WHY GOOD IS GOOD

THE SOURCES OF MORALITY

ROBERT A. HINDE

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'A wonderful addition to the literature on morality … that will force theologians, philosophers and social scientists to seriously consider the contributions natural science can make to moral discourse.'

Ralph Hood, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

'This book is thoroughly researched, engagingly written, and logically and persuasively argued. I do not know of any other book that attempts what Hinde has accomplished in this one.'

David Wulff, Wheaton College, Massachusetts

What can science tell us about morality? It is often said that science – because it tells us about the way the world is and not how it ought to be – can have nothing to say about ethical matters; yet scientists increasingly tell us that evolutionary biology has much to tell us about our values. This ground-breaking new book argues that only a multidisciplinary approach will enable us to understand morality.

The author draws on psychology, philosophy, biology and social anthropology to explore the origins of our moral systems. He discusses the ethical views of different cultures and different eras, looking at attitudes towards infidelity, acts of revenge and human rights. The result is not only a compelling insight into the history and development of the world's moral systems: Robert Hinde argues that an understanding of morality's origins can clarify and inform contemporary ethical debates over topics such as abortion and the treatment of terminally ill patients.

By using fascinating examples ranging from the nature of socio-political power to the moralities of Argentine football, Robert Hinde demonstrates that moral systems are derived from human nature in interaction with the social, cultural and physical experiences of individuals. On this view of morality, moral codes are neither fixed nor freely unconstrained but a balancing act between what people do and what they are supposed to do.

The multidisciplinary nature of this book makes it accessible to anyone interested in the relation of ethics to biology, social science and the humanities.

Robert A. Hinde is a Professor at St. John's College, Cambridge, a Fellow of the Royal Society and Foreign Associate of the National Academy of Sciences of the USA. His most recent book, *Why Gods Persist* (Routledge, 1999), applied a similar multidisciplinary approach to the ubiquity of religious systems.

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TO THE FELLOWSHIP
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CONTENTS

PREFACE

It is not always easy to tell good from bad, or right from wrong. We may have been brought up with fairly clear perceptions of the differences between them, but clear-cut solutions to real-life situations are not always apparent. We have to decide between conflicting 'oughts', balance obligations against abstract values, and assess conflicting 'rights'. Any one decision may have many consequences – on oneself, on others, on one's family, even consequences on society as a whole. What are the criteria by which right and wrong can be, should be, or are distinguished? Beyond that, is it just a matter of criteria rationally considered, or of what one feels about the issue, or both? Do all right actions share some distinguishing characteristics? And where do the criteria come from? Such problems, having been the subject of debate for generations, are now becoming both increasingly difficult and increasingly acute for two reasons.

First, in the past, religions were the principal purveyors of moral codes, which in many societies were portrayed as bestowed by a transcendental being.[1] Moral codes and social codes were closely interwoven, and an individual faced with a dilemma could usually obtain an answer, or at least advice, from a priest or other religious specialist. In European societies at least, adherence to the moral code was encouraged by the churches in two ways. First, directly, by the promise of divine reward or the threat of divine retribution in this life or another; second, and indirectly, by the gossip that even a slight departure from the churches' definitions of 'respectability' would elicit.[2] To-day, the more traditional churches are losing their power to influence individuals in the increasingly secular worlds of Europe and North America. Such religious institutions as are in part replacing them focus either on beliefs unacceptable to many twenty-first-century minds, or on ritual and religious experience. Many feel that the moral codes of the society in which they grew up lack both authority and sanctions. And even leading members of some of the great world religions are suggesting that it is possible to live a moral life without religious faith,[3] or to distinguish faith in a religious tradition from 'spirituality', defined as those qualities which bring happiness to others.[4] This is not to underestimate the importance of

the religious past of our society in maintaining moral values,[5] but the moral precepts that religions have purveyed are losing their force as the rewards and sanctions on which adherence depended become less effective.

The second set of reasons why the problem of morality requires urgent reconsideration results from more general changes in societies. The increase in their scale and complexity has been accompanied by an increase in individual mobility that has posed difficulties for personal relationships and has brought together into the same neighbourhood people from radically different cultural backgrounds. Many societies are now multi-cultural. The widening gap between rich and poor, and increasing consumerism, strain traditional moral perspectives.[6] And scientific and technical advances, though bringing health, comfort and happiness to many (at least in the more developed world), have also raised their own ethical problems – the immorality of nuclear weapons, the possible consequences of genetic engineering, inequity in the availability of expensive medical procedures, and environmental degradation, to name but a few. In any one society these problems are formidable enough to solve; with increasing globalisation, it is increasingly important that we seek solutions acceptable to people with disparate philosophical and religious traditions.

It is unnecessary to say that solutions to such problems will not be found in this book. However, these problems call for an exploration of the bases of moral codes, their development, and their functions in society. The hope is that understanding of these issues will help to ensure such continuity in moral outlook as is appropriate for our changing societies. That is my excuse for yet another book on morality – a book that seeks to indicate the directions in which exploration must be pursued.

An excuse is the more necessary because moral issues have long been seen as the province of philosophy, theology or the social sciences, and it is often claimed that natural science can have nothing to say about them. Indeed, many natural scientists take this view: for instance, Dawkins,[7] like myself a biologist by training, has taken the view that we are simply born selfish and that science cannot contribute to morality. Science, on his view, is concerned with what is 'true'[8] and can have nothing to say about what 'ought' to be the case. I do not share the view that we are simply born selfish: our potentials to cooperate with (at least some) others, to help others, in general to show 'prosocial' behaviour, are every bit as important as our selfishness and self-assertiveness. Nor do I agree that natural science has nothing to say about morality, though its contribution depends on marriage with other disciplines.

In this context it is important to be clear about the questions one is asking. I shall be concerned not in the first place with what moral values people 'ought' to hold, nor with how the values and precepts internalized by individuals affect their behaviour, but with how it comes about that people hold the values that they do hold – that is, to refer back to Dawkins, with

issues concerned primarily with what is (or seems to be) 'true'. With this approach, my hope is that insight into where moral beliefs come from will throw light on whether changes in moral values and precepts in a given society are likely to be appropriate for, and acceptable to, its members. This approach may also help in reaching cross-cultural understanding over some of the new ethical issues that confront us. And, along the way, I hope to convince the reader that at least some of the problems that have dogged discussions of morality are unnecessary.

Having said that, I should emphasize that the issue of why people hold the moral values that they hold has several aspects. It involves asking how individuals acquire the moral precepts of the society or group in which they grow up. It also involves asking where cultural values come from, and how they become elaborated and change over time These are the main themes of this book. A fuller understanding of morality would require also knowledge of the relations between moral knowledge and moral behaviour – an important problem, because one may fail to act in accordance with the moral code, or may act in accordance with it for non-moral reasons (such as creating a good impression or fear of punishment). The relations between moral knowledge and behaviour, however, are treated only tangentially: we shall see that moral knowledge and 'choosing' to act on it are separate issues, and the latter is not the main concern here.

Thus the main focus is on how moral codes have arisen over prehistorical and historical time. We shall see that our human nature is such that we are prone to organize our attitudes, values and behaviour as if we were guided by certain basic principles, some of which are concerned with cooperation and helping others and some with asserting our own interests. I shall argue that these tendencies, being present in all humans, are pan-cultural, but that the moral precepts and conventions that order life in a society, while stemming from such foundations, have been given their specific shape in the course of history. This has occurred in part as the result of mutual influences between ideas about what people ought to do and what people actually do. This approach carries the implication that there is no need to search for a transcendental source for morality, while not denying that many people find it helpful to believe in one.

As will become apparent especially in Chapter 8, a number of scientists have written about the biological bases of morality,[9] and I have drawn extensively on their work. It is clear that developments in behaviour genetics and games theory provide hope that fundamental advances will come from the continued application of an evolutionary perspective to moral problems. However, my aims here are different. They concern rather the need to integrate the biological with psychological and social-science approaches to morality. In doing so, I endeavour to extend the current evolutionary perspective in four ways. First, the work of biologists has been concerned primarily with prosociality and cooperation: these, however, are not the only

issues with which morality is concerned. Second, I distinguish between the pan-cultural moral principles, with which the evolutionary approach has so far been mainly concerned, and the more culture-specific moral precepts, virtues and values, and discuss the relations between them. Third, I emphasize that the evolution and historical elaboration of morality within societies must be understood in relation to its development in individuals. Finally, the relations between what 'is' and what 'ought' to be the case is taken up in the last chapter. Contrary to the usual view, I suggest that if moral codes have been constructed ultimately from interaction between human nature and culture – a scientific issue – there is no need to seek for any other source for 'oughts'.

In what follows, it is assumed that the understanding of morality demands an eclectic approach. It requires material about how people behave in the real everyday world to be integrated with abstract issues. How people think about moral issues must be brought together with how they feel and how they act: it may be necessary to synthesize what seems to be unsynthesizable. Of course, full understanding is way beyond my reach, but even the more limited enterprise of trying to understand why we hold the values that we do hold requires inputs from individual, developmental, social and cognitive psychology, from biology, from anthropology and sociology, and also from history, philosophy and, most dangerously, from 'common experience'. The specialist in any one of these disciplines will, I am afraid, inevitably see my attempt at a synthesis as inadequate from his or her perspective, but I hope she or he will sympathize with my aim.

The book falls into three parts, the first of which introduces some background material. Its first chapter is concerned with defining the limits of morality, an issue about which there has been surprising disagreement between academic disciplines. Chapter 2 provides a sketch of the general approach: this involves a brief discussion of what I mean by 'human nature' and by the 'pan-cultural psychological characteristics' which appear to provide the basis for morality. Neither of these concepts imply the rigidity that is often ascribed to them. The sterility of the nature/nurture dichotomy and the mutual influences between the behaviour of individuals and the socio-cultural structure are emphasized. Chapter 3 raises two questions about the general nature of 'morality': is it to be seen as a unitary category?; and do humans just 'have' a moral sense, or is it constructed by each individual in development? Moral codes are often seen as absolute and unchangeable; Chapter 4 questions this, giving examples of change over time and across contexts. Nevertheless we tend to resist the idea that moral codes are labile, in part because we see ourselves through the moral precepts to which we aspire – moral precepts become part of the 'self-systems' of individuals. Chapter 5 discusses briefly what is meant by the self-system, and shows that moral codes share some features of resilience with the self-systems into which they are incorporated.

Part II contains the central arguments concerning the origins of morality. Chapter 6 is concerned with the development of morality in the individual. Moral codes differ to a greater or lesser extent between cultures; nevertheless Chapters 7 to 11 locate their ultimate origins in pan-cultural psychological propensities, and discuss how these basic aspects of human nature are related to moral codes that differ to a greater or lesser extent between cultures. The successive chapters focus on relations with kin; relations with non-kin; status, rights, and gender-related issues; and the maintenance of social and religious systems. These are followed in Chapter 12 with an inevitably speculative discussion about how moral systems have changed over time.

Part III contains three chapters on general issues pertinent to the preceding discussion of moral codes. Discussion of the genesis of moral precepts tends to present an over-simple picture of the problems that face individuals and societies, many of which arise from conflicts between principles or from differing world-views: Chapter 13 therefore focuses on moral conflicts. Chapter 14 considers an issue that some will see as central to the preceding discussions – namely does an attempt to trace the bases of human behaviour in biology necessarily imply biological determinism, and is it incompatible with our impression that we possess free-will? Finally, the concluding chapter draws together some of the conclusions from previous chapters. In particular, it discusses how far an understanding of where moral codes came from can help us with moral decisions.

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I

SETTING THE STAGE

The chapters in this section address some conceptual issues basic to the later discussion. Of special importance are Chapter 2, which outlines the approach, and Chapter 5, which is concerned with the concept of the self-system – an issue important for understanding the nature of morality.

1

WHAT DOES MORALITY INCLUDE?

The first step must be to specify the subject matter. However, this turns out to be more complex than it appears at first sight. 'Morality' concerns the distinction between good and evil, and 'morals' are usually taken to refer to rules about what people ought to do and what they ought not to do. But, when we talk about 'moral' values or behaviour, we usually mean values that we see as 'good', or as how someone 'ought' to behave. Although – as we shall see – the mechanisms by which people come to hold moral values (in the sense of values seen as good) and behave in moral ways are similar in many respects to those by which immoral (in the sense of bad) values and behaviour are acquired, our main interest is with the former.

Beyond that, morality comes within the province of several academic disciplines, and there seems to be little general agreement on its scope – or, indeed, on the terms used to discuss it. For most people, conventions and rights, morals and ethics are categories with no precise boundaries, and are used rather loosely in everyday speech. Dictionaries make no clear distinction between morals and ethics. In general, morals are concerned specifically with how other human beings should be treated, while ethics is often used more broadly to include such issues as intellectual integrity. Some, however, use ethics to refer to a local group's set of values, and consider morality to concern issues applicable across groups. As indicated below, some authors do and others do not distinguish morals from conventions. While most, probably all, agree that morality is primarily concerned with prosocial behaviour, cooperation and justice, a number of matters that some consider to involve morality are neglected by others. It would be tedious to attempt to survey these differences in opinion, but it is necessary to situate the approach taken here by brief references to salient aspects of some of them.

Theology

Difficulties emerge even in theological approaches to morality. The moral codes of the main world religions differ in a number of respects, in part because rules conducive to their maintenance inevitably differ between

religions, and are seen as moral issues by their adherents. Rules that can seem mere conventions to outsiders, such as the use of the name of the deity in secular conversation, may be seen as moral issues by those inside the system. In addition, there are differences even within any one religious group on what makes a rule a religious rule. For instance, Christian theologians refer to tradition, reason and scripture as sources of moral precepts, but the emphasis they place on each varies considerably. Some refer to the authority of a deity, others to a paradigmatic religious person, or to a religious text, or to the rule's place in a larger theological framework.[1] Some modern Christian theologians are discarding the view that moral precepts are given by authority, and adopting a more eclectic approach. For instance, an Anglican bishop writes: 'Morality tries to base itself on observed consequences, not on beliefs, superstitions or preferences. A wrong act is one that manifestly harms others or their interests, or violates their rights or causes injustice.'[2] This view is in harmony with the orientation of representatives of other disciplines, but omits issues concerned with respect for the deity, held to be important by most religious people.

Philosophy

Much of the literature on morality has come from philosophers, most of whom would agree that moral precepts, while not necessarily constructed by reason, should be defensible by reason. They are thus primarily (though not exclusively) concerned with deliberating about the moral judgements in Western societies, rather than with the translation of moral principles or precepts into action.[3] While some deny that morality should be defined in terms of the content of its precepts,[4] most agree that the fundamental virtues are those that lead to some sort of prosocial behaviour (roughly, behaving positively to others[5]), cooperation and justice – in other words, morality is concerned with how individuals and groups are to live with each other. Within this, morality has been seen as involving concern for some objective good or value, such as the well-being of humankind; or as a system of rules and obligations; or as promoting the self-actualisation of individuals; or as a means of liberation from enslaving institutions.[6] Some see moral precepts, such as 'Thou shalt not kill', as ends in themselves, arguing that their value is not derived from their utility for external consequences.[7] Some have taken a different view. Thus Rawls[8] enunciated two principles for a moral system: namely that every individual should have an equal right to the most extensive liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others, and that inequalities between individuals should only be such as are to the common advantage and do not affect equality of opportunity.

There is disagreement amongst philosophers even on the extents to which moral precepts are to be seen as absolute and as universally binding. For instance, Williams[9] emphasizes that moral matters are felt to be funda-

mental. Although disagreement about moral issues is possible, such disagreement is to be taken seriously: there is a feeling that people *ought* to have a common view about morals. On this view, moral statements are not merely attitudinal statements: although one can change one's mind about moral matters, that usually involves merely how 'fundamental precepts' should be applied to the matter in hand, or the relative weight to be given to apparently conflicting considerations, each of which seems to be fundamental. Other philosophers make a distinction between universally binding moral rules, and those which are accepted only by limited groups of individuals. A somewhat extreme example is Strawson.[10] Recognizing that certain human interests and virtues (e.g. mutual aid, honesty) are a necessity for any conceivable moral community, he also emphasizes that the ideals by which people live may differ markedly, even between individuals.

Moral principles are seen by most philosophers to be so deeply ingrained in development that acting on them does not depend on fear of detection – though, of course, this is true also of many quite mundane habits and conventional actions, such as how to use a knife and fork. Most philosophers hold that actions are moral only if they are intentional; accidents do not count. Taken to an extreme, this would imply that spontaneous action cannot be moral, a view with which many would disagree (see p. 48). Others would go farther, and say that actions are moral only if they are motivated by the consideration that they are morally right and by no other consideration at all: in practice – since motivations are multi-layered, and many actions have multiple foreseeable sequelae – this would be a very difficult distinction to make.

But, even given that moral precepts are primarily concerned with prosocial behaviour, cooperation and justice, there is still room for disagreement and for cultural differences concerning which types of behaviour are prosocial, and about what constitutes cooperation and justice. General agreement about the content of morals or morality would thus be difficult to obtain. The editors of a volume on the issue[11] refer to a number of properties which have been suggested: moral precepts are universal (at least within a cultural group); are prescriptive or proscriptive; are more important than other precepts and override them; have particular forms of sanctions associated with them; and are defined by reference to their content. They point out that none of these can be seen as a sufficient condition for a principle to be a moral principle, and all present difficulties as necessary conditions.

Often, and especially when dealing with public policy issues, it is useful to make a distinction between private and public morality. M. Warnock[12] sees private morality as grounded in a mixture of principle and sentiment, which together give rise to an imperative to the person concerned, and public morality as concerned with what is publicly acceptable and seen widely to be proper. Private morality is based (in her view) on the recognition that others are as important as oneself: it may involve postponing one's own immediate

wishes for the sake of a principle – a principle, such as truth or loyalty, usually concerned with the well-being of others.[13] Thus, a keen footballer who foregoes a match in order to help a friend is showing private morality. Public morality requires one to defend something in the interests of all members of the group to which one belongs, such as the right to freedom of movement or speech.

A different kind of distinction between public and private contrasts the public world, in which individuals are anonymous, with the private world of personal relationships.[14] According to this view, value in the public world of modern societies often tends to be placed on self-advancement, power and consumption, and other individuals are valued only in so far as they are means to an end; while in the private world individuals are the repositories of special values and emotions, and friendship is pursued for its own sake. In the public sphere the law courts are the guardians of morality. In the private sphere one helps others, does things for friends, and so on, not (usually) by compulsion or out of a sense of duty but (in the ideal case) because one wants to: one's own well-being *is* the well-being of one's family and friends. While this distinction is unacceptable to many, and certainly cannot be pressed too far, it is a not uncommon view that it is inappropriate to judge action in the public world by the moral precepts applicable in the private one. That, however, raises the question of whether different standards are used in the public domain for pragmatic reasons, or because basic standards of morality 'ought' to differ.

Feminist philosophers

While most philosophers, perhaps inevitably, have based their discussions round abstract principles whose applicability to particular issues is discussed in terms of justice, fairness, and the interests of individuals, recent writings on ethics by feminist philosophers provide a rather different perspective. Here issues of personal relationships, caring and nurturance are accorded greater priority than issues of justice and fairness. Instead of a focus on justice, they have emphasized responding adequately to others' needs and fostering relationships. As feminists recognize, pitting justice against care in a masculine/feminine arena runs the risk of consigning women to their traditional roles, though care for self is to be considered alongside care for others. It is therefore important to emphasize that the distinction is between what women and men value, not between their styles of behaviour or between behaviours that are appropriate to either.

While gender differences in moral reasoning have probably been exaggerated (pp. 109–11), the debate has raised other important issues. In particular, and perhaps because of the emphasis on care in relationships, many feminist writers advocate attention to the particulars of each case, with attunement to particular relationships, and are less concerned with ubiquitously applic-

able principles of right and wrong. Thus context is seen as critical, so that it may be right to behave in a particular way in one relationship and not in another. The focus is on decisions that have to be made in everyday life with real people.

Although there is less concern with impartiality and with the universality of moral precepts, this does not mean that abstract principles do not apply: rather they must be interpreted in the context of the particular circumstances. People are seen as individuals, sharing a common humanity but with differing histories and personalities. Decisions often involve a conflict between responsibility in relationships and personal integrity, where formal rules are of little help in differentiating between good and bad. The difficulty, and even the impossibility, of making moral decisions in the face of conflicting needs, loyalties and principles is recognized, and it is accepted that decisions are inevitably often made intuitively rather than by considered thought.

In any case, most feminists do not see justice and care as necessarily incompatible: some see justice as more appropriate for public interactions, care for interpersonal interactions with family, friends and casual acquaintances, while others argue that justice and care are interdependent, each providing a brake on too great a focus on the other.[15]

Psychology

Morals are not the province only of theologians and philosophers, and other disciplines have their own emphases. Psychologists are concerned with the acquisition of morality, and with the relations between moral precepts and action, and not so much with deliberating about what is right. Most Western psychologists are concerned with behaviour conducive to the harmony of relationships and societies. Thus they tend to emphasize the welfare of others and justice as the critical issues, though, as we shall see, some are concerned also with issues of individual autonomy and rights. In defining morality, most psychologists tend to place less emphasis on the underlying intention than do many philosophers, accepting that motivation may be complex. Indeed moral actions are often regarded as spontaneous rather than the product of considered calculation.

But the approaches of psychologists to morality are diverse. Many developmental psychologists, concerned primarily but not exclusively with Western cultures, distinguish between moral and conventional issues on the basis of the strength of the affective reactions aroused by infringements. Others make an absolute distinction between the two, arguing that those precepts that are clearly moral are determined by criteria other than (secular) authority, agreement, consensus, or institutional convention; and tend to concern justice and the rights and welfare of others. Conventions, unlike moral issues, are concerned with the rules and norms of the social system,

and are valid only in the local context. Moral precepts are regarded as obligatory, and moral transgressions as more serious than actions that defy convention. Those who break conventions may arouse indignation, and even be seen as outrageous, but they are unlikely to be seen as evil or 'bad'. Moral rules are such as would be seen as right or wrong in the absence of a rule or law, and are valid even if they are not observed in other cultures. Some would argue that morality has meaning only with regard to others' rights.

Considerable evidence suggests that the distinction between morals and conventions is widespread.[16] It has been argued that moral and conventional issues depend on distinct conceptual domains: justifications for judgements on moral issues include promoting welfare, justice, fairness, rights, truth and loyalty, and also preventing harm; while justifications for judgements about conventions require understanding the social organization, including the nature of social authority and customs, and the importance of social coordination.[17] However, one can find exceptions to virtually all the criteria that have been proposed. For instance, the implementation of moral precepts is not always context-independent, for there are contexts in which some would relax the precept 'Thou shalt not kill'; religious people would argue that moral principles are based on authority; conventions often do involve the rights and welfare of others; and conventions can be affectively important, for the inadvertent breaking of a convention can lead to social rejection. In any case, it is recognized that some issues may involve both domains, and that conventional rules may come to be seen as moral ones because infringement causes psychological offence to others who accept them.[18] Thus in some cases it is a matter of perspective: the Jewish dietary prohibitions might appear to the outsider to be merely social conventions, and as having no immediate effect on other individuals, but are regarded by believers as involving moral issues because of their place in their total world-view (see p. 166). Much current research on the development of moral behaviour makes little reference to the distinction between moral and conventional issues, but is in practice largely concerned with justice and the rights and welfare of others.[19]

Some studies by psychologists on 'the meaning of life' suggest a close relation with morality.[20] Thus morals are primarily concerned with behaviour to others, and surveys show that social relationships provide the most important source of meaning in people's lives. Adler[21] refers to the three main duties of life: ensuring personal and collective survival; living as a social being; and proper behaviour in relations with the opposite sex – these are exactly the moral issues discussed in later chapters.

Anthropology

Anthropologists, concerned with cultural diversity, face an even more problematic issue of definition:[22] some cultures do not even have a name for our abstract concept of morality.[23] In some cases a distinction between 'rules'

and 'morals' is useful,[24] and some anthropologists have advocated a distinction between 'wide' and 'narrow' ethics, the latter emphasizing concepts of obligation or duty. But it has also been suggested that 'morality' is a concept peculiar to the West, because of the relative ease with which it can be distinguished from the rest of culture; in other societies precepts about 'correct' behaviour are more intricately interwoven with other aspects of the culture.[25] Perhaps not surprisingly, anthropologists often see morality as coterminous with the social.

