemma. They are not part of a magic answer kit that produces infallible solutions: If they were, ethics would be infinitely easier than it is, and the moral problems of the world would have been satisfactorily sorted out centuries ago. No, the principles are useful because they give us a way to exercise your moral rationality. They provide different lenses through which to see our dilemmas, different screens to use in assessing them. To see how the principles work, look at two of the dilemmas raised above: the case of the

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librarian facing the question about rape, and the case of the young journalist who plagiarized the blueberry story.

What should the librarian do? Analyzing her dilemma, it seems most readily to fit the paradigm of individual versus community: the lone caller's right to privacy versus the community's right to live in safety. The utilitarian, looking at consequences and numbers affected, may well urge the librarian to hand over the phone number to the detective. The good of the community, in this view, must prevail over the rights of the individual. What if he is innocent? What if the police, in

their zeal to get a confession, made his life most unpleasant? That's unfortunate, but that's what is implied in utilitarianism: The fact that the greatest good goes to the greatest number suggests that every once in a while the not-so-good—even, at times, the very bad—will go to the few. Suppose (continues the utilitarian) the librarian refused to hand over the number—and that very night a second rape occurred. And suppose that happens night after night. Doesn't the community have the right to be protected?

The categorical imperative puts it in a different light. Arguing the hallowed regard for duty, the Kantian may well urge the librarian to elevate to first place her sense of obligation to her profession. The rule is simple and direct: You don't divulge the names of those who call for information. No matter what the circumstances, you simply don't do it—because, if you do, you are saying that every librarian in the world should do what you're about to do.

In explaining her reasoning to us, in fact, the librarian who originally related this dilemma backed it with another example. Suppose a small business entrepreneur in your community gets a flash of inspiration and decides to set up a miniature golf course. He calls the library to get information about how to build one. That information is immediately made public—and a big-bucks developer, who already has a piece of land and plenty of cash, decides he'll build it before this little guy even has a chance to explore the possibilities. Her point: Librarians have a sacred trust to protect the identity of information-seekers, in order to ensure the free use of libraries and promote the most inventive and productive society possible.

But would Mr. Big Bucks really do that, asks the utilitarian? Aren't the chances of that happening pretty slim? And isn't there a huge difference between rape and miniature golf? Surely the end result of

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a developer's financial coup pales in contrast to a criminal's conviction.

There you go again (replies the Kantian), speculating on consequences—as though you really could read the future. Since you can't, the only safe course is to stick to your duty: Don't tell. And remember: Whatever this librarian does in this case is going to set the standard for every librarian for all time. That's the imperative of the category of action she is creating. Go down this road, and you open yourself up to all sorts of consequences. Yes, every suspected rapist may be behind bars. But the libraries will be all bugged, and we'll all live free from crime and full of terror in a Soviet-style police state.

And the Golden Rule? Here the issue turns on whom we mean by *others*. If the other is the caller, he doesn't want to be turned in—particularly if he's just a student working on a paper. If the other is the detective, however, he really needs that number. If the others are women in the community, they too might well want the detective to know. How the librarian decides will depend in part on which one she thinks of as "the other." But only in part. It will also depend on

her concept of what it means to *care for* others. Can she express the highest sense of caring by defending the long-term interests of a free society, where no one is put at risk merely by asking for information? Or does her highest sense of caring lie in protecting the community from what might be an immediate threat?

Three principles, three ways to think—and no clear vote. Whether you put the individual above the community, or the community above the individual, depends on the weight each of the lines of reasoning carries for you.

That's true as well for the blueberry story and its justice-versus-mercy paradigm. There, the utilitarian will urge an examination of consequences. Sure, throw the book at her: But what will you do if, the next day, you read that she committed suicide? That her private life was so entangled that she was driven to desperation—and you pushed her over the brink without even bothering to find out what was wrong? Or what if she sues you for sexual harassment because of your vigorous actions? What if, and what if? All things considered, the utilitarian might argue for bending the principle that plagiarism is a cardinal evil—leaning toward mercy, even if just this once.

The Kantian will want to ask not about the *what ifs* but about the rules. Remembering that whatever you do will be done by every editor in similar circumstances from now on, the Kantian wants to lay

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down a firm standard. If you must always obey one or the other side, which will it be? Here the logic may lean toward justice—an enforcement of the rules, with no concern for the consequences of your action in this particular case, but with a clear eye on the larger duty of eradicating plagiarism. After all, to lean in the other direction—to make mercy the infallible rule—would in essence make justice void. If every editor always acted as though justice could be set aside "just this once," what good is justice?

The Golden Rule, focusing on reversibility, asks, What would I want to have my superior do to me in such circumstances? What, I might ask, would have driven me to do such a thing? Am I struggling with overwhelming personal problems? Then maybe I want counsel. Am I frightened by the possibility of failure? Then maybe I want to be encouraged. Am I driven by a need to succeed at all costs? Then maybe I need to be brought to my senses by the tough, swift response of my boss. Maybe, in fact, this is an unconscious plea for help—a situation so blatant that it cries out to be caught, punished, and reformed.

The decisions examined here are all tough. And they are all tough in the same way. They all pit one powerful right against another. In the following chapters, we'll look at the concept of right versus wrong (Chapter Two). We'll examine what it means to be ethically fit (Chapter Three). We'll consider where we get our sense of what's right and how we develop our core of values

(Chapter Four). We'll examine in much more detail the dilemma paradigms (Chapters Five and Six) and the resolution principles (Chapter Seven). In Chapter Eight, we'll apply these paradigms and principles to a rich array of examples drawn from the private and public realms. Finally, in Chapter Nine, we'll consider the nature of ethics in the 21st century and our individual relation to it.

First, however, we need to explore some 20th-century answers to some age-old questions.

What about right and *wrong?*

Doesn't it matter that people do bad things?

As we move through the final years of this millennium, what's the reading on our moral barometer—and how important is that reading?

Does ethics really *matter?*

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What are the three Resolution Principles mentioned in "How Good People Make Good Choices" by Rushworth M. Kidder. 1. Ends Based (utilitarianism) "Do whatever produces the greatest good for the greatest number". 2. Rules Based (categorial imperative) "Stick to your principles and let the chips fall where they may". 3. Care Based (Golden Rule) "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you". What are the nine checkpoints for Ethical Decision Making? 1. Recognize there is a moral issue 2. Determine the actor (who does the problem belong to?) 3. Gather t When tough choices come about, it's easier to make decisions on what to do. Serves as a shared reference point. Helps team members dismiss issues that might later grow into dilemmas, or bigger issues. Â End's Based Thinking- Do whatever produces the greatest good for the greatest number of people. Ruled-Based Thinking- Follow the principle in a situation that you would want everyone else to follow. Care-Based Thinking- Do unto others what you would like them to do to you.