The difficulties arise in part because morality is sometimes defined in terms of content, and the content of moral precepts differs between cultures. Midgley[26] has advocated a change in focus from the consequences of action to the reasoning behind action – to 'moral thinking'. This is compatible with the scope of the contributions to a recent book on the ethnography of moralities.[27] Its contributors were asked to 'consider the dynamic interaction between abstract ideals and empirical realities' – that is, the ways in which values shape choices and practices while, at the same time, values change and adapt as a consequence of actual choices and practices. As a result, the volume contained studies of a wide range of issues, including the attitudes of village locals to outsiders, the skills of Argentinian footballers, and the prime importance of 'showing respect'. In that volume, Jacobson-Widding[28] defined morality as concerning 'the norms of good behaviour, insofar as this behaviour affects the well-being of any other person than the actor him- or herself'; and Archetti[29] considered 'the field of morality and moral analysis as a dynamic cultural code that informs, creates and gives meaning to social relations'. These definitions clearly cover much that many psychologists would consider as convention as well as morals. They also emphasize that moral precepts do not merely control behaviour, but are related to cultural values that influence the formation and nature of social relations.

Some anthropologists take a slightly different approach. For instance, James[30] complains that the concept of morality is too little examined in ethnographic work, and too often refers 'to the systematic form of codes and conventions, rather than to the experiencing person'. She prefers to define moral knowledge as 'the store of reference points from which a people, as individuals or as a collectivity, judge their own predicament, their own condition, themselves as persons'. This implies that the application of moral precepts in practice is seldom absolute, but may have a degree of contextual dependence and is something that can be argued about. Such an approach can lead to an emphasis on the plurality of moralities even within a society, and to the necessity of coming to terms not only with conflicts between moralities within individuals according to context, but also with differences in and conflicts between moralities within a community (e.g. between men and women), and conflicts emerging at the meeting of two moral orders, such as that between the Western emphasis on human rights and the Hindu caste system.

Thus, while most philosophers have tended to assume that moral rules are ubiquitously applicable, anthropologists, confronted with the diversity of societies, emphasize their diversity and their relations to other aspects of the culture. Clearly there is a challenge here. If we are to think ahead and consider what moral precepts will be appropriate to our changing society, then we must distinguish between that which is fundamental for the functioning of any society and what is, or should be, specific to the society in question.

Scope of the current discussion

In what follows, I shall treat morality broadly to include some issues in addition to those immediately concerned with the welfare of others, rights and justice, and the values associated with them. While the issues discussed are mainly those that would be seen as aspects of morality by philosophers, anthropologists and psychologists, I include some further actions and values that are commonly regarded as 'moral'. For instance, incest should obviously be included: though its precise meaning varies (pp. 124–6), it is seen as a moral issue in most societies. And there seems no reason to rule out the precept that one should 'Do God's will' as a moral precept, for it is a critical determinant of action for some believers, and decisions are regarded as matters of conscience to just as great an extent as the injunction not to kill. (Interestingly, 'Doing God's will' has also been used as a reason for actions that others with a different world-view would regard as immoral.) In addition, moral precepts are closely related to values and virtues. For instance, 'courage' was seen as a virtue by Aristotle, and Bunyan certainly saw Christian's courage as morally right. So, for many, is the view that it is virtuous to show humility, patience, loyalty, and so on. Such precepts and values are based on a sense of inner conviction, and contraventions may affront the conscience and are often regarded with moral indignation by others: they therefore surely qualify as 'moral' in a broad sense.

While not wishing to challenge the usefulness of the distinction between morals and conventions in Western cultures, I shall not confine the discussion rigidly to the former. Although the distinction is often important for studies within one culture, it is often difficult to apply cross-culturally (see pp. 58–9).

There is another reason for taking a broad view. Those who find themselves on opposite sides in some of the current moral debates, such as the issues of abortion or *in vitro* fertilization (pp. 167–9), might be judged similarly moral in their adherence to basic moral principles. Their differences arise from differences in the context of the world-views within which they apply the moral principles. These world-views, even if not religious, may themselves be seen as moral matters. It is thus wise not to limit the study of morality too narrowly. Even in relatively simple situations moral precepts may be influences on, rather than determinants of, a moral person's action.

Summary

The scope of discussions about morality differ markedly between academic disciplines. The differences lie in part in the questions being asked, and in part in the scope of the data. Precepts important for many theologians are seldom discussed by secular philosophers, and anthropologists take a wider view than either – perhaps because moral precepts are less clearly distinguished from other aspects of the culture in many pre-industrial societies. A distinction between morals and conventions is important for many purposes in studies within one culture, but is more difficult to apply cross-culturally. The following chapters take a broad view of the scope of morality.

2

THE APPROACH

Introducing some terms

Although taking us away temporarily from the central issue of the nature of morality, it is necessary to outline the theoretical approach used in later chapters. It depends in part on distinctions between psychological potentials, psychological characteristics, moral principles and moral precepts. All humans are born with certain *potentials*, which, in interaction with the experienced environment, give rise to psychological *characteristics*. The psychological characteristics can be observed, but the potentials are inferred from the fact that, given a certain range of environments, the characteristics appear in development. The psychological characteristics include propensities to behave in some ways rather than others, and predispositions to learn some things more readily than others. An example of such propensities might be the tendency to behave in a positive, rather than selfishly assertive, way to friends, and an example of a predisposition might be the ability to learn the language generally spoken in the society. Other examples will be mentioned shortly.

Some apparently basic moral themes that arise in (virtually) all cultures are referred to as '*moral principles*'. That parents should look after their children is an example of such a (presumably universal) principle: in this case it is clearly closely related to a pan-cultural psychological characteristic: most parents, or at any rate most mothers, *want* to look after their children. Another principle, to be discussed in more detail later, is the 'Golden Rule' of 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by'. The principle 'Look after your own interests, even at the expense of others' (related to 'Do not compromise your own integrity' or 'Be yourself') also has an influence on behaviour similar to that of principles generally considered as moral. It is with these principles that the discussion will be primarily concerned. However, other principles will also be considered in relevant contexts. 'Do not compromise your integrity' is seen as an important moral principle by many, even if it does not immediately or even eventually lead to acts that contribute to the welfare of others. And the principle 'Be loyal to the group' is important in some contexts. I shall suggest later that all these principles may earlier have taken the form of

shared understandings, perhaps below the level of consciousness, but later came to be reified as principles used to determine action.

Moral *precepts* (and values) are more specific guides to behaviour, which may be either explicit (as in the Judaeo-Christian Ten Commandments) or implicit, as in the behaviour of individuals. They may take the form of prescriptions (saying what one should do) or proscriptions (saying what one should not do), and may be specific to the culture. It is implied in what follows that precepts are derived from principles, but principles can also be seen as summaries of diverse precepts: this issue is discussed later (Chapter 3). Collectively, the moral precepts of a particular culture (or of a particular individual within that culture) are referred to as the '*moral code*'. The moral precepts within a code are interrelated to varying degrees.

Where do moral codes come from?

Our concern is with the sources and status of the moral precepts that people accept in the societies in which they live. Moral precepts must come from somewhere, and there seem to be three possibilities. Some hold that the moral precepts have been handed down by a supernatural authority; this is a possibility that I shall not consider.[1] Others, impressed by cultural differences in moral codes and by how notions of what is morally right change with time, see moral codes as solely a product of culture. But that seems to beg a further question – where does culture come from? That leads on to the third possibility, the one adopted here, namely that *both culture and morality stem ultimately from 'human nature' as it has been shaped by natural and cultural selection in interaction with the physical, biological and social environments that humans have experienced in evolutionary and historical time and that are experienced in the lifetime of each individual.* The important word here is 'ultimately'. There is no implication that moral precepts are simply there in our biological heritage or in our experience: both are essential. Thus it will be argued that moral codes are constructed, maintained, transmitted and amended by humans interacting with each other, and thus depend on human nature (in the restricted sense discussed below) and on experience in the physical, psychological and cultural environments of development. If this thesis is accepted, it renders unnecessary any appeal to a transcendental source.

An attempt to trace the source of moral principles, how they are related to precepts, and how those precepts are used in real-life situations, requires a multidisciplinary approach. But, as mentioned above (p. x), too often has it been assumed that academia in general, or the natural and social sciences more particularly, could tell us little about morality. For instance, Howell,[2] in introducing an important volume on the ethnography of moralities, indicates that 'humans everywhere are cognitively and emotionally predisposed towards moral sensibility', but she assumes that this 'can tell us nothing

about the content of any moral sensibility'. I shall argue against this view. Whilst agreeing that the conventions and moral precepts that smooth life in any society have emerged from the history of that society and are more or less peculiar to that society, and that they may have been manipulated by those in power, a biological orientation suggests that there are *basic commonalities in moral precepts which are derived from commonalities in aspects of human nature*.[3]

To be specific, while the tendency of human beings to look after their own interests is widely recognized, the evidence indicates that natural selection has operated in such a way that it is restrained by equally potent propensities to behave cooperatively and to show prosocial behaviour.[4] Social experience and emotional processes further the development in individuals of prosocial as well as selfishly assertive modes of behaviour, though the balance between them that is effected differs between societies and between individuals in any one society. Prosocial propensities have evolved because they bring biological advantages to individuals living in groups (Chapters 8, 9 and 11). Within each society the moral precepts acquired by individuals, though influenced by basic propensities, are shaped by the reciprocal influences between what people do and what they are supposed to do, and by individuals and groups that have influence within the society. Thus the approach taken here recognizes both the commonalities and the cultural diversity of moral systems. As I hope to show, it is in no way incompatible with the approaches of developmental psychologists or anthropologists, but it suggests that the questions of ontogenesis of interest to the developmental psychologists, and those of cross-cultural differences of interest to the anthropologists, bear ultimately on interactions between basic aspects of human nature and individual experience repeated over generations. Thus it will be argued that moral precepts come not from an external source, nor from society, but emerge from a continuing interchange between what individuals do and what they are supposed to do. The results of that interchange may differ to a limited extent between societies and even between individuals.

I shall return to the issue of whether understanding the evolutionary bases and historical elaboration of moral codes can tell us anything about what '*ought to be*' in the concluding chapter (pp. 183–8). For the moment it is sufficient to say that the focus is on how people come to hold the moral precepts that they do hold.

What is meant by 'human nature'?

The reference to 'human nature' will already have raised the hackles of many social scientists.[5] So I must add quickly that 'nature' and 'culture' are not to be seen as a binary pair in opposition to each other.[6] Rather, the argument is that moral codes, as part of 'culture', have been elaborated in the course of human evolution and human history as the result of interplay between

human psychological characteristics – many of which were originally evolved in other contexts – and the culture of the group. I return to this point below.

Diverse criteria for specifying human characteristics meriting the term 'human nature' have been reviewed by Boehm.[7] His own definition is 'the stronger, better defined behavioural tendencies that all adult humans possess', but puts the emphasis on their genetic determinants by adding that they depend on 'tendencies that are stimulated or channeled by genes'. My definition differs only slightly from his, but makes no reference to the relative importance of nature or nurture in the development of the characteristics in question. By human nature I shall be referring to *pan-cultural psychological potentials or characteristics possessed (albeit to varying degrees) by virtually all humans or by all members of an age/sex class of humans*. Perhaps it should be added that I am referring to relatively elementary psychological characteristics, and not to more complex matters such as religion or making fire.[8]

Defining human nature in this way is a device to avoid the sterile debate over the relative importance of nature and nurture.[9] All human characteristics, somatic and psychological, depend on both the genes and experience in the physical, social, and cultural environment of development.[10] It makes no more sense to discuss the relative importance of genes or experience in the development of a given characteristic than to ask whether the area of a field is due more to its length than to its width: it depends on both. Likewise, all human characteristics depend on both genes and environment. It does make sense to ask whether a *difference* between individuals or between groups in a given character is due more to a *difference* in genes or to a *difference* in experience or both, but that is another question. The near universality of any characteristic may be due to commonalities in environments of development as well as in genes: for example, all humans experience gravity, nearly all are exposed to a multi-coloured environment, nearly all have been suckled from a nipple or nipple-like object, all have been cared for by other humans. The psychological characteristics that I include as part of human nature have all been influenced by experience, but by experience likely to be common to all humans. Cultural differences in the environments experienced are likely to play only a small part in the development of these characteristics. It will be clear that the category of pan-cultural psychological characteristics may not have clear boundaries, but it is an heuristically useful one. Thus the language that children learn depends on what they hear spoken in their environment, but the potential for developing linguistic communication in a speaking community is part of human nature.

This nature-versus-nurture problem is important because there has been a tendency in the literature to write in a misleading way that could be taken to imply a direct line between genes and adult characters. For instance, even Nesse,[11] a sophisticated evolutionary psychologist, writes: 'It is correct beyond question that genes shape brains that induce individuals to do whatever best gets copies of those genes into future generations. This

principle follows from the logic of how natural selection works, and is not an empirical issue.' This sentence could easily be taken by the uninitiated to imply that experience played no role in brain development, though that is certainly not what Nesse intended.

It would be a fruitless task to attempt to enumerate the pan-cultural psychological characteristics of human beings. Not only would the list be unmanageably long, but many of its items would be irrelevant to our present concerns. But amongst them would be, for example, basic motor patterns, such as those used by infants to find the nipple (found also in monkeys), bipedalism, walking and smiling; aspects of perception, such as the distinction between figure and ground, basic Gestalt features of perception, and the effectiveness of certain visual illusions such as the Müller-Lyer; and responsiveness to certain stimulus configurations, such as the human face. Also, and more relevant to our present concerns, it would include aspects of motivation, such as propensities to eat, drink, sleep and behave sexually, to protect the integrity of the self and maintain relationships with others.[12] Finally, the category includes basic cognitive processes,[13] including constraints on what can be learned and predispositions to learn some things rather than others.[14] It is, of course, characteristics concerned with motivation, emotion, cognitive processes and learning that are most relevant to the elaboration of moral codes.

This last category of constraints on and predispositions for learning is of special importance, for specialized learning mechanisms allow individuals to acquire techniques, beliefs and values in a more efficient fashion than would be possible by simple trial and error. Indeed, learning would not be possible at all without some initial predispositions. As a much studied non-human example, the chaffinch (a small bird) produces the species-characteristic song only if it has been exposed to chaffinch song during a certain period of its development, but exposure to other sound sequences is ineffective.[15] I have already mentioned an obvious human example – the learning of language: all humans have a predisposition to learn to communicate with a spoken language, but the language does have to be learned. That learning depends on preceding species-characteristic predispositions: chimpanzees brought up by humans do not learn human language.[16] And if learning is delayed, as with children reared in near-isolation from other humans, it may be difficult or impossible for the child to catch up.[17] Human children have a predisposition to stand up, but standing is achieved only after a considerable amount of effort. Humans differ from all other species in possessing much stronger and more elaborate predispositions to acquire the attitudes, conventions, customs, symbol systems, and so on, of the society in which they live. More importantly, they mostly learn to live cooperatively with others in the group in which they find themselves. We shall see later that there is much evidence that men and women differ in the predispositions influencing their psychological development. And individuals may be predisposed to develop

behaviour appropriate to the context in which they grow up – for instance, developing psychological characteristics that suit them for a competitive society or for a supportive one.

Practical concerns would make it impossible to prove that any given characteristic is possessed by *all* humans, and I can claim only that such a view is reasonable with regard to the characteristics I shall mention. Just as it is reasonable to assume that virtually all humans have two eyes, two ears and a nose, though no two faces are quite the same, so I shall assume that virtually all humans have certain psychological characteristics. But individual variation in those characteristics is ubiquitous. All features that can be presumed to be present in virtually all humans, or in all humans of a given age and sex, show some individual variation, and may be influenced by experience in development. And although we regard it as 'natural' that children should soon learn to talk, that is primarily because they are nearly always born into a linguistic environment: the occasional child who, because of peculiarities in nature or nurture, is unable to communicate verbally does not invalidate the generalization.

This raises the important issue of development. Many psychological characteristics, such as the ability to feel empathy with another individual, depend on constituent processes that have their own developmental histories and may originally have been selected through their sequelae in other contexts. As emphasized in Chapter 6, this ability to feel empathy is but one constituent amongst many in much moral behaviour. Often, for heuristic reasons, it is necessary to treat complex processes as unitary, and many examples will be found in this book. However the dangers inherent in doing so must not be forgotten. As yet the details of the processes involved in the development of complex abilities are far from fully understood, and it is tempting to forget the underlying complexity of constituent mechanisms, their ontogeny, and their functions in other contexts.

Other features of human behaviour that seem to be pan-cultural, though somewhat more complex than those mentioned so far, include such ubiquitous or near-ubiquitous features as using fire, some form of kinship system, the incest taboo, and religion. But there is always a possibility that another culture will be found that does not provide an aspect of environment, experience or tradition necessary for the development of these more complex characters.[18] They are not to be included as 'basic psychological characteristics', though they may develop from such characteristics in the context of the environment experienced by the individual.

Morality and natural selection

What is the relation of this to Darwinian evolution? Perhaps here I should underline the biological distinction between two types of causation, proximate and ultimate. In discussing the proximate causation of behaviour,

biologists refer to physiological and psychological factors acting in or on the individual that increase the probability of the behaviour in question. By ultimate causation, biologists refer to the consequences of the behaviour through which natural selection has acted to maintain the behaviour in the organism's repertoire. Thus one can specify a number of proximate psychological factors for sexual behaviour (certain external stimuli, expectation of pleasure) and certain proximate physiological factors (e.g. hormones). These are quite distinct from the ultimate cause, which is reproduction or the perpetuation of genes. The relation between the proximate and ultimate causes has been established by natural selection in the course of evolution: the genes of individuals who sought sexual intercourse tended to be better represented in the next generation than the genes of those who did not. However, in this case the proximate and ultimate factors sometimes come together, as when people engage in sex in order to have children. In the following chapters I shall at times discuss both proximate and ultimate factors: for instance, the ultimate cause for status-seeking may be access to resources, but status is not always consciously motivated with the intention of gaining resources. Rather, the individual is impelled to seek status because selection has ensured that it has become part of human nature to do so, and natural selection has acted in that way because status-seeking brought access to resources to our ancestors.

There is a strong presumption that the basic pan-cultural psychological processes that are concerned with proximate causation have arisen through Darwinian selection, and that they are or have been adaptive in a biological sense – that is, that they are or were such as to contribute to the survival and reproduction of individuals or their close relatives. However the presumption is not *necessary* for the present thesis, where the emphasis is on their (near) ubiquity.[19] More importantly, there is no *necessary* implication that their role in the development and maintenance of moral codes is adaptive. Such basic characteristics enter also into aspects of human psychology and behaviour other than morality. The genes, in interaction with the environment of development, lead to these pan-cultural psychological characteristics, and they on the whole foster survival and reproductive success, but they do not necessarily do so in every case or on every occasion, and may or may not do so in their effects on morality. However, in later chapters parallels between moral precepts and behaviour that would have been adaptive in the environments in which humans evolved will be emphasized. This does not imply that early humans evolved in any particular type of environment:[20] indeed adaptability to local environmental conditions is an outstanding human characteristic.[21] But the environments in which humans lived earlier in their evolutionary history must have had certain common features, one of the most obvious being the presence of other humans. The assumption is that humans have had propensities to acquire attitudes and styles of behaving that tended to enhance their inclusive fitness[22] appropri-

ately, according to the social and environmental conditions in which they were living – though the proximate factors that guide development may not do so appropriately in all environments.

Thus, the involvement of such characteristics in the development or implementation of morality does not imply that moral behaviour or moral precepts *necessarily* augment the survival or reproduction of individuals. The relations of the basic psychological propensities to moral codes may be very indirect, and there is no necessary presumption that whole moral codes, or any of their separate precepts, inevitably contribute to reproductive success. Many complex aspects of human behaviour, such as much of the behaviour of football fans, no doubt depend on psychological characteristics that are pan-cultural, but that does not necessarily mean that the behaviours themselves are biologically advantageous. In the same way, it is not necessarily the case that all aspects of moral codes are adaptive for the individuals who subscribe to them. There are circumstances in which a moral code that promoted unbridled selfishness would be adaptive and lead to greater individual survival and breeding success, though in most circumstances it would lead to group extinction – as would unbridled unselfishness. We shall see later that basic moral principles are mostly such as lead to group harmony, itself conducive to the biological welfare of many of its members. But such a moral code may well contain precepts, perhaps imposed by those in positions of power, which are far from conducive to the biological welfare of *all* individuals. *Thus I am certainly not claiming that what is natural is good, but rather suggesting that we can trace in what is natural the bases of what we see as good.* Similar basic propensities in humans living in societies with different histories and in different circumstances have given rise to moral codes with some basic similarities in their moral precepts but differing in many details.

Prosociality and selfish assertiveness

In the course of the discussion I shall refer to psychological propensities at a number of levels of complexity, but propensities to behave with selfish assertiveness[23] and prosocially[24] will be referred to frequently. The focus on these two is an heuristic device for the sake of simplifying the argument, and the extent to which they are unitary is discussed later (Chapter 3): the point to be emphasized here is that *both* predispositions are present. Too often humans are portrayed as basically assertive and selfish, and competition as the norm in human societies, with good will and cooperation requiring explanation. We hear a great deal about selfish assertiveness and its concomitants: aggressiveness, violence, and acquisitiveness leading to stealing figure predominantly in the newspapers and news bulletins. But it is essential to recognize that this is because they are salient compared with what is usual in our society. If burglary became an everyday event, a

burglary would not be news. Rather than focusing solely on selfish assertiveness, *it is equally valid to stress the human propensity to show prosocial behaviour*. For most of the time, most people live happily together. The extent to which they do so depends to a large extent on the conditions under which they are living. In some societies violence is very rare and warfare almost unknown.[25] For most people, their relationships with others are the most important aspect of their lives, and relationships depend on prosocial behaviour, cooperation and reciprocity. Most humans have an aversion to seeing or causing suffering in others, and will try to alleviate that suffering for reasons that are not self-interested.[26] Of the innumerable opportunities that most people have to further their own interests at the expense of others, very few are taken.[27] That all individuals are liable to display selfish and assertive behaviour is clear,[28] but it is equally the case that *all individuals are capable of displaying unselfish, prosocial behaviour* which may be disadvantageous to themselves at least in the short-term – some individuals, of course, more than others. By and large, our selfishness is held in check by more positive propensities, by the prosocial aspects of our nature. Just why the prosocial side to human nature is to the ultimate biological advantage of individuals is another issue, to be discussed later (Chapters 7 and 8).

To many, this emphasis on the positive side of human nature may seem unnecessary. However Darwinism has been misrepresented as picturing nature as 'red in tooth and claw', and the model of human behaviour as depending on 'rational self-interest' has had an excessive influence in economics and the social sciences. However, the academic mood is now changing to accord more with common experience, and experimental studies have demonstrated cooperation, fairness and generosity as well as individualism and competitiveness.[29] It is, of course, important to distinguish here between the proximate motivation of behaviour and its long-term biological consequences on reproductive success. While selfishly assertive behaviour may be to the advantage of the individual, prosocial behaviour may be costly in the short-term. But we shall see later that prosocial behaviour, costly in the short term, may bring biological dividends in the longer term (Chapter 8).

Some caveats: integrating biology and the social sciences

It will be apparent that I have been treading warily here. There are three reasons for this. First, in the past discussions about human nature have often run into the sands because they have focused on characteristics at the level of the socio-cultural structure, such as religion, or somewhat complex patterns of behaviour, such as the use of fire, and not at the individual psychological level.[30] The basic psychological characteristics to which I refer are at the individual or near-individual level. However, to reiterate a point made earlier, the development of these basic psychological characteristics is

not independent of environmental influences or even of learning within a social group.

A second reason for caution stems from possible misunderstandings about the use I shall make of principles of behavioural evolution drawn from studies of other species. Although the behaviour of some non-human species shows that there is a case for talking of non-human culture or proto-culture, there is no necessary implication that any animal has anything comparable to human morality. Evolutionary principles are used only to throw light on the human psychological characteristics that, it will be argued, provide the bases of morality. People do indeed sometimes ask whether animals have morals, and whether our own morality had its roots in the morality of our prehuman ancestors. Human morality is largely (though not solely) concerned with the channelling of behaviour in a manner conducive to conflict-free societies, and the behaviour of some non-human primates does indeed contain elements which have similar consequences. For instance, Flack and de Waal[31] report that chimpanzees show a degree of reciprocity in food-sharing, sympathy, third-party intervention and mediation in conflicts, and behaviour conducive to reconciliation after disputes. On that basis, they claim that chimpanzees show 'community concern' and have 'methods for resolving, managing and preventing conflicts of interests within their groups' (p. 3). But here one must be careful. Chimpanzees are related to our ancestors, and such behaviour (or rather the capacity to show such behaviour) in our evolutionary ancestors may well have provided some of the building blocks for human morality, but it is not in itself evidence that they have anything comparable to human morality, or what some would call a moral sense. Human morality involves shared understandings, so that it is possible to be moral according to the precepts of a group but not prosocial.[32] It depends on human consciousness and self-consciousness and on the capacity for language: while some hold that self-consciousness and language are present in a rudimentary form in some animals, such as the anthropoid apes, in discussing morality it is best to be cautious and not to consider the gap between animal and human as a narrow one. Therefore, in what follows I shall use principles about evolutionary processes which have been derived from studies of animals, but I shall not discuss the possible relations between aspects of animal behaviour and human morality.

The third reason for caution is that this is an arena where social scientists, psychologists, and biologists have come into conflict. At the extremes, social scientists have felt that culture,[33] including ethical issues, is their patch, and that biologists can have nothing useful to say to them. On the other hand some biologists,[34] impressed by the explanatory power of Darwinian selection, have claimed that its straightforward application would be able to explain all the complexities of human life. More basically, the conflict stems from a difference between the problems in which biologists and social scientists are interested. Most social scientists have been primarily interested in

differences – differences between societies or cultures, differences between age groups or social classes, differences over time, and so on. Naturally, therefore, it seems to the social scientist that the biologist, interested in pan-cultural generalities, can have nothing to say to him about differences. On the other hand, it has been easy for the biologist, armed with such a powerful theory as the theory of evolution by natural selection, to overlook the intricacies of human development and the complexities of and cultural differences in human behaviour: only recently have the latter become a focus for their research. The approach adopted here attempts to link these two viewpoints. It assumes that any implication that culture is a given that affects individuals is inadequate. Rather, it emphasizes mutual influences between culture, inter-individual relationships, and individuals, and assumes that individuals are not merely passive recipients of cultural influences, but shape them in the active construction of their own world-views. Cultures, in all their diversity, are themselves ultimately constructed by human beings endowed with 'human nature'.

A model that I have frequently found useful in the past involves seeing all the complexities of human behaviour as based on two-way influences between psychological mechanisms within individuals, interactions between individuals, relationships, groups, societies, and the sociocultural structure of beliefs, values and institutions (Figure 2.1). Each of these levels of complexity (as well as the physical environment) affects, and is affected by, others. The complexities at the higher levels depend ultimately on the nature of individuals, and the characteristics of individuals are themselves elaborated and transformed in development in the context of social and socio-cultural influences. The two-way influences operate both in the short term (synchronically) and across generations (diachronically). Understanding the moral code of any society must therefore involve three sets of questions. *The first concerns how the code is acquired by individuals in interaction with their social and cultural environment. The second concerns its bases in human nature and how that has been elaborated in the course of human evolution. And the third concerns how the moral precepts have been elaborated during the history of the society in question*. Just as the controversies on the roles of genes and environment in the development of aspects of behaviour have proved sterile, so would discussion about the influences ascribed to 'nature' and to 'culture': each affects and is affected by the other (see also p. 15).

The discussion of morality in this book is in fact part of a wider enterprise to reduce the gap between the natural and social sciences, but it is not reductionist. Although the role of pan-cultural human propensities basic to the interactions is initially emphasized here, the complexities of human cultures are seen as emerging from the dialectical interactions between the levels of social complexity shown in Figure 2.1. More specifically, although certain psychological characteristics are seen as present (even if developing to differing extents) in all humans, moral precepts are not seen as initially

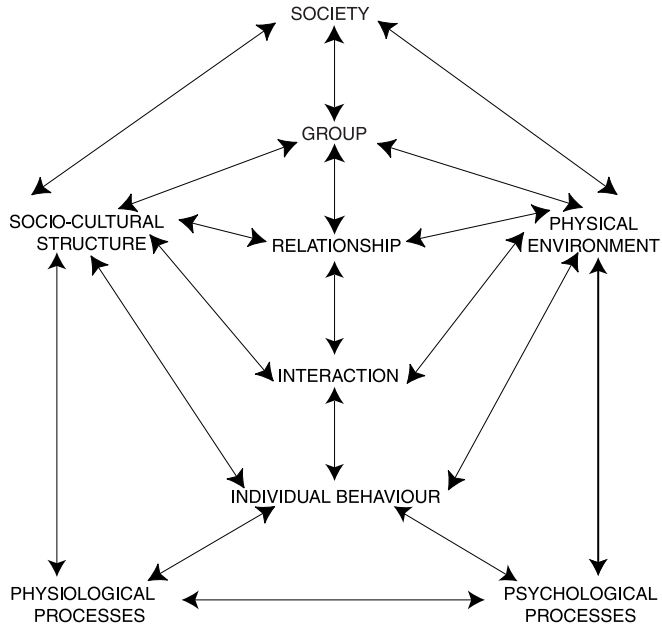

Figure 2.1 A simplified view of levels of social complexity.

Note: Each level continually influences (and is influenced by) others and by the socio-cultural structure, with its beliefs, values, conventions, and institutions. The influences involve behavioural, affective and cognitive processes in the individuals concerned, mediated by the meanings attributed to events and situations. Each level, including that of the individual, is thus to be seen not as an entity but as involving processes of creation, maintenance and degradation through the dialectical relations between and within levels.

present in our nature but as emerging over time from the dialectical interactions between levels.

Furthermore, this approach renders largely irrelevant any debate about whether moral precepts are to be seen as absolute and ubiquitously applicable, or relative and peculiar to the society in question. On the one hand, cross-cultural similarities are to be expected, because, as will be argued, they stem from pan-cultural human characteristics. On the other – *because the elaboration of moral precepts from basic psychological characteristics involves the developmental processes of individuals, which themselves depend on and influence interactions and relationships between the individual and others, which in turn influence and depend on the sociocultural structure of beliefs, norms, values and institutions in the society, which itself has been shaped in the course of a long history peculiar to that society*[35] – limited differences between societies and contextual differences within societies are to be expected.

But if moral codes are constructed in this way, and differ between societies, how can they be justified? I shall return to this question in the final chapter. For the moment it is sufficient to take the view that their justifiability, which implies an arbiter or an outside standard, is in a sense irrelevant to the question of why moral codes are as they are, and why they differ between cultures; what matters here is how they came to be accepted by the members of the society in question. Societies, of course, vary in many respects according to ecological and historical factors. Personifying 'society' for a moment, all it can do is to offer moral precepts and see if individuals accept them. Where acceptance is lacking, the precepts may become adjusted by the continuing dialectic between what people do and what they are supposed to do, or what they think that they should be supposed to do. But this way of putting it involves, of course, a considerable simplification. With 'society' we are concerned with successive generations of individuals socialized, though with varying degrees of success, to accept the code current at the time; diversity in the extent to which a moral code is accepted by individuals may be essential to its vitality. Reciprocally, the moral code of any given society must have been emotionally and/or rationally accepted by a high proportion of its individuals. From time to time some individuals may think or feel that the code could be improved, but any innovation must be judged in part by its acceptability. In particular, in the rapidly changing modern world some decisions on moral/legal matters (for instance, on the permissibility of *in vitro* fertilization, see p. 167) must be taken by individuals or small groups of individuals. In such cases, a variety of considerations come into the discussion, but prescriptions unacceptable to the society as a whole would clearly run into difficulties.

Summary

This chapter outlines the approach taken in later chapters. The principle issues are:

1 Basic to the discussion are the concepts of *Psychological potentials*; *Psychological characteristics* (basic psychological elements believed to be common to all or the great majority of humans); Moral *principles* (which are basic to or summarize moral precepts) probably present in all cultures; Moral *precepts* (prescriptions and proscriptions with a degree of cultural specificity); and Moral *codes*, the collectivity of precepts in a given society.
2 Culture and morality stem ultimately from human nature as it has been and is being shaped by natural and cultural selection. Moral principles and precepts have been shaped by reciprocal influences between what people do and what they feel they are supposed to do, and by individuals and groups of influence in the society.

3 Basic psychological characteristics are pan-cultural. They may be influenced by experience in development, and may differ in degree between individuals. They are likely to have been the product of Darwinian selection, though sometimes only indirectly, but that is an issue not essential to the present thesis.
4 Moral codes must be compatible with the viability of the society and its individuals, but moral precepts are not necessarily conducive to the well-being or biological success of all individuals.
5 Humans have both prosocial and selfishly assertive propensities.
6 Comparisons with other species must be treated with caution, though principles drawn from a range of other species may be valuable for understanding our own.
7 Disagreements between natural and social scientists concerning the relevance of natural science stem largely from differences in their basic orientations.
8 The relations between individuals and 'culture' must be seen in terms of diachronic dialectical interactions between levels of social complexity (Figure 2.1).

3

NOTES FOR A CONCEPTUAL TOOL-KIT

One conceptual problem should be made explicit from the start. It concerns the question of whether the terms 'morality' and 'moral sense', and also the labels used for certain categories of behaviour, are to be seen as having implications of common basic processes, or as *post hoc* labels used to group phenomena in convenient ways. It thus involves conceptual, motivational, and developmental issues. These issues have so far been somewhat neglected, but they should be borne in mind in any attempt to understand the genesis of morality.

Morality

Much philosophical discussion has been concerned with the nature of the 'good', some arguing that everything that is 'good' has something in common, a characteristic, perhaps an essence, which could be immediately apprehended. The philosopher G.E. Moore wrote: 'Good is good and that is the end of the matter'.[1] On this view, a moral decision between two courses of action is based on which will bring the most 'good'. Moore claimed that pleasure, knowledge, and virtue are self-evidently 'good', and actions are good that maximize good consequences for everyone concerned. One just *has* a moral sense. Such a view, though reflecting Moore's personality, is not very helpful, principally because there is so much room for disagreement about what constitutes pleasure, knowledge and virtue, and the obvious possibility that an action that brings immediate pleasure may be harmful in the long run. However it does raise the important questions of whether there is in fact anything in common between actions that are perceived as 'good', and of what it means to say that we can recognize such actions intuitively.

More specifically, does the so-called 'moral sense' come first in development, which behaviours are 'right' and which 'wrong' being learned subsequently by reference to a sense of right and wrong already present, or is the moral sense a consequence of learning that some behaviours are right and others wrong? Surely, it might be said, there must be a sense in which we are predisposed to make moral distinctions, for that is part of being human.

But, in the initial stages, what would it mean to have the capacity to distinguish right from wrong without criteria by which the distinction should be made? It is difficult to imagine a 'moral sense' without content. How could a naïve individual recognize virtue? Is it therefore more acceptable to see the 'moral sense' as a *post hoc* construction consequent upon the learning of dos and don'ts? That very young children may behave in ways that adults see as morally good could be taken as evidence against this view, but surely a 'moral sense' implies more than acting appropriately in one or a few particular situations? There do seem to be predispositions not only to avoid pain but also to see some actions as distasteful or unimaginable (sexual relations with a close relative might be a possible example, though this is a complex issue; see p. 124), or some sights as abhorrent (blood and gore, for instance); but in such cases one is dealing with specific issues, not with a prescriptive moral sense. They concern experiences that one is likely subsequently to avoid but (except perhaps for the case of incest) are not necessarily related to *moral* precepts.

But perhaps it is simply inappropriate to pose the question as 'Which came first, the moral sense or its content?' More probably there are predispositions to attach feelings or (initially non-verbal) labels of 'good' and 'bad' to actions, under the influence not only of their consequences but also, and more importantly, of the responses of parents or other authority figures and of peers. It is relevant here that infants are indeed predisposed to pay attention to parental demands and to gain pleasure from doing so – but such predispositions could not be realized independently of some content. *Thus the view taken here is that 'moral sense' is a rather loose term useful for describing the tendency to differentiate 'good' from 'bad', constructed in parallel with the acquisition of content, on the basis of pre-existing predispositions to respond appropriately primarily to the comments, positive or negative, of parents or other authority figures, and perhaps to avoid certain situations.* Differentiation of good from bad may be followed by generalization within each category, for instance, from 'Don't hurt your sister' to 'Don't hurt the cat' to 'Don't hurt any living being'. Such a sequence would seem to be in harmony with the course of moral development (Chapter 6).

Prosocial and selfishly assertive behaviour

Two other terms which I have already used frequently also require comment. 'Assertiveness' is a term with rather diverse meanings. In the first place, it must be distinguished from aggressiveness, the latter being used to imply readiness to harm another: when we speak of an 'assertive salesman', we do not mean one who will knock his clients' heads together. But, even without an aggressive implication, 'assertiveness' has negative connotations for some, and positive ones for others. In the former case, it may imply attempts to gain precedence or status at the expense of others – 'pushyness', egoistic or

selfish behaviour. On the other hand, partly through the influence of feminists, assertiveness has come recently to be seen more as a desirable social characteristic, involving social competence, being open and honest with self and others, listening to other people's points of view, speaking up, having respect for self as well as others, and so on.[2] And, as we shall see, others take it to be a precursor for various aspects of self-realization. Clearly diverse characteristics can be implied. The question is, in what sense do they have anything in common? Is aggressiveness simply an extreme negative expression of assertiveness? Do the more positive aspects of assertiveness share a common base – causally, ontogenetically, or both – with the egoistic ones? If so, one might expect individuals who were frequently assertive in one way also to be assertive in the other; that is certainly not always the case. Or is 'assertiveness' to be seen as only a *post hoc* descriptive phrase for tendencies for behaviours whose consequences have something in common – namely the promotion of one's own interests, whether their consequences to others be positive or negative? I shall not pursue these problems here, but must make clear the sense in which I shall use it: as a label for the propensity to show an intermediate category of behaviours (usually but not necessarily short of physical aggression) that promote one's self-interest without regard for the interests of others. Assertiveness is thus used here in the sense of 'selfish assertiveness' and defined in terms of particular sets of consequences, the extent to which its constituent behaviours are causally or developmentally homogenous being left open.[3]

Similar problems arise with 'prosocial behaviour'. I shall use the term 'prosocial behaviour' very broadly to cover diverse types of behaviour with the common characteristic that they foster the well-being of others. Thereby I can mostly avoid the term 'altruistic behaviour', which is used in a much more restricted sense in biology than in everyday life.[4] But helping behaviour can take many forms, including sympathy, benevolent feelings, cooperation, and social support; and can have many causes, including personality factors, hopes for reward, educational and cultural factors, and so on. One could ask to what extent have they anything causally or developmentally in common? If they do, one might expect individuals who were frequently prosocial in one way also to be prosocial in others. To some extent that is the case: some individuals are 'kind' and others are not. One of the factors in the much used 5-factor test of personality is 'agreeableness', and that includes such qualities as soft-hearted, good-natured, trusting, helpful, forgiving, gullible and straightforward.[5] But, on the other hand, many people are kind in some contexts or to some individuals, but not indiscriminately: can one get round this by saying that their kindness is expressed only in some contexts or to particular people? Is there some core motivation, or is 'prosocial behaviour' a *post hoc* label for behaviour with positive consequences for others? No final answer can be given to these questions. However for present purposes I shall treat both assertive and prosocial behaviour as each depending on a

central core, while their strength, mode of expression and contextual dependence may be subject to diverse influences.

Because these two categories of prosocial and antisocial assertive behaviour cover such diverse actions, and because I shall use them often in what follows, it is important to note that they are not *necessarily* opposed. Individuals who campaign for the release of a political prisoner, although seeking a consequence beneficial for another individual, may be asserting themselves in so doing insofar as the immediate spur is the strength of their own conviction. And because actions are categorized by their consequences, the same act may be seen as prosocial from one perspective (e.g. that of the prisoner's relatives) and antisocial from another (e.g. that of politicians who believe in preserving the *status quo*); or as prosocial at the time but appearing to have been antisocial in longer-term perspective. But, for the most part, prosocial and selfishly assertive tendencies act in opposition, and there is a whole range of behaviours intermediate between them. *Thus, to a large extent, morality can be seen as influencing the balance between prosocial and selfishly assertive behaviour – though we refer to the balance as 'moral' only when prosocial behaviour predominates.*

Summary

1 It is suggested that the 'moral sense', a rather loose term for the ability to discriminate 'good' from 'bad', is constructed in development in parallel with the acquisition of content.
2 The terms 'selfishly assertive' and 'prosocial' are used descriptively to define categories of behaviour by their consequences. There is no necessary presumption that they are unitary, either ontogenetically or causally.

4

CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

Consistencies and inconsistencies across contexts and cultures

Moral precepts in a narrow sense (i.e. not conventions) are often perceived as if cut in stone, absolute, permanent, and ubiquitously applicable. This makes them more likely to be observed, so their absolute nature is likely to be emphasized by those who purvey them or who have an interest in their observance. A closer look, however, shows that immutability is nowhere near the whole story. As mentioned already, not only are the actions and experiences of individuals influenced by the moral code of the society in which they live, but also, over time, they influence the moral code.

There are a number of ways in which the validity of moral precepts may change. The first involves the context: to injure a fellow citizen is morally wrong, and to hit one's mother even worse, but to kill an enemy soldier in time of war may be seen as a laudable act.

Second, within the life span of an individual his or her moral orientation may undergo considerable change – both during development and also throughout adulthood. For example, Colby and Damon[1] cite the case of Virginia Durr who, brought up in Alabama, acquired strong racial prejudices in her youth, and was horrified when she went to college because she had to sit at table with a black girl. The alternative was dismissal from the college. She came to like and respect the black girl and, after further experiences, dedicated most of her life to working for civil rights.

Third, on a longer time scale, the accelerating changes in society provide many examples of the lability of moral codes. An obvious example is the acceptability of divorce in the Western world. Early in the twentieth century divorce was rarely accessible and morally unacceptable to many. The causes of the increase in divorce have been multiple, and include the decline of religious orthodoxies, the increase in individual mobility, and the changes stemming from the sexual revolution. Research has suggested that it might be 'better' for the children of a couple living in irreconcilable conflict that their parents should separate. The result of such factors has been mutual influences between how people were supposed to behave and how they did behave. As more couples divorced, and divorce became more usual, the credibility of the prohibition against divorce weakened, and the moral stigma

diminished. And as divorce became more acceptable, more couples divorced. As we have seen, moral precepts affect behaviour, and over time the behaviour of individuals affects the moral precepts of the culture (Figure 2.1, p. 23).

Fourth, on a still longer time scale, it is self-evident that changes in socio-economic circumstances can bring a change in values. In mediaeval Europe the hierarchical morality was one of landed feudalism, with each individual from landlord to serf having duties according to their status, and humility being a virtue, at least for the majority. With the Industrial Revolution and consequent social upheavals, this changed to the commercial/manufacturing morality of competition and self-interest, so that humility started to lose its moral status. As another example, the ordered hierarchy of duties in Catholicism changed to Calvinism's emphasis on thrift and diligence leading to economic success.[2] And Thatcherite economic policies placed a greater emphasis on individualism, entrepreneurship and competition in Britain.

Well-known to anthropologists and sociologists, but not always emphasized by psychologists or philosophers, is the fact that values and moral codes differ also between cultures, at least in their emphases. An action seen as wrong in one culture or in one society may not be seen so in another. Frequently documented examples concern the differences between so-called individualistic and collectivistic orientations.[3] At a sociological level of analysis, individual goals are given priority, and there are fewer objections to self-serving actions in individualistic societies, while in collectivist ones people are socialised to conform to in-group norms. A collectivist orientation tends to stress family networks and interconnected relationships, with arranged marriages and pragmatic selection of partners taking the place of romantic love.[4] Most societies are a mixture of both, and labelling societies as one or the other conceals the heterogeneity of individual attitudes within them. Nevertheless Western European and North American societies are biased towards individualism, with individuals differing and showing different orientations in different contexts or at different times. In East Asian societies there tends to be more conformity to group norms and other characteristics of collectivism.[5] As an example, one study[6] focused on the differences between family values in the USA and those of Hindu families in India. While USA families gave a high priority to communicating emotions and to personal freedom, the Indians stressed the importance of personal desires channelled towards the good of the family as a whole. When presented with moral dilemmas between interpersonal and justice expectations, most Indians gave priority to the interpersonal issue, most USA citizens to justice. The Indians tended to treat interpersonal issues as socially enforceable moral duties, and to treat personal inclinations as consonant with interpersonal expectations. Because of the emphasis on individualism, in the USA sample studied close interpersonal relationships were regarded less as moral matters than they were in the Indian sample. To one holding

USA cultural values the Indian system would be seen as inhibiting freedom of choice; such a view would not take into account the Indian emphasis on interdependence or the satisfaction felt by individuals in contributing to it. Conversely, an Indian would be likely to see the USA culture as involving the risk of social isolation and to fail to appreciate the rewards consequent upon self-determination and autonomy. The difference stems from their contrasting world-views (see Chapter 13).

Another issue influencing the stability of the moral code concerns its relation to the structure of society. In pre-industrial societies the two may be almost inseparable, so that the fabric of society depends on observance of the moral code: in such cases the code may show considerable stability. In the West, established religions have been important in maintaining stability. But the numerous factors tending to produce change in Western societies, such as changes in technology, the mobility of citizens, the increasing size of institutions, the depersonalisation of public life, and the decrease in 'social capital',[7] inevitably have repercussions on the moral climate.[8] In addition, a society's moral code may be influenced by more abstract issues – such as changes in the understandings of moral precepts derived from the religious system, new principles arising from the social interpretation of scientific knowledge (as with Social Darwinism), and the influences of moral and political thinkers.[9]

In addition, and to be discussed in more detail later (Chapter 13), many of the changes and cultural differences in moral precepts involve not so much basic principles as the range of individuals to whom they are seen as applying or the relative priority of moral values. Thus the abolition of slavery involved an extension of the classes of individuals who were seen to have rights. The provision of more universal health care involves a change in relative importance between the individual freedom of tax-payers to accumulate wealth and the needs of others less fortunate.

Finally, the moral precepts incorporated into the self-system may also differ between individuals within a society. Thus situations sometimes arise where more is expected of some groups of individuals than of others. For instance, lay followers of Buddha, householders and monks were expected to follow successively more exacting life styles.[10] Among Western middle classes, doctors, lawyers and priests have, for different reasons, at times been accorded special respect, and high standards expected from them. In other cases (and regrettably) some individuals have been considered, or considered themselves, as 'above the law' or as exempt from the moral standards relevant to other people.

But moral precepts are not infinitely flexible. A society's moral code must be acceptable (by free choice or coercion) to its members and must render that society viable in the context of other societies around it. Although the form taken by the moral code differs between societies,[11] within each society every individual's private moral code is likely to remain broadly similar to

the moral codes in the heads of at least a proportion of fellow citizens. A rule to which one's peers subscribe is more binding than one about which there are differences of opinion – in part because an individual who does not follow its dictates maybe sidelined by those who do. But of more interest is the fact that moral precepts must remain broadly compatible with other rules or principles and with the world-views of those who are to subscribe to them. If they are not, there will be many circumstances in which they fail to offer clear guidance: thus the debate about capital punishment involves conflict between humanitarian considerations, on the one hand and, on the other, supposed benefits to society seen as based on an absolute principle of 'an eye for an eye' or on pragmatic considerations. We shall return to these issues in Chapter 13.

Thus this emphasis on the lability of moral codes, though necessary for understanding their nature and genesis, must not be overinterpreted. The stability and viability of a society, and the well-being of its members, depend upon consistent adherence to the moral code, with at most rare exceptions. The lability of moral codes is not to be taken as an excuse for disregarding them.

Summary

Moral codes are in principle labile, with changes occurring over time and differences arising between cultures. However their apparently absolute quality and enduring nature are essential for their effectiveness: we shall see later how individuals defend the status of the precepts that they live by.

5

MORALITY AND THE SELF-SYSTEM

The self-system and morality

When individuals have to 'make decisions' on simple moral issues, they can follow moral precepts already incorporated into their way of behaving. They act without thinking in a way consistent with the ideals they hold: there is no need for 'deciding', or for 'consulting the moral code', for it is already incorporated into each individual's sense of self,[1] and action can be spontaneous. Over everyday issues that is how we usually live our lives. Of course issues may not be that simple, and we must bear in mind that it is often a case of 'I'd like to do that, but it would not feel right', or 'My conscience is not happy'. That raises the questions, 'Why does it not feel right?', and 'What do we mean by conscience?' To understand how moral precepts work, and how some of the disagreements about moral issues arise, it is necessary to sketch briefly some work on the 'self-system'.[2] In that moral precepts are incorporated into one's sense of self, the violation of a precept may impinge on that sense of self.

In the Western world each individual assumes that he or she is a unique individual, with a mind in some sense distinct from the body, with an inner private self, with emotions, with memories stored in the mind, and with a will capable of acting on the world. We see our 'self' as being in control of our behaviour, though sometimes, if we do not like what we do, we project that control by blaming others for our actions. Of course the 'self', the 'mind' and the 'will' are intangible entities: no one has ever seen them, no one knows what they are. So it is perhaps not surprising that people have not always thought of themselves in quite this way. In premodern times there was much less emphasis on the individual than there is to-day:[3] people thought of themselves as more under the control of external agencies, with emphasis on the autonomous self becoming more predominant in the last few hundred years. And, if we move to other cultures, the differences seem even greater. In some there is little distinction between mind and body. In Africa the Dinka appear to have a notion of mind very different from our own, with memories conceived in terms of their external source instead of being stored in the 'mind'. In much of eastern Asia people feel (or have felt)

their fate to be controlled by forces outside themselves, by ancestors, deities, by natural entities. Thus it seems that the ways in which people picture themselves in relation to the world differ between cultures in many ways.[4] However, it is possible to overstate the differences, and there is need for caution.[5] In every culture people have a sense of 'self', in that they know who they are, and some sense of responsibility for their own actions. Individuals who believe they are controlled by external agents may yet attempt to placate, recruit or manipulate those agents, for instance, by making sacrifices to deities or placating the ancestors, thereby controlling their own circumstances indirectly.

It will be apparent that the 'self', and what I shall call later the 'self-system', are somewhat slippery concepts, and they may seem not immediately acceptable to some scientists as a scientific tool. But they are comparable to many scientific concepts that served in the development of science, such as 'pressure', 'gene' or 'electric current'. For example, certain variables affect the 'electric current', and it produces certain effects. No one has ever seen an electric current travelling down a wire, but it is a useful concept for relating a variety of causes to a variety of effects. In a similar way, the 'self-system' helps us to account for a variety of properties of psychological functioning.

In any case, the concept of 'self' is essential for understanding the nature of morality. Every human being has a sense of selfhood or identity. A woman may see herself as female, thirty years old, moderately good-looking, a modern woman, an engineer, and so on, and also as British, middle-class, and a member of the Labour Party. Such labels may be coupled with value judgements: 'a modern woman' may be coupled with 'independently minded' or 'unprejudiced'. They may also be coupled with information about relationships and about her place in society. For instance, 'female' may be coupled with 'married', and with her impressions about her partner in that relationship ('understanding'). More importantly in the present context, her sense of her identity includes moral and conventional issues – how she thinks she should behave in her marital relationship ('not bossy'), which may be different from how she ought to behave in other relationships (e.g. 'bossy at work'). The salience of different aspects of her self-concept may be affected by the context – at home, perhaps various aspects of femininity but not her competence as an engineer, and the reverse at work. And her sense of 'self' will influence how she behaves in the contexts she encounters.

Our hypothetical woman engineer's personal relationship with her husband may involve the elaboration of expectations and norms of behaviour suited to their particular characteristics, adherence to which contributes to smoothing the course of their relationship. At the same time, her social situation as an incumbent of the roles of wife and engineer are associated with specific rights and duties concerning what she should and

should not do, and even with what her husband and colleagues should and should not do, deviations from which may provoke sanctions. Internalisation of moral precepts and conventions will help to determine the behaviour she sees as appropriate to each of the roles of engineer and wife. Feeling in control of what she does, she compares her behaviour with her internalised moral precepts using her 'conscience', and may feel virtuous or guilty. Thus *the 'conscience' is not to be thought of as a thing: 'having a bad conscience' corresponds to a discrepancy between the values internalised in the self-system and the actions one sees oneself taking,* that is, to a lack of 'congruency'.[6] If she has failed to live up to the moral precepts she has accepted, her memory of events may become distorted, and she may invent a new way of describing them, a new narrative in which she can perceive her actions in a better light.[7] Or she may ameliorate guilt by projecting it externally, by blaming others, her upbringing, fate, and so on.

While it is often useful to talk about morality as involving conscious comparison between internalised standards and one's own intended or actual behaviour, as in the last paragraph, the comparison may be unconscious. One should therefore recognize a complete spectrum of moral behaviour. At one end, the individual acts according to moral precepts without thinking about it: the precepts are so deeply ingrained that they never surface in consciousness. At the other extreme behaviour is the result of prolonged conscious consideration, the pull of 'conscience' on the one hand acting against the consequences of disregarding it on the other.[8] More generally, culture and the world-view of the individual becomes part of the person, and serves as a template for regulating possible action.

The values, conventions and moral precepts that our woman engineer holds are influenced by, and likely to be shared with, other members of her group: in that case they form part of the culture. But any one individual may have many relationships, and belong to more than one group. It is therefore sometimes useful to distinguish the personal self (how she sees herself as a person) from the social self (how she sees herself as a member of society). While some of the moral precepts and conventions will be shared with at least the majority of others in her society, others will be limited to members of particular groups, some shared just with her husband or with particular individuals, and some may be idiosyncratic.[9] Thus an individual's values, precepts and prohibitions about how she should or should not behave are closely bound up with information about the sort of person she perceives herself to be, her view of her friends and relations and of her relationships with them, and the groups to which she sees herself as belonging. In brief, they are part of, and contribute to, her world-view. For that reason, a moral dilemma may lead to a course of action determined not so much by a rational weighing of possible courses of action as by the extent to which the alternatives conflict with the person's self-system in the current context.

Consider two examples of the relation between how an individual

perceives herself in the world and her response to moral questions. In one set of experiments[10] respondents were asked 'Why is it important to keep a promise?' The answers differed between those having a separate (corresponding to individualistic) orientation and those with a connected (collectivistic) one (see p. 31). The former saw promises as contracts between autonomous persons, and their answers tended to refer to trustworthiness as a personal attribute. By contrast, those with a connected orientation focused on the relationship, indicating that breaking trust involved letting others down or causing hurt. The other example involved a dilemma about two best friends. While A was on vacation, B was invited to a disco by A's boy- or girl-friend. Should B go? Should they kiss? Respondents with a separate orientation framed their response in terms of the territorial rights of A with regard to his boy- or girl-friend, implying a contract between the friends about property and rights. Respondents with a connected orientation, by contrast, imagined themselves in the place of the various members of the triad, and framed their answer in terms of hurting or causing unhappiness. Each individual was found to apply a given model consistently across a wide range of situations but, although members of the same culture, different individuals applied different models. It seems that individuals' choice of a model for relationships is related to the salience to them of the several aspects of the situation, which in turn is related to their view of the world. The suggestion is that people select from the models offered to them in the discourse of everyday life those that they themselves find congenial, and incorporate them into their self-systems.

That the moral judgements made by an individual are closely related to her total world-view as incorporated in the self-system is critical for understanding the nature of moral codes. To repeat a point made earlier, for the individual the moral code is not something out there, an inscription on a tablet of stone or a book of laws, but lies in the head as part of the individual's identity. That is why moral 'judgements' can be spontaneous, and why moral actions can enhance self-respect. Of course, some aspects of the moral code may be reified into laws, but laws must be assimilated by the individual if they are to affect action.

Thus how an individual sees herself includes a complex store of information about herself, others, relationships, her position in society, her rights, value judgements, conventions, moral principles and other aspects of the culture.[11] Not all this knowledge is available to consciousness at any one time, and some may never be. Some of it may be inconsistent, and the items are at best only loosely connected together. One distinction, emphasized by many developmental psychologists, is between three domains – the psychological (intrapsychic processes and constructs such as the self), societal (concepts of social organization) and moral (concepts of justice, rights, etc.).[12] I refer to the whole as the 'self-system', to emphasize that the different parts are interrelated in differing degrees – but it is, of course, a

matter of choice if one prefers to define the self more narrowly as the 'self-concept' and to regard knowledge about relationships, habitual ways of behaving and moral precepts not as part of it, but as readily available to it. The notion that the self-system embraces information external to the individual seems strange to individualistic Western ears, but is entirely compatible with the notion of a more extended self recognized in other cultures.[13] The important issue is that the self-system functions in interpersonal relationships and enables the individual to make choices and initiate actions.[14]

To create and maintain their self-systems, people actively seek information about themselves, and in doing so have preferences for certain kinds of knowledge about themselves. If the accuracy of information is contrasted both with its consistency with what the individual already believes about herself, and with information that casts the individual in a favourable light, the last usually takes precedence.[15] Most people prefer to think well of themselves. This so-called 'self-enhancement' motive clearly has considerable relevance both to the acquisition of moral precepts and to the relation between the moral precepts an individual has acquired and the extent to which they are realized in action. However, things may not be so simple as they seem. For one thing, information about the self that is too favourable may be rejected.[16] For another, there is some evidence that cognitive responses to social feedback conform to a self-consistency principle, but affective responses to a principle of self-enhancement.[17]

Cultural differences in the self-system and personhood

As noted above, how people see themselves and others differs enormously between cultures. Most of the research on the self-concept has been carried out in Western societies, where people see themselves and others primarily as individuals and only secondarily as members of families or groups[18] In many other societies the balance is different, and self-perception as the occupant of a place in a hierarchy or in a social group seems more prominent.[19] This can affect the nature of the subjective experience when one sees oneself to have behaved badly. In Western societies moral behaviour is usually seen as a matter of individual responsibility for the action, and transgressions cause the transgressor to feel guilt for what has been done. By contrast, in societies where social personhood is defined by reference to fixed and hierarchically-related social categories, interacting individuals see themselves, and are seen by others, largely as representing their social categories. Transgressions may then involve discrepancy between one's own (perception of one's own) moral behaviour and the perception of others, and are more likely to elicit shame.[20] One response may then be to hide (see p. 87).

The anthropological evidence shows variations even more subtle than this. As one example, Geertz[21] described four of the many possible ways of

conceiving personhood and the self. In the West, the self is seen as a 'unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe … set contrastingly against other such wholes and against a social and natural background'. In Java, the self involves both a subjective, emotional realm and an external realm of observable behaviour, 'regarded not as functions of one another but as independent realms of being to be put in order independently'. In Bali individual characteristics are muted in favour of the individual's assigned place in the pageant of Balinese life. 'It is dramatis personae, not actors, that endure … Physically, men come and go, mere incidents in a happenstance of history'. And in Morocco individuals are named as belonging to a particular group, social categorization being pervasive, and yet are free to be an individual in whatever way the situation demands.

Though such distinctions are often seen as radically different ways of conceptualising the self, they can also be seen as differentially emphasizing distinctions between aspects of the self common to many cultures. As noted earlier (p. 36), more recent studies of the self-system in Europe and North America have used a distinction between the 'individual' or 'personal' self and the 'social' self.[22] Individual idiosyncrasies are contained within the former, giving considerable weight to personal autonomy and freedom; position in society is emphasized in the latter. This brings it close to the Moroccan conception. The Javanese self seems to correspond to the Western conception of private and public selves (social scientists have debated which is the 'real' self, the inner self of feelings and impulses or the public self of social roles and obligations).[23] The Balinese self corresponds to aspects of the social self, more specifically to the way in which we see the incumbents of roles in institutions. We shall meet all these aspects of the self in discussing the content of morality[24] and the conflicts that may arise in moral decision-making.

Resilience of the self-system and of the moral code

Since the moral code is assimilated into the self-system, it is not surprising to find parallels between the maintenance of consistency in the self-system and consistency in moral codes and the behaviour to which they are relevant.

Our knowledge about our selves is based on how we perceive others to perceive us – not, it will be noted, with how they *actually* perceive us but with how we *believe* that they do.[25] Partly for that reason, the salience of the various aspects of our self-concepts tends to differ somewhat according to the situation. Nevertheless, we are strongly influenced by a tendency to maintain 'congruency' between how we perceive ourselves (our self-system), how we perceive ourselves to be behaving, and how we perceive others to perceive us.[26] Now, if one's perception of one's own behaviour does not match one's self-image, one may change either one's behaviour, or how one perceives oneself to behave, or one's view of one's self. Any of these changes

could restore congruency. Lack of congruency may also arise if one's perception of how others perceive one's behaviour is at odds with how one behaves or sees oneself to be behaving. For instance, if an individual considers himself to be honest, perceives himself to be acting honestly, but hears others describe him as deceitful, he will experience incongruency. He will then be likely to attempt to adjust his perceived world to restore congruency. This might be achieved, for instance, by 'cognitive restructuring', that is by misperceiving what others say, or attending selectively to the one voice that confirms his honesty. Or, as another possibility, he might act in a way calculated to convince others of his honesty.

A related approach is provided by Steele,[27] who sees the self-system as explaining oneself, and the world, to oneself. These explanations maintain a phenomenal view of the self as competent, good, coherent, capable of free choice, and so on. Self-affirmation processes are set in train by information that threatens the perceived integrity or adequacy of the self. Integrity can be maintained by resolving the inconsistency: for instance, a smoker, confronted with the medical evidence, may give up smoking or dispute the evidence. However, as another alternative, he may engage in some activity that affirms his self-integrity but bears no relation to the issue – for instance, by supporting a valued cause, or spending more time with his children. The inconsistency would remain, of course, but would pose less of a threat because of the enhanced affirmation of the self's integrity.

Now, not only do we attempt to maintain congruency with the perceived opinion of others, we also try to maintain some degree of consistency between different aspects of our self-concepts, including our perceptions of our behaviour and our internalised values, and consistency in our self-concepts over time. This can be pictured in the terms of an influential approach to the development of early relationships, which postulates that young children construct 'internal working models', involving representations of the self and of important others and of their relationships with them.[28] This does not imply reification, but is a way of conceptualising the manner in which past experience influences action. As Bretherton puts it, 'salient aspects of the causal network of relations humans perceive in the course of interacting with the physical and social world must somehow be reproduced internally in order to create subsequent mental simulations'[29] and provide guides for future behaviour. Since some aspects of later relationships are much affected by the important relationships of early childhood, it is supposed that these early working models have considerable stability.[30] Their stability can be explained in part by the regulation of the perception of new experiences by a variety of 'defence mechanisms'. 'Defence mechanisms' are a way of accounting for the fact that we tend to reject or manipulate information incompatible with our current conceptions or, more importantly, that would cause us anxiety or suffering.[31]

These postulated 'internal working models' are compatible with the

'scripts' and 'schemata' postulated to account for other aspects of experience,[32] and can be seen as a major factor in how one sees oneself: that is, in one's self-concept. Because they include contextual information, the salience of one's different characteristics may alter with the situation, although one tends to see oneself as the same person in the different contexts: the defence mechanisms operate to maintain congruency between one's self-image and one's perception of one's current behaviour. For the same reason, one tends to see one's several relationships as having some similar qualities. Thus a difference between how an individual behaves to family members at home and to fellow employees at work, though conspicuous to a third party, is likely to be more muted to the individual him- or herself. Finally, and with special relevance to the present context, the internal working models will contain information about whether one's behaviour in different relationships induced approval or disapproval in others, and thus encapsulates a moral code. Insofar as the self-system contains information on relationships with others and moral precepts, or insofar as these are readily available to the self-system, its maintenance becomes equivalent to the maintenance of the world-view.

To summarize the preceding paragraphs, our social behaviour is guided in part by efforts to maintain congruency between our perception of our behaviour and our self-systems, including their incorporated moral codes; and much of our behaviour in relationships can be accounted for on the assumptions that our self-systems contain internal models of relationships which are:

(a) modifiable only with difficulty;
(b) basically similar in certain qualities across categories of relationships, in part because
(c) based on fundamental early models of important relationships in early childhood. In addition,
(d) one tends to see one's behaviour as more consistent across contexts than it really is.

Of course, one does behave differently according to whom one is with, but one sees oneself as the same person in different relationships and, while recognizing some differences in one's behaviour, one tends to underestimate them. We do apply different standards in different relationships, but we tend not to notice that we are doing so. And if we do notice, we are likely to feel disturbed by our inconsistency.

The properties of moral precepts are similar in these respects to those of the self-system as a whole. Thus:

(a) Modifications to morals are resisted: moral precepts are seen as absolute, not subject to change. (As we have seen, to some that is a matter of

the definition of morality). In a study in which individuals were asked how far a change in the various components of their identity (e.g. gender, nationality, morality, ideology, facial features) would make them different people, morality received the highest mark: the subjects felt that if they were to become less moral, they would to a large extent become different people.[33] Furthermore, moral responsibility requires two forms of consistency – between moral judgements and action ('Am I living up to my ideals?'), and consistency across partners ('Am I applying the same standards to my behaviour in dealing with A as I do with B?'). As Keller and Edelstein[34] put it: 'Unity across interactions as well as unity among thoughts and actions make for regularity and predictability of behavior, the basis for interacting. The traditional moral labels of reliability, dependability, and trustworthiness are attributes of consistency in moral transactions, and thus also of moral responsibility.'

Furthermore, when an individual catches himself acting in a way that conflicts with the moral precepts he holds, he is likely to become uncomfortable and find excuses and rationalizations. For instance, a friend justified himself for smuggling watches from South Africa to England during World War II by pointing out that watches were almost unobtainable in England at that time, and he was really doing a public service. Or actions may be justified by saying that other people do the same, by saying the action is preferable to less acceptable alternatives, or by denigrating anyone who suffers as a consequence of the action (see also Chapter 13 on conflicts).

(b) The precepts tend to be seen as ubiquitously applicable, and thus as applying equally to all other persons – though, as we have seen, not all individuals are seen as persons (also a matter of definition).

(c) As we shall see later, the precepts by which individuals attempt to guide their lives are seen as based on fundamental principles, and we shall suggest later that they are related to pan-cultural psychological characteristics. In any case, most are acquired or reinforced before one can remember, the most frequently cited example being 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by' – the so-called Golden Rule. Of course not all behaviour is guided by that particular principle. Some depend on other precepts, such as 'Maintain your integrity', 'Look after yourself, no one else will', 'Life is a competitive struggle', or 'Damn you Jack, I'm alright'. Such principles may also be acquired early in life, or they may be adopted in a deliberate rebellion against a group to which an individual sees him- (or her-) self as belonging against his will, as in a conscript army or an unfair society.

(d) Although people sometimes judge their actions by different criteria in different situations, they like to think that the values they hold are compatible one with another. When they are perceived not to be so,

defence mechanisms operate. Thus, those who see themselves as kind and generous to their fellow human beings and also support hunting argue that deer and foxes are chased by predators and do not suffer in the hunt because it is part of their nature, or that hunting has beneficial effects on the countryside, or even that the animals enjoy being chased. It is in part because the moral code of an individual is related to his or her total world-view, because it is seen as fundamental and as resistant to change, and because it is seen as internally consistent, that disagreements about moral issues tend to be difficult to resolve. That moral codes are not as internally consistent within individuals as they are perceived to be, or at least that their application varies across domains and contexts, are issues that we shall return to later.[35]

Summary

1 This chapter provides a brief discussion of the concept of the 'self-system'. The emphasis is on how individuals see themselves.
2 Information about many aspects of an individual's life, including moral precepts, is included in, or readily available to, the self-system. Thus many moral decisions do not require reflection.
3 The 'conscience' involves comparison between the moral precepts and values incorporated into the self-system and how one sees one's behaviour.
4 How individuals see themselves is related to the culture in which they live.
5 Both the moral code, and the self-system into which it is assimilated, are seen to involve consistency across situations and to be resistant to change.

II

WHERE DO MORAL PRECEPTS COME FROM?

In the previous chapter it was argued that moral precepts are best seen as embedded in, or readily available to, the self-system. We are now in a position to ask how it is that individuals come to see some things as good and others as bad. Since moral distinctions are much influenced by the culture in which individuals are reared and live, there are two distinct questions here. One is how cultural values are acquired by individuals, and the second why particular values are accepted in the culture. Chapter 6 is concerned with the development of morality in the individual. Chapters 7–11 are concerned with the relation of pan-cultural psychological propensities to moral codes and cultural values. Chapter 12 speculates about their historical elaboration.

6

ACQUISITION OF A 'MORAL SENSE' AND MORAL CODES

We have already argued that, since it is difficult to imagine a moral sense without content, we can focus attention on the question of how individuals come to see some actions as good and others as bad. On this view, what is called the 'moral sense', though dependent on pan-cultural propensities, emerges by generalization from particular instances (Chapter 3). Given that moral precepts as guides to action must lie in the heads of individuals, we now ask how they get there. As will become apparent, discussion of the 'acquisition' of morality here is not incompatible with the possibility of existing predispositions that facilitate its development.

How morality develops in the individual has become a major focus for research, and the extensive literature has recently been reviewed by a number of authors.[1] This chapter summarizes only a few points relevant to the present argument. But, as a caveat, it is important to remember that most research on moral development has involved studies of individuals in Western societies, and has been limited to the concept of morality employed by most psychologists, namely one involving justice, welfare of others and rights. That these are not the only issues with which moral codes are concerned will become apparent later (e.g. Chapters 9–11).

Furthermore, in discussing development it is important to be clear on the exact question one is asking. Is it a matter of whether children behave in accordance with societal moral standards; or of how they consider that they ought to behave; or of why they believe that people should behave in this way or that? Such issues may have different chronologies. As we shall see below, *behaviour* that accords with moral principles starts early, long before children could be said to have a moral sense. But early in life children's self-descriptions make no reference to moral goals or beliefs: the emerging self-system appears not to include moral precepts. And children may acquire *knowledge* about moral precepts without the motivation to accept the rules as binding on them. For instance, young children may know that keeping promises is an obligation, yet not apply this knowledge in interpreting a situation. Later they show evidence of having internalised moral standards, and

only later still (pre-adolescence) do most consciously regulate their actions in accordance with their obligations.[2]

One other preliminary point must be made. Moral development is inevitably discussed in terms of the acquisition of 'good' behaviour and 'good' values, with the implication that this is necessary to overcome intrinsic 'badness'. But many of the processes involved in moral development can also, given other circumstances and other relationships, lead to the acquisition of 'bad' behaviour and 'bad' values. As stressed repeatedly already, humans have propensities to develop both prosocial and selfishly assertive behaviour, and the processes involved are not all that different.

The self-system and the moral code

Moral development is to be seen not as the acquisition of a moral sense, as if that moral sense were something added on in the course of development; *rather it is intrinsic to the course of development.* Putting it another way, moral development is not limited to Sunday mornings, or to occasions when the parent explains to the child why what he/she has done is wrong: it goes on virtually all the time. And it is not limited to childhood, but continues throughout life. Moral development involves the incorporation of precepts into the self-system, so that behaving morally can occur spontaneously, without reflection. Ideally, moral behaviour then becomes how individuals *automatically* behave, and how they *want* to behave. In behaving in that way they realize their personal rights and freedoms and the necessary limitations on them. The completion of this process has been studied in a number of extraordinary individuals whose moral behaviour served as exemplars to many, like the civil rights worker mentioned previously, Virginia Durr. Such individuals had great certainty about the decisions that they made, as though morality were completely integrated into the self-system and personal motivations did not conflict with moral action. They also had a highly positive attitude to life.[3] Such findings, it will be noted, throw doubt on any definition of morality as *necessarily* involving intent, and imply that research into moral reasoning can tell us only part of the story (cf. pp. 50–1). It is still the case, of course, that many decisions do require rational consideration, even by such exceptional individuals.

Development involves an interplay between the selfish and the prosocial sides of the individual's nature, and between these and experience in the social world, leading to the construction of concepts of 'good' and 'bad' applied first to actions and then to the self and other individuals. Morality thus develops as part of, or in parallel with, the self-system.[4] Acquiring morality is not merely a matter of picking up a series of dos and don'ts: it is part of the development of the self in a particular cultural context. It is not merely a matter of learning not to do bad things, but also involves the realization and elaboration of pre-existing prosocial propensities.

Psychological predispositions

Young children show indications of behaviours that could be considered as morally good – sharing, care-giving, taking turns, sympathy, helping and cooperating, and obeying commands – from around one year old.[5] Soon after that age toddlers start to respond to the distress of others with attempted prosocial interventions.[6] Although these are often inappropriate, they suggest the existence of empathic responsiveness[7] to another's distress.[8] Such behaviour suggests that young children are predisposed to develop behaviour that we consider moral, but certainly does not indicate that they have a fully fledged moral capacity, and one must remember that they also show behaviour that could be considered as selfishly assertive. At most, such indications of morality should be regarded as proto-moral behaviour. How much they depend on parental or adult guidance or example is not entirely clear, but the evidence strongly suggests that young children are predisposed to learn to please their parents, when doing so does not conflict too much with their own interests. Early in their second year children look warily at an adult when they have spilled food or violated a sanctioned act.[9] At least for most of the time, young children like to help their parents,[10] to do what their parents tell them to do, and to imitate them. This is not so surprising when one considers the immediate responsiveness of many newborn mammals, such as wildebeest, to parental signals; in such species survival depends on the proximity of the parent, for when the parent moves, the young must follow or fall victim to predation. It is virtually certain that obedience to certain parental commands and parental proximity were equally important also in human evolution.[11]

Thus, far from a prosocial disposition being incompatible with the child's biological nature, the early appearance and probable ubiquity of prosocial propensities is in harmony with the view that they are in part derived from the child's biological heritage.[12] Twin studies suggest that a considerable proportion of the variance in a variety of forms of prosociality is accounted for by genetic factors,[13] though as yet we know little about how those genetic factors work. It could be, for example, that they operate by influencing the tendency to obey parental requests. And genetic influence certainly does not mean that experience has little importance: relationships with parents and others, and interaction between prosocial and selfishly assertive tendencies, in the environment provided for and created by the developing child, contribute to the formation of the self-system and to its moralistic content. Furthermore, cultures differ as to which types of behaviour are perceived positively or negatively, and as to the child-rearing practices that promote prosocial behaviour.[14] It may be suggested that the distinction between morals and conventions, emphasized especially by developmental psychologists (see pp. 7–8), arises from the dependence of the former on a propensity for prosociality in addition to parental and other social influences, while conventions arise solely from the latter.

Of course, one must not paint too rosy a picture: egoistic propensities are also present, often conflicting with prosocial tendencies, and parental example may augment either moral or immoral behaviour. But, crucial though social experience is, it builds on a propensity to acquire various types of prosocial behaviour, as well as the more generally recognized propensity to acquire various types of selfish and assertive behaviour. Children also show a propensity to become autonomous individuals[15] (see below); that, of course, may lead either to predominantly prosocial or predominantly antisocial behaviour.

Cognition and emotion in the development of moral behaviour

The display of prosocial behaviour and the capacities for internalising and acting on moral precepts require many basic aspects of cognitive and emotional development which will not be discussed here. They include the abilities to comprehend cause–effect relations; to use language; consciousness and self-consciousness; to interpret the behaviour of others in terms of intentions and related psychological processes ('theory of mind');[16] the ability to take the perspective of another, to empathize and sympathize;[17] the ability to control one's emotions appropriately; the capacity to internalise moral rules; and moral reasoning, including the ability to evaluate one's intended actions and to make moral choices.[18] The capacity for empathy and the ability to comprehend that the mental state of another individual is not the same as one's own are of course crucial. Each of these abilities has its own developmental course. For instance, two-year-olds understand that others have 'desires' but not beliefs: a full theory of mind does not develop before about the age of four.[19] It is reasonable to suppose that each of these abilities evolved by natural selection, but such abilities do not serve only moral behaviour. For instance, the ability to interpret the behaviour of others can facilitate exploiting them; perspective-taking also enables children to manipulate their parents and peers;[20] and rationality can be used for good or evil. Morality is at least partly based on abilities used also in immoral behaviour and, indeed, in other contexts. Thus, in most cases these abilities may well have been selected in evolution for their consequences in contexts other than those we now see as involving moral behaviour. In addition, each of these capacities has its own developmental history, and there are likely to be cultural differences in, for instance, the nature of emotional control or moral reasoning. Nevertheless each of these abilities is likely to be a pan-cultural human characteristic,[21] and is at best dubiously present in other species, except (in some cases) the great apes.[22]

While much of the research on moral development has emphasized cognitive processes, and that what behaviour is seen as 'good' and what 'bad' is largely a cognitive matter differing in detail between cultures, the part played by the emotions on moral development must certainly not be

neglected.[23] As discussed further below, emotional relationships with others are central to the development, and perhaps especially the early development, of morality. Of special importance for many types of moral behaviour, a form of emotional empathy is present in a rudimentary form soon after birth, as suggested by the way in which infants are disturbed by the sound of another infant's crying. Empathy is basic to sympathetic understanding of another individual and is thus an important mediator in prosocial behaviour.[24] Although the relations between measures of empathy and prosocial behaviour are inconsistent in children, perhaps because of the difficulties inherent in measuring empathy, or because the prosocial behaviour studied involved little cost,[25] stronger relations have been found in adults. In any case, in older individuals empathy is not the only issue involved in moral behaviour. Kagan[26] stressed also anxiety about punishment or disapproval, feelings of responsibility, shame and guilt, boredom and confusion, as well as the self-satisfaction that comes from doing the right thing, or moral rectitude.

However, given the nature of the self-system as discussed in Chapter 5, it is suggested here that the role of the emotions is mediated in part through congruency or lack of congruency (see pp. 39–40) between values previously internalised in the self-system and perceived action. If moral behaviour occurs as an automatic response to the situation, there may be little emotion. If reflection occurs, either the positive emotions associated with a 'good conscience', or guilt or shame, may be felt. If the reflection occurs before the action, and there is a discrepancy between internalised precepts and the intended action, emotion may inhibit or promote the action. It has also been suggested that anticipation of the emotions that would be felt if the child were to act antisocially contributes to the internalisation of the moral code;[27] presumably the reverse is also true, self-satisfaction consequential on parental approval also playing a role.

Relationships and moral development

Though maturational processes are essential,[28] relationships with parents or other care-givers, as well as siblings and peers, are major influences on moral development in the early years.[29] Much recent work has been concerned with the reciprocal interactions between parent and child: children interpret, evaluate, and internalise the behaviour of their parents (or other care-givers) to them, and in turn they influence parental behaviour[30] (Figure 2.1). The nature of the relationship affects both the extent and the direction of its influence. In general, children tend to emulate or comply with those whom they care about, but may act perversely with someone with whom they are (temporarily or more permanently) at cross-purposes. The child may assess the legitimacy of parental demands and reject the values of a rejecting parent.[31] A major issue is thus the formation of a

secure attachment relationship with a parent or parent figure, and that depends on parental sensitivity and affection.[32] This can facilitate the effectiveness of the parent as a 'secure base' and probably also as a role model.

If a parent threatens a child with withdrawal of love ('I will not love you if you do that'), the child comes to regard the parent as a less reliable source of parental care, and so may be less likely to carry out parental wishes in the future. By contrast, children (and adults) tend to like others who like them, and so are more responsive to a loving parent. In addition, parents who couple affection with appropriate control are almost by definition sensitively responsive, allowing the child scope to establish and maintain a sense of personal agency and to negotiate the scope of his/her personal rights.[33] Such parents point out to the child the consequences of his/her actions on others.

With preschool and older children parental control techniques have been categorized in diverse ways; but a number of studies indicate that the 'induction method' or 'authoritative parenting', which involves affection coupled with appropriate control by discussion and explanation of the reasons why certain behaviours are to be preferred over others, are more effective than strict discipline or withdrawal of love.[34] Parents use value words – wrong, unfair, selfish, and so on – in discussing the behaviour of their children, though the precise way in which they apply these judgements may differ between cultures, between parents, and between contexts. Many parents capitalize on the child's desire for self-esteem ('Good children don't do that'). Some studies have found that mothers use different techniques according to whether the issue concerns morals, conventions or personal rights: acts harming others were discussed in terms of needs and rights, while infringements of social conventions were met with references to social order and conformity.[35] In such ways parents and others serve as mediators, conveying cultural precepts (perhaps idiosyncratically interpreted) to the child.[36] In any case, there may be discussion over the extent to which the child has the right to make his or her own decisions, and over the limits of parental jurisdiction.[37] And some parents may seek to pass on not a rigid sense of rules but flexibility and initiative, so that the child may go beyond the parents' position.[38]

The process depends in subtle ways on the relations between the child's temperament and the parents' socialisation techniques.[39] Gentle disciplinary techniques are more effective for children who tend to be anxious. But it is not only what parents say that is important, but the way that they say it and the discourse that follows. *Children do not just assimilate what they are told, they actively construct their moral code on the basis of their experience*. And children are motivated by a desire for self-esteem as well as fear of punishment.

The precise role of authority has been a matter of some controversy. Early on, it seems that children have no clear notion of authority,[40] but, if contrary motivations are not too strong, they are happy to comply. Even

very young children seem to see acts harming others as intrinsically wrong, independently of parental authority. Soon, however, parental authority becomes important. At least from middle childhood, the authority of parents over moral and conventional issues is recognized. Later, although the authority of parents over fairness, welfare of others and justice over conventional issues is recognized, adult prescriptions for immoral acts are often disregarded.[41] There is thus a suggestion that children recognize, or come to recognize, moral precepts as independent of adult authority.

The interactions with parents will, of course, be influenced by the parents' expectations, themselves influenced by their cultural environment. Cultural differences can thus appear very early on.[42] As a further complication, the values a child acquires from a parent will be primarily those that the parent thinks should apply to the child, not those that they think should apply to themselves. While studies of moral development emphasize the conditions necessary for the development of morally good behaviour and precepts, it must not be forgotten that other conditions, and especially acrimonious family relationships and difficult social conditions, may lead to antisocial values and behaviour (see below, p. 54).

Conscience

Thus moral development involves a complex interweaving between diverse processes, including initial predispositions to show prosocial behaviour and to respond empathically to others, the acquisition of standards of behaviour from observing and discussing the responses of parents and others to the child's own actions, and modelling how parents and others behave themselves. Between the second and third birthdays children develop an appreciation of the symbolic categories 'good' and 'bad', which are then applied to their own actions, thoughts and feelings. When the child perceives his or her own behaviour to coincide with the previously acquired standard of 'good', he or she experiences an 'emotionally tinged intuition' that Kagan[43] describes as the 'pleasure of virtue'. Kagan regards the desire to experience the self as 'ethically worthy' as a human universal and is at pains to emphasize the difference between sensory pleasure and virtue, arguing that the affirmation of virtue takes precedence over sensory pleasure most of every day. The early emergence of a 'moral sense' is signalled by indications that the child recognizes that some actions are good and others bad, often by looking towards the parent with an appropriate expression.

This process is often spoken of as involving the development of a 'conscience' that forms part of the self-concept and serves as an internal regulator, keeping behaviour in line with societal values, norms and rules. *As argued above* (p. 36)*, moral judgement depends on comparisons between values incorporated in the self-system and observed or intended action: having a 'good conscience' implies the maintenance of congruency* (pp. 39–40). The

conscience embraces all 'oughts' – even failure to abide by conventions may evoke 'twinges of conscience'. Indeed, the incorporation of the sense of good and bad into the self-system has widespread consequences on virtually all aspects of behaviour. It affects not only the moral dilemmas discussed by philosophers, but perceptions, motivations, attitudes and styles of behaving. It may even affect bodily posture. But the conscience is not to be seen as an unchallengeable censor on action. Also embedded in the self-system, or readily available to it, are other aspects of the individual's relationships and world-view which also may affect moral decisions (Chapter 13).

Other relationships

Parents and other so-called authority figures are by no means the only influence on moral development. As development proceeds, individuals' characteristics interact continually with their social experience to form and transform their moral goals.[44] Of special importance are interactions with siblings, because they are frequently present and involved in both positive and negative interactions,[45] and peers, because they are of comparable age and status.[46] Interactions with peers can be reciprocal, unlike the complementarity of parent–child relationships, and perspective-taking[47] is facilitated. Discourse with peers provides a means for obtaining validation, by agreement with another, of the precepts being acquired. Furthermore, individuals tend to reinforce their own moral outlook by associating with others who share it. Studies of moral development in peer groups has shown that positive interactions between them lead to advances in moral reasoning, which may result in the joint discovery of new moral goals. In four-year-olds the group situation led to sharing on the basis of equal shares; in older children it sometimes led to other principles of justice (see pp. 164–6). Studies of the development of rule-based games indicate the importance of negotiation in settling disputes.[48]

Perhaps it is as well to emphasize again that development may involve progression towards morality or towards immorality, depending on experience. Some parents encourage selfish assertiveness more than prosocial behaviour. Similarly, some environments will encourage predominance of prosociality, others of antisocial behaviour. And these effects may be quite subtle. Individuals living in a small community, in which reciprocal exchanges with others known to be honest are frequently possible, are more likely to learn that honesty pays than those living in a group so large that they never meet the same person twice. In addition, the moral system may be affected by experience in specific areas – for instance, in medical students by medical discourse, or in army recruits by the military atmosphere. And, apart from interactions with others, the narratives of the culture may be an important source of information about moral issues. Of course, all the time such processes are influenced also by both prosocial and selfishly assertive

dispositions: what is internalised may differ according to the nature of the individual. Possible differences between males and females are discussed later (Chapter 10).

Thus the child's construction of a moral world is not a mere matter of receiving instruction from others. Vygotskian copying of what the parent is already demonstrating is important, and probably more important than parental reward or punishment, but in either case the effect is mediated by the nature of the relationship involved. Emotional responses play a critical role. The child is an active agent, assimilating experience from parents, other authority figures, siblings, peers and others in constructing his or her moral code.[49] Through interaction with both parents and peers children discover not only what they should and should not do, but also what may legitimately be done; their own rights, as well as those of others.[50] And just as the salience of different aspects of our self-concepts differ according to the situation (p. 36), so the precepts, conventions and values that we see as applying in one social context may not necessarily be those that we see to apply in another: our judgements reflect different domains of social knowledge.[51]

Moral reasoning and moral dilemmas

Much of the classical work on moral development has been concerned not with the content of moral codes but with the nature of the moral reasoning used by a subject in discussing stories posing moral dilemmas.[52] In Kohlberg's scheme, three major levels, subdivided into six or seven stages characterized by patterns of thought, were defined. At the 'preconventional level', societal rules and conventions are regarded as external to the self: motivation is primarily one of self-interest. At the 'conventional level', supposedly reached at around the age of nine in most individuals, the rules are internalised, but seen as specific to individuals in particular relationships or to the family or social group: self-interest may be subordinated to the good of the relationship or group. At the 'post-conventional level' the rules are seen as depending on underlying moral principles, with the individual to some extent choosing his own moral principles. At this last level, reached by only some adults, morals (in a narrow sense) are distinguished from laws, and the primacy of morals recognized. The point here is the emphasis of Kohlberg's scheme on the internalization of moral principles and precepts. On other issues it has come in for considerable criticism – for instance, because of its emphasis on justice and neglect of caring (p. 109) – and because the ages at which these forms of moral reasoning are shown depend on contextual factors, children appearing to be more morally advanced in naturalistic observations at home than in tests in school. In any case, since testing involves commenting on stories in which the subjects themselves are not involved, it does not predict the incidence of moral choices in real life.

Of course, any method for assessing moral development along a single

scale is likely to neglect complexity. One study (in a Western culture) used a very different approach to moral development by assessing children's attributions of emotion to hypothetical wrongdoers; whether they gave higher importance to moral norm-conformity or to need-fulfilment was taken as a measure of their moral motivation. About a quarter of four- to five-year-olds, and half six- to seven-year-olds expected wrongdoers to feel bad as a result of having transgressed.[53]

In any case, the ability for moral reasoning is only part of the issue. It is one thing to have moral understanding, another to put it into practice. Rationalization, 'making others wrong' and self-deception may be used to justify egoistic choices in moral situations,[54] and moral solutions are more likely when the costs imposed on the actor are small.[55]

Constituent processes – some dilemmas

We have seen that even one-year-olds may show behaviour that conforms to moral norms. But that certainly does not mean that they have a fully developed moral sense, nor that the psychological processes are the same as those operating in adult moral behaviour. The following paragraphs illustrate some of the further complexities arising during moral development.

In the first place, moral development is neither smooth nor continuous. For example, as noted above, in Western societies virtually all infants of eighteen months show a sort of proto-prosocial behaviour by offering and giving objects to others, but their tendency to do so seems to decline as they move into childhood. And two- to three-year-olds show increasing aggression, destructiveness and 'pushing limits'.[56] These data contrast with the finding that children in general tend to become more 'moral' with age.[57] So what is the meaning of this age-change? If 'moral' is to be equated with prosocial or generous here, do children become in some sense less generous in this particular way? Does their sense of possessiveness increase? Or do the objects used in the experiments lose their meaning – for instance, because of an increased emphasis on novelty? Many possibilities are open.

Second, it is claimed that the moral orientations that develop may differ somewhat between the sexes. This is discussed in Chapter 10.

Third, acquiring knowledge of what is and is not permissible is a different matter from learning why they are or are not permissible. Dunn *et al.*[58] assessed separately the views of four-year-olds on the permissibility of social transgressions and the manner in which they justified their views. The children were asked whether three social transgressions (involving name-calling, taking a toy from a friend, and excluding a friend from play) were permissible and whether they were justified. The mean scores indicated that nearly a third of the transgressions were seen as justified. The children's views on the permissibility of actions towards friends were not linked to their justifications in terms of their reflections on the inner state, welfare or

interpersonal relationships of the victim or the violator. The authors suggest that views on the permissibility of transgressions reflect 'automatic' responses to learned rules, while justifications reflect their sensibilities about feelings and relationships. In harmony with this, views on permissibility were related to the children's social/educational background, while their justifications with respect to feelings, relationships and welfare were correlated with their understanding of their own emotions and those of others. Interestingly, in harmony with the views of Gilligan (see p. 109) on gender differences, girls were more likely to provide justifications that took account of interpersonal issues than were boys.

Behavioural autonomy

An issue of special interest in the current context concerns differentiation between matters over which the individual feels he or she should have personal control and those that involve others. As noted earlier, some developmental psychologists see cognitive development as involving three domains: moral (concerned with justice, welfare, and rights), societal (concerned with social organization), and psychological (emotional issues, motivations, the self). Within the psychological domain are concepts of behavioural autonomy tied to notions of selfhood and personal identity. These personal issues concern actions considered by the individual to be outside justifiable social regulation by others, and can be seen as resulting from the (not necessarily immoral) propensity for selfish assertiveness. For example, many children come to feel that they should be allowed to decide when they go to bed, what they want to eat, and what games they play – and much parent–child interaction involves negotiation over such matters. Here lies a frequent source of family friction: for instance, does a parent have the right to insist on the tidiness of an adolescent's bedroom?[59] Recognition of the child's right to make some decisions for him- or herself implies that he/she is an agent with autonomy and individuality.

As the child develops, understanding of personal matters is related to his/her conceptions of the self and the person. Nucci and Lee[60] list five levels in development that focus on the importance of control over personal matters for establishing and maintaining the self and personal autonomy. These levels range from the establishment of clear distinctions between self and others, through a view of freedom within the personal domain as essential for establishing oneself as an individual and realizing one's potential, to viewing the self as a labile, multifaceted evolving product of one's decisions within the personal domain. A degree of freedom comes to be seen as a necessary good for maintaining agency and uniqueness. Subsequently the concept of reciprocity may transform personal freedoms into mutually shared moral obligations.

Emphasis on autonomy may lead to the perception that doing one's own

thing, maintaining one's integrity, is an overriding concern. As discussed in Chapter 13, this is an important issue in many moral conflicts.

Finally, the studies of exemplary individuals referred to above reveal that they had had an openness to new experiences that enabled them to develop new moral goals and new ways for achieving them. This, however, had not been a one-way process: the social influences to which the individual had been exposed were often largely chosen by that individual. The result was the incorporation of those goals into the self-system, so that such individuals came to see themselves in terms of their moral goals and their behaviour came to be motivated by them.

Variations in experience

Before leaving the question of the development of morality in the individual, it may be appropriate to stress again the range of experiences to which individuals are subjected. Within European and North American cultures, the evidence that authoritative parenting practices yield what we see as the socially and morally best outcomes is now substantial (see p. 52). But a considerable proportion of parents do not rear their children in that way. Why should that be the case? Why are some parents insensitive, punitive, even abusive? The proximate answer usually given is that the causes of variation in parental behaviour lie in their own experience, and especially in the way in which they were brought up in their own childhoods. Evidence supporting this view comes from cross-generational studies of child-rearing: for instance, negative personality characteristics are associated with non-optimal parenting, and thus with the development of non-optimal characteristics in the next generation.[61] Further evidence comes from the ways in which mothers describe their own childhoods. Mothers who are able to answer questions about their childhood experiences in a coherent and open way, showing reflection and appreciation of the emotions involved, tend to have secure children.[62] Mothers unable to reply in this way tend to have less well-adjusted children, the quality of the children's adjustment being related in an orderly manner to their mothers' style of responding when describing their own childhoods. But that still leaves open the ultimate question of how it has come about that human nature is such that some parents do not bring up their children in what seems to us to be the preferable style of parenting. Is parental experience alone a full explanation? We shall return to this question in Chapter 12.

Beyond that, it must be remembered that the great bulk of all this research deals with Europe and North America. But parental practices and moral codes differ between cultures, perhaps in accordance with culturally prescribed values. Things are different elsewhere. One example, contrasting USA with Indian families, was cited on pp. 31–2. As another, Humphrey's[63] description of Mongolian culture serves as a warning, as some aspects of

the moral roles tend to be individually constructed or selected, and may thus be neither universal nor consistent between individuals. While the Mongols do have 'rules of order, reason and custom', presumably acquired in the same sort of ways as have been studied in the West, emphasis is placed on the cultivation of the self as a moral subject in relation to individually chosen ideals. This involves not the affirmation of culturally accepted ways of life, but judging whether one's actions are good or bad *for oneself*. Individuals choose their own exemplars, everyone having one or more 'teachers' who are held to have perfected an admired quality. The exemplar is constituted by the sayings and actions of the teacher, and given meaning by the subject in the context of his or her own predicament. The teacher(s) is/are chosen individually by the subject, who is already seen as a moral person, but who may spend years in discovering and cultivating himself in the search; the selection depends on the subject's sense of moral self-worth. The household has a special space where representations of the teacher are placed. Since moral exemplars may be unique to their subjects, they are not necessarily consistent with one another or coherent with regard to society as a whole. Conflict between moral ideals is inevitable, and it is recognized that acceptance of one way of life necessarily involves the neglect of other possibilities. Perhaps the important issue is that there is 'a social space for deliberation about ways of life, amid the pressures that circumscribe the instantiation of personal ideals' (p. 25). That the deliberations are based on the same principles as apply elsewhere seems probable, but is as yet undocumented.

Summary

This chapter is concerned with the development of morality in the individual.

1 Moral development involves incorporation of precepts into the self-system. Deliberate consideration of the issues is unnecessary for many moral choices.
2 Very young children show prosocial behaviour, but this does not necessarily indicate possession of a moral sense.
3 Both cognitive and emotional processes are important for morality.
4 Relationships with others, especially parents, play an essential role in moral development. For much of the time children like to please their parents, who can be an important source of values. Much depends on the nature of the parent–child relationship. Different circumstances, and relationships of different quality, may lead to the development of predominantly antisocial behaviour.
5 The conscience involves comparison between internalised standards and actual or intended behaviour.

6 Siblings, who necessarily figure importantly in the child's world, and peers, who are of comparable status to the child, are also important in moral development.
7 Acquiring moral knowledge is a different matter from learning about the justification of actions. Much previous research concerns the acquisition of styles of moral reasoning.
8 Related to the development of a moral sensitivity is the development of autonomy and the recognition of rights.
9 The development of morality may differ in some respects between cultures.

7

SOURCES OF MORAL PRECEPTS: RELATIONS WITH KIN

The psychological processes involved in the acquisition of moral precepts by individuals, sketched in the last chapter, are of obvious practical and educational importance. The next six chapters take us, as it were, one step back, asking about their ultimate origins. This chapter and the next focus on the principles underlying those aspects of moral codes most often discussed by philosophers and psychologists – prosocial behaviour, reciprocity, cooperation, and justice. Chapters 9–11 will be concerned with the bases of other aspects of moral codes, and Chapter 12 with how moral codes develop in societies and come to differ to a greater or lesser extent between them.[1]

There have been many attempts to find a basis for a universal moral code that does not depend on revelation by a transcendent being and is logically consistent. Here the discussion will lead to the conclusion that moral codes have a limited number of bases that lie ultimately in 'human nature' (see pp. 14–17). It is argued that basic propensities and predispositions, through the mutual influences between what people do and what they are supposed to do within and across generations (Figure 2.1), give rise to moral precepts. The resulting moral codes are neither human universals, nor entirely relative to particular cultures, but limits to their diversity are set by the properties of human minds and by the requirement that they should be conducive to, or compatible with, a viable society.

It is worthwhile bearing in mind that each individual tends to have views about how others should behave that differ somewhat from his views about how he should behave himself. Some people are harder on themselves than on others, but for what is probably the majority, one's tendency to behave prosocially to others will be diminished by the need to achieve one's own goals, while one's inclination to feel that others should behave prosocially to oneself will be enhanced by one's own needs. Partly for that reason, we find it easy to justify our own behaviour to ourselves when we would not tolerate similar behaviour in others. In spite of this, there tends to be collective agreement about how others should behave – that is, about the moral precepts appropriate to the society. As we have seen, these become incorporated into the self-concepts of individuals.

Precepts that concern relations with kin seem to stem directly from biological principles, and it is convenient to start with them.

Relations between parents and children

One of the most ubiquitous aspects of human social behaviour, and one that we take for granted, concerns how people feel towards other members of their family. Human parents strive to ensure the successful development of their children. Children usually respect their parents. There are countless instances of individuals caring for or helping their siblings, often at considerable cost to themselves. Indeed, although the composition of the family varies widely across cultures, such special relationships are part of the moral code in nearly all, and probably in all. Parents *ought to* ensure the successful development of their children. Children *should* honour their parents. It is proper that one *should* look after other members of one's family. Indeed, that parents do and should look after their children is such a commonplace that we seldom think of it as involving a moral precept – we see it as 'natural'. But, faced with a case of parental neglect, we are immediately prone to feel moral indignation.

Such moral precepts are in keeping with the mode of action of natural selection. Natural selection operates to ensure that individuals act in a way that maximises their lifetime reproductive success and that of their close relatives. The genes of those individuals who leave the most offspring will be best represented in the next generation. In looking after their children, parents are ensuring the survival of individuals who are also likely in turn to behave similarly to their children.[2] Natural selection thus ensures that parents make some sacrifice for the sake of their children (and, to a more limited extent, that individuals make some sacrifice for relatives who are likely to carry the same genes[3]). This, of course, is not a peculiarity of our own species: it must be true of all species. Even those that do not look after their offspring once the eggs are laid must deplete their own resources to create the fertilized eggs.

Since, in a sexually reproducing species, each offspring acquires half its genes from each parent, it will be in the biological interests of each parent to look after its offspring if the biological benefit to the offspring is more than twice the cost to the parent – cost and benefit being assessed in terms of their probable effects on long-term reproductive success.[4] Of course, the reverse, though less obvious, is also true: it will be in the biological interests of a child to look after his or her parents if they are likely to produce siblings, because, assuming a monogamous parental relationship, such siblings also will share half their genes with the child. However here there are a number of additional complications. First, it is in the interests of children to behave appropriately to their parents also because they thereby ensure the maintenance of parental care. This will include both offering the

stimuli that elicit parental care as babies and behaving in ways that the parents consider appropriate to their age as they get older. Second, parents may further the reproductive interests of the child by acting as grandparents, helping to care for their children's children: this provides an additional practical reason why it is in the interests of children to look after their parents. Third, moral codes are formalized by adults, and parents are instrumental in passing them on, and it is in their immediate interests to induce their children to respect them. Thus, for example, the Judaeo-Christian Ten Commandments contain an injunction for children to 'honour' their parents, but does not mention the reverse – though presumably it was assumed. Fourth, a child (within a certain age-range) is likely to have greater reproductive potential than an ageing parent. It would therefore cost a child more (in terms of the perpetuation of genes) to sacrifice his or her life (to take an extreme case) to save that of a parent than *vice versa*. This consideration acts against the child's tendency to care for the parent, its magnitude depending on their respective life-stages.

Some will say that of course parents look after their children: they like to do so. The point being made is that their parental desire is in line with the requirements for successful reproduction. That the immediate or 'proximate'[5] causes of parental motivation are in line with the 'ultimate' desideratum of successful reproduction can be presumed to be a consequence of natural selection. The moral requirement that parents ought to care for their children involves the reification into a precept of what most people do (see Chapter 12).

However, both theoretical and empirical data indicate that there is a limit to the extent to which parents are prepared to make sacrifices: a limit which also stems from biology but is usually not inscribed in moral codes. It is in the biological interests of parents to incur costs for the sake of their children, but only *so long as* doing so does not overly impair their own prospects for further reproduction. But, as children develop, they come to demand more and more parental resources until they demand more than the parent is prepared to give.[6] As children get older, parents become less willing to cater to their every whim. And indeed, although it is seldom made explicit, most people do feel that there is something not quite right when children remain dependent on their parents if they could be independent.

In harmony with the same biological principle, the parent/child relationship can become fraught with difficulty when a sibling arrives, because the later-born must have priority in many aspects of parental care, and the elder sibling perceives the diminution in parental attention. The biological principle that parental care is limited by the costs (in terms of potential further reproduction) is also in keeping with the care lavished on a last-born, for the parent need not then conserve resources for a later-born.

Cultural practices seemingly contrary to the biological model

Contraception

At this point it should be noted that some cultural practices seem, at least at first sight, to be contrary to the predictions of the biological model. Most obviously, contraceptive practices might seem not to maximize reproductive success. However that is not necessarily the case, because it must always have been necessary to find a balance between ensuring the welfare of children already born and further conceptions. In many societies, prolonged lactation helped to space out births;[7] post-partum sex taboos often facilitated this. Since an individual may leave more descendants in the long run by devoting resources to a few children than by spreading them over a larger number, one can speculate that at least some of these practices may have been in line with the biological desideratum of long-term reproductive success. But, of course, such considerations do not apply to all uses of contraception. In the modern industrial world, most adults produce far fewer children than they could. A number of proximate factors have contributed to this, including economic considerations, laws governing the inheritance of property, women's desire for greater autonomy, and the wish of parents to pursue a life-style bringing satisfactions other than, or in addition to, those provided by children.

Perhaps an aside that illustrates a further point is permissible here. There are those who feel uncomfortable with references to satisfactions unconnected with family life or the rearing of children, perhaps because they feel that not to reproduce is selfish. That, of course, involves a confusion between biological desiderata and morality, between the reproductive success of the individual and his/her well-being and that of the wider community. It cannot be too strongly emphasized that, although the sources of morality lie in human nature, *that does not mean that what is natural is good*. Indeed, now that the world is clearly seen as becoming overpopulated, many see more than minimal reproductive success as morally wrong. But the tendency to feel uncomfortable seems to indicate a tendency, based in nature or nurture or both, to approve of having children.

Infanticide and child abuse

Another group of practices that would seem to reduce reproductive success includes infanticide, child abuse, and child neglect. Common in some non-human primate species, infanticide occurs more frequently in humans than many realize.[8] The contexts in which it occurs are of four main types. First, in earlier civilizations and in tribal societies, men who captured women might kill the women's children. This had the consequence of preventing the woman expending resources on her children and, if she were lactating, ensuring her reproductive availability to the captor. The practice was thus in the reproductive interests of the captor. Again, and lest there should be

any misunderstanding, in this and other cases the fact that an action is in line with an individual's reproductive requirements does not mean that it does not have more immediate causes. The captor might feel that the woman's children occupied too much of her attention, or were unnecessary mouths to feed.

Second, infanticide has been used as a means to control family size. Though not common, this was apparently at one time the practice in parts of China to avoid the payment of a poll tax. In addition, cultural practices or ecological conditions may make children of one sex more desirable than the other: newborns of the less-preferred sex may then be killed. At various times there have been preferred family sizes in China. In the eleventh century in one part of China the ideal was two boys and a girl, and any born after that were killed.[9] In the late Imperial era, abortion was legal even though, in a Buddhist's eyes, it was a sin. Recently the authorities in the People's Republic of China have attempted to limit couples to one child. Couples apparently prefer that an only child should be a boy – at any rate the sex ratio amongst children is strongly biased in favour of boys, presumably as a result of female abortion or infanticide.[10] This can be understood on cultural grounds: China is a patrilineal and patriarchal society. But it also makes biological sense, for the following reason. In all mammals the variance in male reproductive success is on average greater than that of females, because males are limited only by the number of females they fertilize, while the requirements of pregnancy and lactation force females to space births or litters. Males therefore compete for females and vary greatly in their reproductive success, so that success in male–male competition has more effect on male reproductive success than success in female–female competition has for females. Chinese parents who are forced to concentrate their resources on one child may therefore do better to rear a healthy boy than a healthy girl – until, of course, the sex ratio is skewed too far in favour of boys. The long-term social consequences of forced family limitation remain to be seen.

Third, mothers who are undernourished or severely disadvantaged in some way, or who anticipate the shame and social ostracism of having an illegitimate child, may abort or kill their children. A variety of personal, social and economic factors that affect the probability that a mother can rear a child successfully are related to the probability of child abuse and neglect. And children who are themselves undernourished or handicapped may be killed or abandoned by their mothers. In some cases this practice may be institutionalised: thus in the Ch'in state (China, 221–206 BCE) parents were allowed to kill a deformed child, but infanticide to limit family size was not condoned.[11] In recent years impoverished mothers in Brazilian shanty-towns sometimes abandon their infants without being punished for doing so.[12] While the hardship of young, impoverished unmarried mothers might well call for compassion, in early modern Germany pregnancy outside marriage was regarded as heinous and unnatural, and was often punished by

execution.[13] Again, there are many possible pragmatic reasons why disadvantaged mothers should kill their children in such circumstances, but it also fits a Darwinian model: the costs to the mother of continuing to rear the child, assessed in terms of her ability to bear children in the future, may not be matched by the probability of successfully rearing a child with reasonable reproductive potential itself.

Modern industrial societies provide the fourth context for infanticide and child abuse, where it is predominantly due to the action of step-parents. For Canadian children up to preschool age, the risk of being abused or killed is forty or more times greater for children living with a step-parent than for children living with two biological parents.[14] This also fits an evolutionary model: in Western societies a step-parent is usually not related genetically to the child, and so feels less parental involvement. This principle does not apply only to the extreme case of infanticide. A study of white, middle-class families with adolescent step-children in the USA showed that parents, including fathers, were more involved in the care of their own children than step-children, and that conflicts about child-rearing were greater if the father was a step-father.[15] In these last cases, the incidence of abuse or infanticide is in harmony with the view that a parent is more disposed to care for children who have the reproductive potential to perpetuate the parent's genes. This step-children, being unrelated, cannot do. Thus there is no suggestion that the parent's tendency to maximize reproductive success is the only issue in these cases, nor that infanticide is adaptive, only that its incidence serves as an index of parental motivation, which is itself related to the prospect of successful reproduction.[16]

In harmony with the same principle, children with congenital abnormalities are less likely to reproduce, and are also at risk for abuse; and natural parents are less likely to abuse children as the children get older, and their reproductive potential increases. In addition, the incidence of infanticide varies with the parents' prospects for future reproduction: younger women, who have greater expectations of reproducing again in the future, are more likely to commit infanticide than older women.[17]

Of course, many step-parents show a great deal of parental care to their step-children. One factor conducive to this may be the desire to maintain a good relationship with the child's biological parent,[18] which may both have proximate causes and be in the reproductive interests of the step-parent. But the fact that step-parents do care for step-children indicates also that parental motivation operates even when it does not lead towards its normal biological consequence of passing on parental genes.

Adoption

A third cultural practice that seems biologically counter-intuitive is adoption. This also has been much more prevalent than is often recognized, and

is institutionalised in some societies. An earlier anthropological view held that the incidence of adoption undermined the biological concept of kin selection, for why should parents expend resources in rearing children who are not their own? However, in a high proportion of cases, the adoptive parents are biologically related to the adoptee. For instance, a detailed study of data from Oceania[19] showed that adoption there occurred almost exclusively among close relatives. In addition, the natal children tended to form alliances against their adopted siblings, and the adoptive parents tended to favour their biological children when apportioning land – in each case in accordance with biological principles. And adoption does not necessarily mean a severance of ties with the biological parents: often contact is maintained. A study on Langkawi Island (Malaysia)[20] found that about a quarter of the children lived away from their biological parents. In many cases fostering was by close kin and resulted from there being too many children in the adoptee's family. Where children lived with non-kin or distant kin, fostering had nearly always been precipitated by the death or divorce of the biological parents, and brought some prestige to the fosterer.

However adoption by non-kin is common in some societies, and social motherhood may be considered as more important than biological motherhood.[21] Amongst the Inupiat of north-west Alaska adoption is common: the couple who bring up the child usually know the biological parents and are often, but not necessarily, kin. The adoptive parents are regarded as the 'real' parents, but children often maintain relationships with both real and adoptive kin.[22] In late Imperial China wives would sometimes take over the children of concubines, and would then be regarded as the real mother.[23]

An important study of adoption suggests that this diversity in patterns of adoption is not just a matter of chance.[24] Goody points out that parenthood is not a unitary role, but involves biological, nurturant, training, sponsorship, and jural roles, and has both biological and social aspects. In west Africa adoption is not necessarily permanent, and is best described as fostering. In a relatively small area there are societies that foster only with genetic kin, societies that foster with non-kin, and societies that do not foster, all living in broadly similar ecological environments. In the first category, the Gonja regard fostering as a way of reinforcing kin links. The relatives of both biological parents have rights over the child, and siblings of both parents are seen as 'owning' the child. Fostering is also a way of allocating care for the children of broken marriages. Claims to economic and political resources arise from kinship fostering and reinforce those based on kinship alone.

Such fostering with kin tends to occur in societies where key resources are dispersed spatially and socially. This tends to be in smallish kingdoms in which people are differentiated politically and economically, and kin are dispersed. Societies that do not foster have political roles and economic resources vested in localized separate descent groups. Fostering with non-kin

occurs in large kingdoms with complex politics and economics. It resembles a form of apprenticeship, sons being sent away to learn new skills and establish clientship links with a mentor. Thus the extent and nature of the fostering is linked to the socio-political nature of the society.

In industrial societies these tendencies are much attenuated, perhaps because kinship is a less prominent organizing principle in society. Nevertheless the demand for adoptive children tends to outstrip the supply and must be ascribed to the strong biological desire for rearing children experienced by many adults. And the influence of genetic relatedness is still present: even in industrialized societies many adopted children subsequently seek out their biological parents, and biological parents are often eager to know their adopted children.[25]

In summary, while contraception, infanticide, and adoption all seem contrary to the biological expectation that individuals strive to maximize their reproductive success, there is evidence that the hand of natural selection is present in all three practices, though it may be less obvious in the industrialised West.

It is important to be clear about the role of natural selection in such cases. The data are in harmony with the view that the strength of parental motivation is related to the extent to which parental behaviour is likely to favour long-term reproductive success. However, other personal or social factors also influence action. To take the case of child abuse, if a child living with a step-parent is over forty times more likely to suffer abuse than one living with its natural parents, that is a fact that needs explanation. It fits with the biological prediction that step-parents are likely to be less securely bonded to their step-children than natural parents are to their own children. Aggressive feelings are therefore less inhibited by parental motivation in step-parents than in natural parents. But many other factors enter in. One step-parent may be more prone to violence than another because of previous experience, because of current frustration, because he has other calls on his resources, and so on. These same factors may affect the behaviour of natural parents – though with them parental affection nearly always predominates.

Other kin relationships

So far we have considered only the parent/child relationship, but an individual who behaves prosocially also has other relatives who also are likely to behave prosocially. If he (or she) helps one of them, he will be contributing to the survival and reproduction of an individual carrying mostly the same genes as he does, and thus favouring the survival of genes identical with his own. In addition, as we shall see (Chapter 8), an individual who helps others is more likely to receive help in return.

In the parent/child case, an act may be to the reproductive advantage of one partner of the relationship when its cost is less than half its benefit to the other. A similar arithmetic applies to full siblings, who similarly share half their genes with each other. With more distant relatives the issue depends on the degree of relatedness.[26] An act may be advantageous to an actor in perpetuating genes identical to his own if the cost is one-quarter of the benefit to a grandchild, niece or nephew, one eighth to a cousin, and so on (assuming monogamy and no inbreeding). A number of aspects of human behaviour are in keeping with this principle of 'kin selection', the parent/child relationship being a special case. Thus in both industrial and pre-industrial societies individuals do tend to help kin more than non-kin,[27] and close kin more than distant kin. In north America, at least, people are more attached to relatives than to step-relatives.[28] Furthermore, prosocial tendencies may generalize beyond relatives to others who are recognized as familiar or as belonging to the same group. In an experimental study requiring subjects to indicate which individuals they would choose to save in a disaster, respondents in both the USA and Taiwan chose to save not only kin in preference to non-kin but also friends in preference to strangers.[29] This raises the question of in-group preferences, which is discussed on pp. 128–9.

Such studies show that both aspects of the differences in the ways in which individuals *actually* behave to relatives versus non-relatives, and moral precepts concerning how individuals *should* behave to relatives versus non-relatives, are in keeping with the principles of natural selection. This, of course, is only a correlation, but it is reasonable to suppose that the moral precepts have been elaborated in accordance with the biological propensities. To take an imaginary extreme example, any attempt to make infanticide compulsory for all parents would be incompatible with such propensities and would be likely to fail. That trivial acts of kindness to relatives, which must have an altogether negligible effect on the survival and reproduction of either party, could be the result of natural selection may seem improbable, but the point at issue is the general question of why people tend to show prosocial behaviour more to relatives than to non-relatives, not whether particular instances are biologically adaptive. A tendency to behave prosocially to relatives may find expression in trivial acts as well as in major sacrifices.[30] In addition, quite apart from promoting the perpetuity of the genes of the individual showing the prosocial behaviour, such acts may bring more immediate benefits in ensuring bonding and cementing relationships that may be valuable to both parties in the future. They are more likely to do so with relatives than with non-relatives, and relatives will be more likely to reciprocate.

There are also considerable differences in the ways in which this basic principle is applied in precepts in different societies, and even within societies. For instance, in some societies special responsibilities adhere to the relationships between an individual and his or her mother's brother:

interestingly, the biological relationship with the mother's brother is genetically less close but could be more certain than that with the ostensible father. In other cases distinctions with social but no immediate genetic significance may be made. For understanding these, it is important to remember that a tendency to behave prosocially to kin must depend on an ability to recognize kin. The biological propensity must therefore concern prosocial behaviour to individuals *perceived to be* related, even though they may not actually be so. There may be a pragmatic significance in cultural conventions concerning which individuals are perceived as kin. For instance, some societies distinguish parallel cousins (where the cousin is the father's brother's or mother's sister's child) from cross cousins (the father's sister's or mother's brother's child). Although the degree of genetic relatedness is similar in both cases,[31] the distinction is important in patrilineal or matrilineal societies because cross cousins may be deemed to belong to another group, and are thus perceived to be less close relatives than parallel cousins.

We see, then, that the basic principle that one should behave prosocially to individuals perceived to be relatives can, by reason of its ubiquity, reasonably be seen as part of human nature. There are, of course, great differences between individuals in the amount of prosocial behaviour shown, and in any one individual according to circumstances. The propensity to give help preferentially to relatives is an important *influence*, but not a *determinant*. And proper behaviour to relatives may be rationalized in many different ways, and supported by pragmatic considerations: one should respect an aunt because she is a parent's sister; one should care for a nephew not only because he is a relative but also because he is only little. And special obligations are extended beyond blood relatives: one should be friendly with one's in-laws – in the West presumably because of the desirability of respecting one's spouse's loyalties, but in other societies spousal relationships may cement two different groups.[32]

Summary

1 Natural selection operates so that individuals maximize their inclusive fitness. Moral precepts that advocate prosocial behaviour between parents and their children are in harmony with this. However, from a biological perspective, parental care should be limited by its costs in impairing the parent's capacity for further reproduction. Some aspects of parent/child relationships fit this prediction.
2 Contraception, infanticide and adoption, cultural practices which seem incompatible with these biological principles concerning the extent of parental care, are certainly not always so.
3 Similarly, precepts or conventions that individuals should help others perceived to be related are also compatible with biological predictions,

provided the costs incurred are compatible with the degree of genetic relatedness. However it may be advantageous to individuals to abide by cultural conventions that lead to non-relatives being perceived as kin.

4 Other motivations and culturally transmitted customs may augment or diminish tendencies to behave prosocially to kin.

8

SOURCES OF MORAL PRECEPTS: RELATIONS WITH NON-RELATIVES

Prosocial behaviour and reciprocity

We have seen that, operating through individual survival and reproduction, natural selection has acted in such a way that individuals have propensities to look after themselves and their kin. But prosocial behaviour is not limited to genetic relatives. People also help each other, cooperate, support good causes, and from time to time incur sacrifices for the sake of other individuals who are not close kin. What is more, they usually feel pleased with themselves for behaving in such ways. Such behaviour needs further explanation. Most human groups have existed in conditions in which resources were limited, and individuals competed for them. Any individual who was generous to others but allowed him- or herself to be exploited by them would be at a disadvantage. How then can such behaviour have been selected for and become part of our repertoire of behaviour? In this chapter we shall see that, while it may not be to the individual's own immediate benefit, generosity to fellow group members may contribute to the individual's well-being in due course, or to that of the group as a whole. In the former case it may lead to reciprocation, or it may merit gratitude, praise or social prestige, which may bring further rewards in due course. Or, if prosocial behaviour furthers the cohesion of the group, that may be in the individual's interests either because he is better off living in a cohesive group and/or because it contributes to the success of his group in competition with others. In both cases, prosocial behaviour may on occasion contribute to the individual's successful reproduction. But much of this implies the pre-existence of behavioural tendencies and precepts shared by group members, and that merely puts the question one stage back: we must ask on what bases cooperative and prosocial propensities have been evolved.

First, however, another possible explanation of prosocial behaviour towards non-relatives must be mentioned. It is conceivable that it is a sort of mistake. We have seen that selection operates to promote prosocial behaviour to individuals *perceived* as kin, and some instances of prosocial behaviour to non-kin may be elicited by the perception that they are genetically related when they are not. Indeed the effectiveness of much wartime propaganda

depends on making non-kin seem like kin – fellow countrymen are described as 'brothers-in-arms', belonging to a 'mother country' or 'fatherland'. We shall see later that there may be a grain of truth in this explanation, but it is hardly adequate for all cases of prosocial behaviour to non-relatives, because selection would tend to operate against incurring costs to help unrelated individuals.[1]

Let us consider, therefore, how prosocial behaviour to, and cooperation with, non-relatives could have arisen. In large groups of mostly unrelated individuals, helping non-kin when it is to one's own immediate disadvantage to do so would seem not be a sustainable strategy for an individual to pursue in the long run. Not, that is, unless giving help to others is likely to lead to reciprocation, on the I'll-scratch-your-back-if-you'll-scratch-mine principle. Evidence that that is very much what does happen in many human relationships comes from both social psychology and anthropology.

Exchange theories

Exchange in relationships

An influential and heuristically useful group of theories, known as 'exchange theories', are based on the supposition that a principle of reciprocity is central to social behaviour. Human relationships are seen as involving processes of exchange, individuals incurring costs (in an everyday, not a biological sense) in the expectation of future rewards. Thus, one helps one's peer on the supposition that the favour may one day be returned.[2] Originally intended to deal with marketplace transactions, including employer/employee relations, exchange theories have been extended to close personal relationships.

Three developments in exchange theories are of special importance in the present context. First, 'interdependence theory' stresses that, in any two-person relationship, continuity of interaction depends on the satisfaction of both parties concerned.[3] In a long-term relationship the rewards for a given act may lie in the future. For A to maximize her outcomes in a relationship with B she must consider not only the rewards and costs to herself that are immediately consequent upon her actions, but also the consequences for B. If A does not consider B's profit as well as her own, B may opt out of the relationship, and A would lose her expected rewards. Thus, in close relationships the participants may try to maximize not just their own outcomes but their joint outcomes. In practice, what matters to the individual are not just her or his actual outcomes, but the *perceived* outcomes, and in a long-term relationship these are likely to include the benefits to the partner. In this way one can understand how it is that individuals in close relationships like to help or make sacrifices for those for whom they feel affection or love.[4] (Needless to say, in relationships of a different quality, participants may strive to

maximize their own outcomes whatever the cost to the partner, or to do the partner down whatever the cost to themselves, and so on: however groups having a high proportion of such relationships are unlikely to flourish.)

If A's behaviour to B is based on the supposition that it will bring later reward, this implies that expectation of reciprocation is intrinsic to much social behaviour. Furthermore, B's reciprocation is more likely to be rewarding to A if A's initial behaviour was prosocial. Therefore interactions are more likely to be successful if initiated prosocially. A positive initiation is likely to be reciprocated in kind, and an ongoing relationship has a chance to emerge. But a negative approach to another individual is likely to receive a negative response, and interactions are likely to cease. *Prosociality and reciprocity are linked.*

Another development in exchange theories considers whether reciprocity is seen to be 'fair'. 'Equity theory', assumes that a person perceives a relationship or interaction to be equitable provided he sees his rewards to be proportionate to his costs in comparison with his partner or with what he 'deserves'. (What he deserves may depend on his personal qualities – e.g. status, strength, beauty – as well as what he contributed to the relationship.)[5] This implies that individuals should not only feel wronged if they see themselves as under-benefited in a relationship, but should also feel uncomfortable if they feel over-benefited. Though the generality of the conclusion remains to be tested, a number of studies indicate that this is at least sometimes the case. For instance, in a study of dating relationships the subjects were categorised on their self-reports as under-, equitably, or over-benefited. Equitable relationships were found to be the most stable. Over-benefited individuals felt about the same degree of satisfaction as, and considerably more guilt than, those who felt themselves to be inequitably treated, and both felt less satisfaction than those who perceived their relationship to be equitable. As another example, a Dutch study of married couples found that not only women who felt themselves to be deprived in marriage but also those who felt themselves to be over-benefited felt stronger desires for extramarital sex, and had more extramarital relationships, than women who felt themselves to be in an equitable relationship.[6]

Of course the concept of reciprocity is only a starting point, and takes us only some of the way in understanding human relationships. The important issue for the present discussion is that, if people have misgivings about being over-benefited as well as under-benefited, it implies that *they are guided, perhaps unconsciously, by a social contract or rule demanding prosociality and fair reciprocity or justice in interactions and relationships*.[7] That explains, perhaps, the resentment felt towards someone who is excessively generous: reciprocity is simply not possible.

A third development within exchange theories emphasizes that, although the resources exchanged in relationships have very different properties, costs and benefits need not be assessed in the same currency. In other words,

what one partner gives the other may not be of the same nature as that which he receives: for example, we often exchange money for goods.[8] (The fairly complex issue of what is considered 'fair' is discussed briefly later (pp. 164–5).) This is important in the present context in two ways. First, it means that exchange can take place up and down a hierarchical system: thus an employer and employee exchange money for services. Second, it means that gratitude may be accepted as an appropriate return: we say 'thank you' to someone who presents a gift or pays us a compliment, thereby acknowledging indebtedness and perhaps implying a promise of reciprocation in the future.

Gratitude often has another consequence, resulting from the fact that when one behaves generously one feels pleased with oneself: perceiving oneself to act prosocially enhances one's self-esteem.[9] Although anxiety about the costs incurred may accompany the initiation of prosocial behaviour, and this may conflict with the augmentation of self-esteem, the gratitude of the recipient can relieve that anxiety. In any case, the recipient of the gratitude *perceives* that he or she has been fairly recompensed, at any rate for the moment, and it is the *perception* of fair dealing that matters. The extent of the gratitude that is expected differs between situations and cultures, but we are enculturated to give and to receive gratitude appropriate to the situation, for the most part without thinking about it. Recognition of one's own prosociality provides congruence with one's internalised moral precepts and enables one to feel good; but if one's own prosocial acts go unremarked one feels affronted.

Infringement of reciprocity requires that congruency (see pp. 39–40) must be restored: for instance, if one is met with ingratitude, one may denigrate the recipient of one's prosocial act. Basically similar principles of reciprocation and adjusted perception apply also to antisocial behaviour: an individual who feels wronged may reciprocate by seeking revenge,[10] while one who feels that he has wronged another, may attempt to restore congruency either by compensating the victim or by adjusting his own perceptions. In the latter case he may achieve perceived congruency by distorting his own opinion of the victim or the victim's outcomes – for instance, by concluding that 'He deserved it anyway' or 'It'll teach him a lesson'. *What matters is how far the individual's perception of the situation is in harmony with his internalised moral precepts*.

In large groups, the recipient of prosocial behaviour may never be encountered again, and the expression of gratitude takes on a special significance, for it has to take the place of probable reciprocation by the individual one has benefited. This has a number of important consequences. If the prosocial individual is unlikely ever to meet again the recipient of his beneficence, public thanks are more important than private gratitude, as they enhance the benefactor's reputation as a prosocial person. Because it is in people's interests to deal with those who have a reputation for prosociality, such a reputation enhances the possessor's chances of receiving prosocial

behaviour from others in the future.[11] And that adds a new dimension, because the fact that a reputation for prosocial behaviour and reciprocity is valued means that others are more ready to associate with those who act in accordance with them and to dislike those who do not. Saying 'thank you' is polite, and politeness invites further interchange. Not repaying a debt is cheating; to forego to help another is mean, selfish, or callous; and one tends not to interact with people who are known to behave in such ways. Behaving in accordance with socially positive precepts gives one a sort of status. In addition, a whole set of virtues depends on reciprocity and the social contract – honesty, fair-dealing, generosity, sensitivity to others' needs, and so on. One admires people who behave in these ways, not only because they are approved of in society but, more pragmatically, also because interactions with them are more likely to be advantageous than dealings with those who do not behave prosocially. Beyond that, one tends to imitate those whom one likes, and because one likes people who behave prosocially, prosocial behaviour is likely to become more frequent in the population.[12]

So if you want people to do things for you, you must behave in accordance with the precepts generally accepted in the society. Or at least you must give the impression that you are behaving in that way, because others will be influenced by how they *perceive* you to behave. And that leaves the door open for dissimulation – individuals can *pretend* to be honest, generous, polite, and so on. In turn, that means that one is better off if one is able to detect dissimulation. This leads to discrimination between further sets of positive and negative characteristics: one dislikes dissimulation and pretentiousness, and likes those who behave straightforwardly and with humility. Thus many characteristics that we see as virtuous or objectionable are related to the principle of reciprocity.

Exchange theories do not necessarily imply that people are continually calculating whether their actions will pay off in the long run. As we have seen, people often help others 'spontaneously', without thinking about the consequences, as though they had a tendency to treat others as they would like to be treated. There is also experimental evidence showing that, even when their behaviour cannot be explained in terms of long-term self-interest, people will reciprocate prosocial behaviour and retaliate against those who do not behave prosocially.[13] This implies that many aspects of the ways in which people behave in relationships are best described on the assumption that propensities to behave prosocially and with perceived reciprocity are part of, or readily available to, the self-systems of individuals.

The success of exchange theories testifies to the fact that people do base a great deal of their behaviour on expectations of reciprocity and fair dealing, while the detailed data obtained from this approach indicate how and when this principle applies. That it applies pan-culturally seems virtually certain, though there are important cultural conventions concerning its application in practice.

Exchange theory and moral precepts

Exchange theories have been elaborated to explain how people behave in their interactions with each other. They say nothing about how people ought to behave. Nevertheless there are close parallels between exchange theories and moral codes. A principle of prosociality/reciprocity is pre-eminent in the moral codes of most societies. In the 'Declaration of the Parliament of the World's Religions', based on a meeting in Chicago at which all the world's major and many minor ones were represented, the Golden Rule of 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by' was universally accepted as a principle basic to moral codes.[14] Love, held by many to be the guiding principle of Christian morality, can be described in the same way. And some philosophers see justice as embracing reciprocity and as fundamental to the functioning of society – with certain other precepts, like mutual aid, mutual abstention from injury, and honesty, which can be seen as related to reciprocity, universally accepted.[15] Some of the Ten Commandments, such as those about killing, adultery, stealing, false witness, and coveting, are admonitions not to do things that one would not like to have done to oneself, and thus can also be seen as related to the basic principle of prosociality/reciprocity. But reciprocity is also reified into precepts that are reinforced during childhood – one ought to say 'thank you', one should repay one's debts, one should help others when the occasion demands.

Furthermore, and again in line with the implications of exchange theories, most moral codes go farther than mere reciprocity. Individuals are enjoined not merely to reciprocate, but to initiate prosocial exchanges – 'Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them' (Matthew, 7, xii). A similar sentiment is to be found in the moral codes of many religions.[16] It is morally correct to promote the welfare of others, using how you would desire to be treated as a guide to what they would like, and to do so not just because you hope that they will pay you back. Thus it is not only positive virtues intrinsic to exchange, such as truthfulness and honesty, that are related to the basic principle of reciprocity, but also virtues related to the *initiation* of prosocial exchanges, such as generosity, compassion, and warm-heartedness. Many moral virtues, such as truthfulness and honesty, can be seen in the same light. This issue is considered further on pp. 87–90 and in Chapter 15.

Potlatch and related issues

The exchange of gifts plays a prominent part in many non-industrial societies; it is exemplified most dramatically by the potlatch, as seen in parts of north-west America and some Pacific islands.[17] We can consider here only some general features of such practices. The exchanges take place primarily between groups or between individuals representing groups, and involve not only things of economic value, but also 'courtesies, entertainments, ritual,

military assistance, women, children, dances, and feasts'.[18] In some cases there is intense competition in the giving of gifts, giving being a way of displaying wealth. Prestige and status are determined by the magnitude of the gifts exchanged, and individuals or groups may totally impoverish themselves in competitive generosity. It is obligatory to give, to receive, and to repay: each is conducive to a good relationship, and refusal can be taken as signifying enmity. Thus giving is not simply to be equated with generosity, but is self-interested, a means of gaining prestige. Often the gifts are destroyed or thrown into the sea, but the magnitude of that which is given or destroyed contributes to the prestige of the donor. Receiving gifts implies credit, and it is a matter of honour both to give, and to receive and repay even more than was given. The sequence of gift and repayment, which may be very extended in time, is likely to be embedded in ritual and myth: the gift is seen as associated with or part of the giver, and receiving as constituting a sort of spiritual bond between giver and receiver.

The potlatch is in a sense an extreme phenomenon, and there is a continuum between it and the exchanges of everyday life. Mauss sees such systems of exchange as preceding the Western marketplace: he implies that the assumptions of giving, receiving, and reciprocity lie at the bases of social life. From the present perspective, potlatch can be seen as a ritualized example of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity that has the consequence of cementing inter-group relations. Whether individuals or groups really gain any advantage from the prestige accruing from the competitive generosity involved in potlatch is an open issue. The point is that the practice, elaborated from basic psychological characteristics, has become part of the socio-cultural structure of these societies, and the individuals perceive it to be a proper use of resources.

Selection for prosocial behaviour and reciprocity

To summarize the main points so far, individuals have a potential to develop a propensity to show prosocial behaviour as well as to be self-seeking. Prosocial actions are often spontaneous, but may carry the expectation of recompense in the future. Psychological (and anthropological) data indicate that individuals (and groups) behave in their interactions as though guided by a social contract requiring reciprocity. The social contract can have the force of a moral precept. Reciprocity may take the form of an expression of gratitude, which may imply a more substantial return in the future. Behaviour in accordance with the values and precepts of the society brings status, which may itself bring returns in the future. Since these several aspects of behaviour are common to at least very many, and probably all, human societies, the possibility that they are the result of natural selection must be considered.

There has been considerable controversy about the nature and even the

very existence of *truly* unselfish behaviour. On the one hand, people do give to charities; in times of war people do endanger, and sometimes give, their own lives to help others; in many such situations it seems that there can be no hope of recompense. On the other hand, a variety of explanations for such actions have been advanced. For instance, are such actions merely the over-expression of a general tendency to be nice to others, in the same way that gluttony is an over-expression of the natural tendency to eat? Or are altruists motivated by self-regard, by a desire to see themselves in a favourable light? Let us leave such arguments, which are rarely constructive,[19] and ask whether and how prosocial behaviour and reciprocity could evolve.

The possibility that a propensity to behave in accordance with a principle of reciprocity is in fact part of human nature is suggested by reports of similar behaviour in some animal species. For instance, vampire bats forage at night, and on any one night many individuals are unsuccessful. Bats cannot live for more than a few days without food. However, when the bats return to their communal roost, successful foragers share some of their food with unsuccessful ones. This seems to be unselfish behaviour, for they are giving up some of their own food to others, and thereby perhaps saving the lives of those who have been unsuccessful. However the successful foragers are most likely to feed other bats from which they have previously received food. Thus the apparently unselfish donor is repaid when it is itself unsuccessful.[20] As another example, if a vervet monkey hears a recording of another unrelated vervet asking for help in a fight, it is much more likely to respond if the caller has helped it in the past.[21] A number of other cases of reciprocation amongst non-human primates have been described, many but not all involving mutual help in agonistic interactions.[22]

How widespread such prosocial (considered by some to be 'proto-moral') behaviour is among animals is highly controversial.[23] In any case, apparent parallels in behaviour (in contrast to comparisons of principles concerning behaviour) between animals and humans are always dangerous. The only claim being made here is that the occurrence of reciprocity in some other species suggests that natural selection may have been in part responsible for the fact that people not only help others, but are more prone to do so if they have expectations of recompense. That does not necessarily mean that individuals behave with reciprocity solely because they work out that it is to their long-term advantage to do so, or because people see that they are all in the same boat, which will sink if they do not cooperate. Rather the suggestion is that all humans have a propensity, produced by natural selection, (to learn) to behave prosocially and with reciprocity (though of course not all necessarily do so), and these tendencies are incorporated into the self-systems of individuals, so that they may behave prosocially and with reciprocity virtually automatically when occasion demands.

How could such a propensity evolve? At first sight there seems to be a crucial difficulty for the biologist. If selection acts to further the survival

and reproduction of the individual, it is hard to see how it could foster behaviour conducive to the interests of unrelated others or of the group as a whole. How could norms of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity be maintained within a group? Would not individuals who behaved selfishly to other members of the group who behaved unselfishly to them have better access to resources and therefore do better in the long run? Would not such selfish individuals thereby be enabled to have more children and pass on their behaviour, so that the group would come to consist solely of their kind, and unselfish individuals would be eliminated? Cooperative behaviour between large numbers of unrelated individuals of the type found in humans is not found in other mammals, and requires explanation.

Though the broad outlines of the answers to these questions are now clear, the details are still controversial. The issues have been aired frequently, and what follows is intended to show only the outline of the picture that is emerging.[24] We may consider briefly three inter-related approaches.

The first is based on the views that natural selection acts only on individuals, that it is advantageous to live in a group (see p. 128), and that natural selection *within* groups has operated so that individuals have the capacity to estimate (not necessarily consciously) the probable effects of behaving in different ways on their inclusive fitness (that is, their long-term reproductive success and that of their relatives, devalued by their degree of relatedness – see p. 18).[25] Group living implies that it is more advantageous to individuals to live in a group than to live independently and, since the proximity of others is highly likely to result in competitive situations, selfish assertiveness must already have been suppressed sufficiently for group living to be possible. The fitness of the individual will depend not only on his ability to live with others but also on his/her capacity to compete with them within the group. Individuals thus develop ways of behaving that further their own interests within the constraints of group living. This is likely to involve behaviour that might be classed as moral: as we have seen, an individual who is known to be willing to cooperate with others is him(her)self likely to receive cooperation from others; and an individual known to be honest will find that others are willing to deal with him. On this view, it might seem that individuals who abide by a moral code are better off than those who do not, and humans could be predisposed to develop moral sensitivity.

However, as noted above, such individuals would be exposed to exploitation by those who behaved immorally, and this scenario still leaves open the manner in which natural selection could bring about such a state of affairs. Here we turn to an approach involving computer modelling and make the simplifying assumption that there are two kinds of individuals: one showing primarily prosocial and cooperative behaviour, the other primarily selfish behaviour.[26] Early simulations indicated that, in a small group, selection of individuals who behaved cooperatively with another on the first occasion that they met and subsequently reciprocated what the other did, won in

competitions against other strategies. It was claimed that this 'tit-for-tat' strategy was resistant to invasion by non-cooperators.[27] It worked well in groups of small to moderate size, where individuals could get to know most other individuals in the group, so that a prosocial cooperator stood a reasonable chance of meeting other cooperators: clearly, a cooperative strategy is more likely to predominate over a selfish one if cooperators help other cooperators more than they help selfish individuals. 'Tit-for-tat' and related strategies are successful just because they involve cooperation with cooperators and defection with defectors.

However, it turned out that the success of tit-for-tat over other strategies was due primarily to other strategies defeating each other under the conditions of a tournament, and alternative strategies could be devised that did even better than tit-for-tat.[28] Furthermore, such computer simulations have so far concerned situations that differed from those in the real world in a number of ways. In particular, tit-for-tat is unlikely to be a successful strategy in large groups, where most individuals do not know each other and where the chance of one cooperator meeting and recognizing another are diminished. Of course, knowledge that another individual is a cooperator or defector need not depend on a previous encounter, because observations of others' behaviour or gossip could suffice,[29] but it often does. In addition, in real life errors may occur.[30] And the current evidence suggests that no single strategy could be universally successful.[31] How, then, could selection for prosocial behaviour be maintained?

Here we may consider another (though related) approach to explaining prosocial behaviour directed to non-relatives. This assumes not only competition and cooperation between individuals *within* a group, but also competition and selection *between* groups. Could groups consisting mainly of individuals who behave prosocially to each other be maintained? And would such groups succeed better in competition between groups than groups of mainly selfish individuals? Could selection between groups whose individuals differed somewhat in these behavioural characteristics lead to the elimination of selfish individuals and increase in prosocial ones?

Natural selection acts on genetic differences between individuals, and there is strong evidence that genetic evolution by selection between groups has been at best extremely rare, if it has occurred at all, in non-human species.[32] However, it has been suggested that the critical issue is not that the differences between individuals should be genetic, but that they should be heritable, in the sense of being passed on from one generation to the next.[33] In humans, to a much greater extent than in other species, this could be by tradition or by some other non-genetic mechanism. The question then becomes, could culturally maintained similarities between group members and cultural differences between groups provide a basis for group selection? Could, for instance, a group consisting mainly of prosocial individuals not only be maintained but also win in competition with one of selfish individuals?

One requirement for such a situation would be the existence of groups who showed stable differences from each other. But any group differences in the proportion of prosocial individuals might tend to disappear through copying from one group by another, by intermarriage, and by other forms of cultural diffusion. And, as we have seen, in each group containing a mixture of prosocial and selfish individuals, the prosocial ones would be less effective in competition with their group companions, and would tend to be eliminated. Thus it is not immediately apparent that groups consisting mainly of prosocially inclined individuals could exist. But perhaps the issue is not only that individuals should be recompensed for their prosocial actions, but also that they should be willing to incur costs for behaviour benefiting others, if doing so effectively increased the frequency of individuals who behaved in that way, independently of payback to the individual. The question thus arises, could such a strategy be maintained by competition between groups?

Computer modelling shows that prosocial behaviour could be favoured by competition between groups under certain conditions.[34] If naïve individuals tended to copy the behaviour that was most common in the group (i.e. given conformism; see also below), if the environments in which groups were living were heterogeneous, and if groups tended to move from time to time, prosocial cooperative behaviour could then come to predominate in the group. Conformism is important, because the success or otherwise of the behaviour of others is often hard to observe, but copying what most people do is likely to be a good strategy. If a group moves into a new environment, individual learning by individuals will enable them to learn new strategies. Heterogeneity of the environment and group mobility would favour conformism within groups, because from time to time groups would encounter unfamiliar conditions where the usual practices were less effective. Individuals who did well in the new environment would become common, and it would pay naïve individuals to copy behaviour that was common. If a high proportion of individuals were prosocial cooperators, prosocial cooperation would spread within the group.[35]

Heterogeneity of the environment would also lead to phenotypic differences between groups, with some having a higher proportion of a particular type of individual than others. This might also arise in other ways. If individuals had a tendency to join groups containing individuals similar to themselves, or if groups were founded by a pair of individuals and grew into expanded families of related individuals, groups would differ in the characteristics of their members and there would be scope for competition between groups.[36] The behaviour of prosocial cooperators, although involving some cost to themselves in relation to non-cooperators within the group, could increase the probability that their group would win in competition with other groups; prosocial cooperation could then increase. Of course, competition between groups implies that the principle of acting prosocially and then

with reciprocity must apply to in-group members only. We shall return to this point later (p. 129).

Thus uniformity within groups, but diversity between groups, provides conditions conducive to between-group selection that could favour prosocial behaviour. That such a process is at least possible has been shown by computer modelling.[37]

Selection between groups has often been seen as involving the elimination or assimilation of one group by another as a consequence of intergroup warfare.[38] However, it is an open question how far warfare between groups, with the victors imposing their customs on the losers, could have been a powerful force. While it is clear that this has sometimes happened, there is controversy over the role it could have played in human evolution. Boehm,[39] in a careful but necessarily speculative review of the evidence, considers that, while warfare between groups could have provided selective forces that amplified group selection and supported prosocial behaviour, it was unlikely to have been adequate to support within-group selection for a *genetic* basis for altruism. That, however, does not mean it could not have supported *cultural* group selection. In any case, selection between groups could have been indirect, with groups differing in their success in competition for limited resources without actually fighting each other.

Thus, although the precise way in which selection has acted is not yet universally agreed, the evidence is strongly in favour of the view that prosocial behaviour and reciprocity evolved by processes of selection operating over time.

Kin selection and selection for reciprocal 'altruism'

In Chapter 7 we saw how prosocial behaviour to a *related* other involves helping another who is likely to carry genes identical with those of the initiator, and thus fosters the survival of those genes and of the tendency to help a relative – giving rise to the principle of 'kin selection'. In this chapter we have seen how help to an *unrelated* other could be selected for if the other were likely to reciprocate – the principle of 'reciprocal altruism'.[40] These are often treated as two unrelated principles, but it has recently been suggested that they are closely related.[41] On the one hand, kin selection is related to reciprocity because every time individual A helps a relative B he/she is helping someone who, having many genes identical with his own, is likely to help others, including A. On the other, reciprocity is likely to bring some of the benefits of kin selection, in that every time A helps another, B, who is likely to reciprocate, he/she is helping someone who is also disposed towards helping others, like him/herself. Thus each carries some of the benefits of the other.

The argument can be taken even further. The tendency to behave prosocially to others depends on both genetic and experiential factors. Every time

A receives a prosocial response (without too much delay) to his prosocial initiation, he will be reinforced and be more likely to behave prosocially in the future – at least to that individual, and more widely if the response were generalized. This would assist the spread of prosociality.

This in turn leads to an even more speculative proposition. A general tendency for individuals to like doing things for others whom they love or are fond of was mentioned earlier. This is in contrast to the tendency to require reciprocation from anonymous individuals or those with whom there is no tie of affection. A variety of proximate explanations for this difference are possible,[42] and an ultimate explanation in terms of the differential forces of kin selection and reciprocal altruism can be suggested. Many of the individuals towards whom one feels affection are likely either to be related, or to be potential reproductive partners. In addition, one tends to be attracted to others who are like oneself,[43] and who are therefore likely to share one's propensity for prosocial behaviour. In both cases, kin selection could operate. In dealing with others with whom one has no affectional tie, the probability of relatedness will be less, and the necessity for reciprocation greater.

A note on conformism

The preceding discussion indicated that a tendency to conform by doing what others are doing may have played an essential role in the spread of prosociality. A 'pull towards conformity', sometimes related to an over-strong need to define the self through others' evaluations,[44] is a common human characteristic and hardly requires documenting. The fashion industry; the ease with which individuals pick up beliefs and behaviour styles common in the society; the phenomenon of mass hysteria; as an extreme case, the apparent readiness of the members of some religious cults to sacrifice themselves, are all examples. It has also been demonstrated in the laboratory that individuals' judgements (for instance, of the length of a line) are influenced by hearing the judgements of others who agree with each other.[45]

Conformism may have been favoured by selection in several ways.[46] First, it pays to imitate individuals who are successful in making tools, acquiring women, or whatever – and in a successful group most individuals will presumably be doing things right. Second, if the group is a potentially successful one, most individuals are likely to be showing behaviour that supports group integrity, and it will pay an individual joining that group to emulate them. Third, simply doing what others do, whatever that may be, tends to facilitate group integration and cohesion. This is shown by the power of public gatherings, such as religious meetings: individuals not only do what other people are doing, they even come to believe what others believe. Fourth, those who conform with the precepts of the society will gain admiration and status, which may pay off in other ways (see pp. 91–2).

Thus, in general, conformism would cause any behaviour that was

common in the population to increase in frequency: if prosocial behaviour were common it would increase. This would be even more likely if authority in the society promoted conformity, and those who did not conform were punished (see p. 129). Computer modelling confirms that not only prosocial behaviour but any behavioural orientation could increase in the population if it were described by a social norm, adherence to which was reinforced by social reward or sanctions.[47]

Once a norm was established, conformism could be maintained by the actions of conforming individuals. Boehm,[48] impressed by the egalitarian nature of modern hunter-gatherer groups, has suggested that individuals who displayed excessive selfish assertiveness would have been suppressed by others, and this would have reduced in-group variability (see p. 136). The process would have been enhanced by the tendency of such groups to reach decisions consensually.

Of course, conformism may involve some ambivalence. Individuals like to maintain congruency between how they see themselves to behave and their pre-formed self-concepts (see. pp. 39–40). Not surprisingly, therefore, individuals who join another culture may both tend to conform and show some resistance to conformism. For example, a study of immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union showed that the immigrants believed that the Israelis wanted them to be assimilated and to relinquish their distinctive identity more than they themselves wished to relinquish it. Those immigrants who valued conformity appeared to be less satisfied with life, the greater they perceived the discrepancy to be between their own acculturated attitudes and those attributed to the host society.[49] Not surprisingly, conformism is more likely to occur in second-generation immigrants.

Other characteristics supporting reciprocity

In discussing exchange theories, we saw that the principles of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity could lead to the positive evaluation of other aspects of behaviour in interactions – for instance, generosity, honesty, fair-dealing. Here we pursue that theme.

Cognitive characteristics

Approaches based on computer modelling tend to portray individuals as having a limited behavioural repertoire. In fact a number of psychological characteristics, many of which are apparently pan-cultural, support reciprocity. Their existence is additional evidence that prosocial behaviour and just reciprocity have been evolved by natural selection.[50]

As we have seen, individuals who behave prosocially can be exploited by those who display selfish assertiveness. This may involve refusing to reciprocate benefits received or attempts to get away with partial reciprocation, as

well as pretensions to qualities (e.g. of generosity) not possessed. Perhaps as a result of this, humans seem to have an acute sense of justice, even when benefits received are returned in a different coin. As noted earlier, we accept diverse exchanges – not only money for goods, but gratitude for services rendered, esteem for information imparted, and so on (see pp. 75–6).

Given the existence of a moral code, much depends on the ability of those who comply with a prosocial moral code to detect those who do not. Displays of selfish assertiveness may be prohibited by the moral code, but how is one to know that an individual with whom one is interacting subscribes to the moral code? While the issue cannot be regarded as closed, laboratory experiments have indicated that individuals are adept at detecting infringements of a social contract. In these experiments, subjects were presented with a logical rule of the type 'If P, then Q' and asked to detect infringements. Subjects were more successful if the problem referred to the infringements of a social contract (e.g. 'If a person is drinking beer he must be over twenty years old') than if it were a straight logical issue (e.g. 'If a student has a D rating, his papers must be marked with code 3').[51] However, although the results are not disputed, and although elaborate controls were used, the interpretation of these experiments has been doubted on a number of grounds.[52] One criticism is that the two alternatives, one merely a logical task and the other a possible real-life situation, are simply different tasks.[53] Such an explanation, it will be noted, while not accepting or denying that the detection of cheating could have been due to natural selection, puts the onus on other properties of the human mind. The matter must be considered *sub judice*. In any case, although the ability to detect cheating on social contracts is present in children of three and even younger, a role of learning cannot be ruled out, for socialization involves the frequent invocation of comparable contracts ('If you do X, I will punish you').[54]

Given that an individual who cheats on the social contract has been detected, it is also important that he/she should be identified when next encountered. Experimental evidence has indicated that students could remember more readily the photographs of individuals labelled as cheaters than photographs of individuals labelled as trustworthy or accompanied by irrelevant information. This difference was not present for individuals labelled as having high status.[55]

There is also a sense of collective responsibility in the detection of cheaters. A person seeing another behaving unfairly to a third party feels morally outraged and may intervene. Indeed it is often held to be morally reprehensible not to punish others who are seen as not living up to the accepted standards.[56] Such 'righteous indignation', or 'moralistic aggression' consequent upon righteous indignation, can help to maintain the moral code. Computer simulation shows that, if the costs of being punished are large enough, moralistic strategies that involve cooperating, punishing non-cooperators, and punishing those who do not punish non-cooperators, could be stable.[57]

Emotions

Some ubiquitous human emotions function to uphold the principle of reciprocity, and seem to be adapted to that end. Thus we feel anger if we feel unfairly treated or if we become aware of infringements of the accepted code and, though perhaps less frequently, we feel uncomfortable if over-benefited (see p. 74). Feelings of guilt, and perhaps shame, help to keep our behaviour in line with our internalised moral code. Indeed it has been argued that displays of guilt, shame, moral outrage, moral satisfaction, and so on, are the best indicators that an individual has internalised a moral precept.[58] Moreover the display of guilt or shame by one who has transgressed may deflect the righteous indignation of others who have observed the incident. Although the circumstances and extent to which emotions are expressed vary cross-culturally, individually and according to the situation,[59] there is abundant evidence that facial expressions of anger, sadness, fear, enjoyment and disgust, and possibly other emotions, are similar cross-culturally.[60]

However there is a darker side to this. An individual who fears that his or her cheating on the social contract may be detected, and may leave him open to moralistic aggression, may seek to dissemble and hide any guilty feelings. Indeed deception and the detection of deception are likely to play a large role in the practice of reciprocity. Hiding one's emotions is not easy, and it may be facilitated if one can hide them from oneself. Perhaps the ability to deceive others, to deceive oneself, and to detect the deception of others, have all been subject to natural selection.[61]

The relation between guilt and shame has been a matter of some controversy. However Tangney[62] has found convincing evidence to support the view that the feeling of shame is directly concerned with the self (*I* did that horrible thing), whereas with feelings of guilt the negative focus is on the action (I *did* that horrible *thing*). Shame concerns one's evaluation of one's self, especially one's view of others' view of one's self, and is accompanied by feelings of worthlessness and powerlessness. Shaming has often been used as a punishment for infringements of the sexual moral code and for collaboration with an enemy, as well as for cheating in reciprocal interactions. Guilt, by contrast, although painful, does not affect one's core identity, but is concerned with one's effect on others. Thus guilt tends to foster prosocial behaviour (or some other method of restoring perceived congruency). Guilt can be ameliorated by attempts to repair any harm done, or by misperceiving the situation in a manner that removes blame from oneself ('I hurt him, but he deserved it anyway'). More interestingly, it can also be assuaged by forgiveness. This may come from a confessor or from the recipient of the wrongdoing. A readiness to forgive is associated with psychological adjustment.[63] By contrast, shame is associated with avoidance. Shame can lead to anger and aggression and, unlike guilt, is related to psychological maladjustment. It is therefore reasonable to see guilt as an emotion adapted to

promote prosocial behaviour, but the function of shame is more problematic: perhaps it can affect behaviour in the longer term.[64]

Finally, the abilities to empathize and sympathize with others who suffer or are in need play an important role in prosocial behaviour.

Virtues

In addition, a number of styles of behaving whose consequences tend to promote reciprocity tend to be regarded pan-culturally as virtuous. For instance, as we have seen, acknowledgement of indebtedness is not always sufficient to bridge the temporal gap between a prosocial act and its reciprocation: trust in the partner and belief in the partner's honesty, fidelity and commitment may also be essential.[65] It is thus not surprising that honesty and commitment (or loyalty) are seen as virtues. Since, if not known to be honest, an individual might find it difficult to engage in reciprocal exchange, the emphasis placed on honesty may have a basis in selfishness.

Individuals are less likely to be generous or honest if they are engaged in an anonymous exchange than if their identity is known, and dishonesty is more probable if the behaviour is not monitored. Since continuous monitoring of those with whom one deals is rarely possible, a reputation for honesty is of considerable importance. It is thus hardly surprising that individuals go to considerable lengths to establish reputations for honesty. If you are committed to behaving honestly, it will pay you to let others know that you are.[66] A society could not function if the members did not recognise honesty in others. However, we have seen that this raises the possibility of dissembling: people may pretend to be honest, caring, charitable, and so on, when they are not, hoping to profit from the misplaced trust of others. Individuals who advertise their positive virtues are more likely to be believed, the more costly the advertisement. But individuals who pretend to be more honest or generous than they are, or who dissemble and are seen as pretentious, are despised.

For exchange in a long-term relationship one needs not only to know that one's partner is honest, but also that he or she will stay committed to the relationship. In a positive personal relationship it is usually in the interests of both partners to encourage the other to stay. Thus both in dyadic relationships and in larger groups fidelity and loyalty are seen as virtues, encouraged by the moral code – though of course the form that they take differs greatly between societies.[67] Commitment may mean fore+going short-term gains in pursuit of long-term goals and reciprocation. It may mean following one's emotions contrary to one's better judgement, or it may mean exactly the opposite. Nevertheless, we tend to prefer people whom we can trust, we admire commitment, and choose only partners with whom to interact if we feel they will be committed to the relationship. Small wonder that trust breeds love, and love breeds trust.

Trust

A further word about the nature of trust is of interest here, as it exemplifies the sort of basis that other virtues, which are mentioned only in passing, must have. In the first place, while 'trustworthiness' may be an individual characteristic, valid at least in some degree across situations and relationships, trust itself is usually specific to a relationship between two persons: A's trust for B and B's trust for A are both aspects of their relationship. It is made possible by their previous knowledge of each other. However, when dealing with strangers we must decide to trust or not to trust on the basis of more flimsy evidence, and a balance must be sought. Not to trust means losing the advantages to be gained from the interaction, trusting too easily leaves one open to exploitation.

The tendency to trust another varies not only between pairs of individuals but also between societies. Societies in which individuals have little trust for each other tend to have weak legal institutions, high income inequality and a high degree of social heterogeneity.[68]

Second, in everyday life we see trustworthiness as a virtue, and we talk about trust as though it were an all-or-nothing issue – either A trusts B, or A does not trust B. But in reality it is not like that. We recognize that there are degrees of trusting and tend to reject the extremes. Thus, on the one hand, we dislike those who seem incapable of trusting others, because nearly all forms of intercourse with them are impossible, and on the other we are likely to despise those who have 'blind trust' in others as lacking in good sense.[69]

It might seem that there are contrasting views on the nature of trust: the everyday, all-or-nothing approach, which seems to imply that trust has something of the nature of an emotion, and the probability approach, which implies that trust is based on a more-or-less rational calculation of probabilities. Both have some truth. According to Bowlby[70] and many developmental psychologists, the *ability* to trust arises in normal development from the feeling of security provided to an infant by a mother or other care-giver who is sensitive and responsive to its needs and who can be relied upon to be there when needed. The implication of that view is that an infant who lacks that sense of security will later have difficulty in forming close relationships because of an inability to trust others. The evidence that individuals who had grossly disturbed childhoods, and lacked an adequately secure relationship with a parent figure in their early years, have difficulty later in forming relationships is clear-cut.[71] The benefits of a secure attachment in infancy for subsequent close relationships are apparent in short-term assessments, though less certain for longer-term follow-ups.[72] Fortunately, most people have experienced sufficient security in their early years to have at least some willingness to trust others. If that were not the case, most forms of social living would not be possible.

That we also make rational calculations about whether or not to trust is a matter of common experience. Every day we make calculations about the trustworthiness of those with whom we have dealings, basing our conclusions on observations of their past behaviour with others, by how well we know them, by gossip, by superficial characteristics such as how they are dressed, and so on. Evidence to prove untrustworthiness may be available, but evidence to *prove* trustworthiness is in principle impossible to obtain. Trust is usually predicated not on adequate evidence, but on the lack of contrary evidence, and is thus vulnerable to disconfirmation: A trusts B because B has never let him down – but he might. By contrast, distrust, once acquired, is resilient, for it leads to behaviour which bolsters the distrust itself. From a rational perspective, it usually pays to start off by trusting, because trust is necessary to find out if the other party is trustworthy, because trust implies a likely-to-be-fulfilled expectation of reciprocation (pp. 73–4), and because trust is a resource (like love, see p. 75) that is not necessarily depleted by use.[73] It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that most people can delude themselves that others are trustworthy; indeed trust can readily take on the characteristics of a passion, augmented or undermined by intuition, affection, love or hatred.

Thus we see that a predisposition to trust is acquired from relationships early in life; the amount of trust that we bring to an interaction may depend on rational assessment; but that assessment can never give us a complete answer, so that an initial predisposition to trust others provides an essential basis. Trust, commitment, honesty and, as we have seen, righteous indignation, are also closely related to the maintenance of fair exchange in relationships – and thus more generally to the abstract principle of justice. In assessing fair exchange, justice and impartiality must also be seen as moral virtues.

Friends

It hardly needs to be said that friendship encapsulates many of the psychological characteristics and virtues mentioned above. Friendship is not a unitary category, and is seen rather differently in different cultures. Distinctions may be made between blood brotherhood, blood friendship, best friends, compadre relationships, and so on, and such categories may or may not be institutionalised and ritualised.[74] Within any one society their characteristics may differ between men and women, and between individuals. Friendship is therefore not easy to define. However nearly every attempt at definition includes reference to prosocial behaviour and reciprocity.[75] Friends, being known, can be trusted not only to reciprocate prosocial behaviour, but to offer it when the need arises. For example, writing of friendship in Western societies, Auhagen sees friendship as a dyadic, personal, informal relationship, involving reciprocity and mutual

attraction, and which is voluntary, long-lasting, positive in nature and does not involve explicit sexuality.[76] 'Special' relationships of this sort probably occur in all societies.

Norms and conventions supporting reciprocity

Many of the conventions in society help to maintain a norm of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity. But why do people generally act according to the precepts accepted in their culture? In the first place, we have seen that acting in accordance with one's conscience coincides with the maintenance of congruency in the self-system. We saw earlier that congruency depends upon coincidence between one's self-image, one's perceptions of one's own behaviour, and one's perceptions of how one is seen by others. If moral precepts are internalised in the self-system, perceiving one's actions to be in harmony with them will involve congruency. If there is a perceived discrepancy between the internalised moral precepts and one's actions, it will be accompanied by a bad conscience and feelings of guilt. If the lack of congruency is produced because one perceives that others know that one has not behaved in accordance with the moral precepts, one is then ashamed of the way that one has behaved. A second reason why we adhere to cultural norms is that transgressions may bring punishment from others.

But prosocial behaviour may also be maintained just because it leads to tangible consequences. This issue has come to the fore in a debate as to the bases of a norm of food-sharing amongst certain hunter-gatherers, especially the Aché of South America and the Hadza of East Africa. The ethnographic data show that in such groups men tend to hunt, women to forage, though the division of labour is not absolute. Most hunter-gatherers have a norm of food-sharing, and not to share is a heinous offence.[77] The successful hunter of a large quarry may get little more for himself and his family than other members of the group. Hadza men spend considerable effort in going after large game, and sharing is more likely if the item of food is large and if hunting success is unpredictable. But a man hunting large game gets less reliable returns for himself and his family than if he hunts small game or forages, because a high proportion of trips are unsuccessful. So why hunt large animals at all, and why share? A variety of explanations are possible. For instance, it could be that the hunter shares merely because, after he has taken what his family can eat, he has no use for more meat, and to preserve it for future use would be difficult or impossible. But meat can be dried; furthermore, if the problem were preserving the meat, he would do better to go after more easily obtainable small game. Another possibility is that the costs of defending the excess meat that he cannot eat outweigh the benefits that it might bring,[78] but the same objection applies. In any case, in most hunter-gatherer societies the

successful hunter often does retain somewhat more than he would get if it were divided out, suggesting that he retains control over its disposal. A number of possibilities remain. Does the sheer force of custom cause him to part with a high proportion of his spoils, thereby averaging out the unpredictable success of individual foragers over the group as a whole? This could lead to greater equality in access to resources and serve as an insurance for all individuals against hard times. Or does actual calculation of costs and benefits determine when sharing will be helpful?[79] Or does the hunter get tangible recompense, perhaps in specific deals with individual others, for instance, in the shape of sexual favours from women in the group?[80] Or is he prepared to share because of the prestige that comes from a show of generosity?[81] Hawkes suggests that the attention and prestige that the successful hunter of a large animal gets is important for men in attracting women and warning off other males, and that this outweighs the fact that their families do not profit. The issue is still controversial, but it has been shown that Aché men who produced and shared more than average received food from more people when they were themselves injured or sick than did those who produced and shared less than the average.[82] Thus reputation and prestige in the group as a whole seems to be the real issue, and may apply in other cases. A similar principle may be applied to modern societies, for their functioning depends to no little extent on those who do public good receiving awards or acclaim which is of very little immediate tangible value. Is this because, like status, prestige can sometimes bring tangible rewards in due course, and has come to be valued in its own right even when it is unlikely to do so?[83] We shall return to this issue shortly (Chapter 9).

Overview

We have seen that diverse aspects of human behaviour are such as to support the display of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity – aspects of cognitive functioning, emotions, virtues, the phenomenon of friendship, and norms of behaviour. It is likely that many of these evolved under the influence of natural selection. This is perhaps especially clear in the case of the emotions. To repeat yet again a point made earlier, this does not mean that experience during individual development plays no part – as yet we know surprisingly little about the early development of many human faculties. Nor does it necessarily mean that they were originally selected because of their role in prosociality – many of them have roles also in other contexts. What one can say with much greater certainty, however, is that most, and perhaps all, of these psychological characteristics are to be found in all human societies.

Primacy of moral principles or precepts?

In Chapter 3 we discussed the question of whether 'moral sense' is a unitary concept, and concluded that it is best seen as a somewhat loose term describing the tendency to differentiate between good and bad, constructed in parallel with the acquisition of content and thus related to diverse types of behaviour. The same question arises with respect to reciprocity, which is related to a great diversity of moral precepts. We must thus ask whether the principle 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by' is basic to the moral precepts, or whether the diversity of the precepts that appear to stem from reciprocity indicate that the principle is only a *post hoc* way of conceptualising precepts that have arisen in their own right? In the former case the precepts or conventions that one should not kill, should pay back debts incurred, and should show oneself to be trustworthy might each be based independently on a feeling that they accord with the basic principle. Alternatively, the numerous precepts embraced by the principle of 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by' could have arisen independently, and the principle have simply been derived *post hoc* from them. The question is thus whether the elaboration and/or perpetuation of such precepts in human societies have been or are based on a general principle of reciprocity. It has been suggested (p. 200) that reciprocity in relationships concerned with exchanges of material objects has a basis different from reciprocity in loving relationships: this would argue against reciprocity as a fundamental principle. However there are a number of points on the other side.

First, a similar principle is said to be descriptive of at least some behaviour in animals. This, however, is in itself not very convincing, since much of the evidence from animals refers to reciprocity in particular contexts (see the example of vampire bats cited above) and not to a principle operating for many diverse types of behaviour. Furthermore 'reciprocity' in non-humans is a descriptive term, and does not in itself say anything about its bases.

Second, we have seen that members of a group may treat other group members in some ways as though they were related. Thus reciprocity and relatedness are not unrelated (p. 83); both kin selection and selection for reciprocity may be rooted in a trait to behave prosocially to others who share the trait.[84] Thus it is reasonable to suggest that selection for reciprocity arose as a basic aspect of selection for traits conducive to group living.

Rather stronger evidence comes from the pan-cultural human psychological characteristics that, as we have seen, support reciprocity independently of the precise context. Guilt and/or shame are felt by those who transgress irrespective of the nature of the transgression. Righteous indignation is felt when a wide variety of transgressions are witnessed. Trust is important in many contexts. It would seem that these pan-cultural characteristics were

selected to support a general propensity for reciprocity, rather than specific types of social transgression.

Thus, while the case cannot be proven, the evidence favours the view that the propensity to develop a norm of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity as a moral principle, given the appropriate experiences in development, is basic to human nature and is a product of natural selection. In addition, it has been reified as a general principle and used to support moral precepts. Once a child has acquired a theory of mind and a capacity for empathy, they can be used in parental admonitions – 'Don't hit Johnny; you would not like it if he hit you!' It seems probable that such admonitions go back a long way in human history.

One final point. Whether 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by' is a basic principle, or a *post hoc* way of conceptualising precepts that have arisen in their own right, it has cross-cultural generality. But that does not mean that all the precepts and values related to it are necessarily cross-cultural. People in different societies like to be treated in different ways.

Summary

1 From one perspective, relationships can be seen as involving processes of exchange. Individuals behave as if guided by a principle of reciprocity.
2 Some animals also behave with reciprocity.
3 The elaboration of prosocial behaviour and reciprocity in humans are compatible with a biological model involving differences in prosociality between groups, a tendency for individuals to copy the behaviour of the majority, and competition between groups.
4 A variety of pan-cultural psychological characteristics function in the maintenance of reciprocity. Humans seem to be adept at recognizing cheating, and readily recall the faces of those believed to be cheaters. There is also a sense of collective responsibility for the detection of cheaters. A number of human emotions and virtues also function in the maintenance of reciprocity, such as guilt, shame, and moral indignation. Characteristics that favour reciprocity, such as trustworthiness, honesty and commitment, are favoured.
5 The evidence suggests that the propensity to develop a norm of reciprocity is basic to human nature.

9

SOURCES OF MORAL PRECEPTS: STATUS, RIGHTS

So far we have discussed moral precepts and conventions concerning positive behaviour to kin and to other group members. We now turn to some other aspects of moral systems not necessarily concerned with the welfare of others, and stemming from a propensity for selfish assertiveness rather than prosociality.

Status

Since differences or potential differences in status are to be found in all human societies, it is hardly surprising that they have played an important role in moral codes. Efforts both to maintain and to minimize status differences can lead to the formulation of precepts in addition to those discussed in the preceding chapters.

We have seen that, speaking broadly, individuals have propensities not only to act cooperatively or prosocially to others, but also to construct, maintain and assert their own selves and their own interests. It is just because of the latter that moral precepts concerned with prosocial behaviour to kin and to other group members, and with reciprocity, are necessary: the selfish assertiveness of individuals must be constrained both for the good of kin and for group living to be possible. But the role of moral precepts can be parasitized by selfish assertiveness through efforts to achieve prestige or status within the group. Status brings power, and that opens the possibility for those with high status to promote ways of behaving that serve to maintain the *status quo* to their own advantage.

Status competition is found in non-human primate groups[1] and in the vast majority of human ones. Some small-scale, locally autonomous human groups appear to be effectively egalitarian, but that seems to be because the assertiveness of individuals is held in check by others and by social norms. In such groups individuals who show signs of being too bossy are controlled through public opinion, criticism and ridicule, disobedience, or through removal by deposition or assassination (see pp. 136–7): the propensity for selfish assertiveness is present, but suppressed if it extends beyond

interpersonal disputes. It has been suggested that this egalitarianism is in the interests of individuals in helping to ensure that resources temporarily available, like a large carcass, are shared (cf. pp. 91–2).

However, increasing population density, larger communities with greater social complexity and the advent of agriculture with food-storing led to status differences becoming central for most human groups. Although the differentials are minimized in some societies, they are present in nearly all. Occasionally they are contested with vigour, though mostly individuals accept them if it seems to be in their best interests to do so. Positive feedback can operate, so that the self-assertiveness of those having high status enables them to formulate mechanisms and perpetuate moral precepts that support and enhance the status differences.

Status relations are often very complex, involving distinctions between ranks, between groups, between men and women (Chapter 10), and between individuals within each of these. Furthermore, the criteria by which status is assessed, and the means by which it is achieved, differ between societies and between groups within societies, though the criterion usually concerns the ability to influence others in a way appropriate to the society. In some it is physical prowess, in some material possessions or wealth, in some learning or wisdom, and in some generosity. In nineteenth-century Germany the code of honour, coupling violence with courage, sustained through the ritual of duelling, helped to maintain the status of the upper class into the twentieth century.[2] At the other extreme, in some religious communities displays of humility may be conducive to high status.

That individual assertiveness and aggressiveness on the one hand, and wealth on the other, should both be capable of contributing to status makes intuitive sense: both can be used to influence others. It may be less obvious why generosity leads to high status, but at least two explanations are possible. First, if generosity benefits other members of the community, it is in the latters' interests to provide status as an incentive to donors (see pp. 91–2). An alternative but not incompatible view is that generosity is a symbol of success: the person who can afford to be generous must have been assertive and successful enough to give some of his possessions away and still have enough for himself. It thus provides a more useful way of displaying success than buying a Rolls Royce or a diamond necklace,[3] and evidence of success can bring high status. But it is no good being generous unless your generosity is recognized by others. Thus it is not surprising that reciprocity, at least in the form of respect or gratitude, is usually expected. From this perspective, generosity that is conspicuous, or a display of strength or skill that is costly to the donor yet provides benefits to others, can be seen as a means to create obligations.[4]

While the issue is perhaps still controversial, the evidence strongly suggests that status may be sought as a valued resource in its own right, independently of immediate access to any physical rewards that it may

bring.[5] Since striving for status may require effort, stress and resources, one must ask just why it should be so attractive. Here one must distinguish two questions, one of primary importance to psychologists, the other to biologists. The first concerns the proximate psychological mechanisms that lead to gaining status being a positive experience; the second is why in a functional sense humans should seek to hold respected positions in the society. With regard to the first, it may be that the feelings of superiority, independence, or autonomy that high status brings are sought after. Perhaps the positive nature of those feelings is itself a product of natural selection, being indicative of priority of access to resources. This is compatible with the finding that an individual unable to achieve the status he desires may raise his self-esteem by seeing himself in a compensatory way, such as being a righteous and humble citizen (see below) or a campaigner for human rights. Or, along the same lines, perhaps succeeding reinforces effort, and the resulting feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem acts as a spur to do even better, lending credence to the proverb that nothing succeeds like success. This would be in harmony with the finding that confidence in one's ability to perform some task is an important step towards actually performing it. More importantly, perceived self-efficacy is closely linked to a wide range of psychological processes that mediate health and disease.[6] Of course, such answers may be important if the goal is to control others' behaviour, but they inevitably pose further questions. For instance, why should perceived self-efficacy be linked to health?

That leads us to the second question concerning the ultimate function, or biologically advantageous consequences, of status seeking. Almost by definition, this concerns access to resources – it may be food, space, members of the opposite sex, or what have you. The stress-free life that results may itself be conducive to good health and longevity. Beyond that, a number of studies[7] have shown that high status is associated with high reproductive success in traditional societies (mostly because of an association with polygyny), but not in modern industrial ones. Although in modern societies, as well as in a number of preliterate ones, social status is associated with longevity, it seems to be by no means always biologically adaptive. Sometimes attempts to achieve high status are a waste of energy, or even counterproductive.

Once status rankings are established, the force of authority can be so powerful that it can be used to cause other individuals to act in ways contrary to their moral beliefs. Experimentally this was demonstrated in Milgram's famous experiments in which subjects were induced to give other individuals strong (though bogus) electric shocks on the authority of the experimenter.[8] Tragically, the same principle seems to have been partly responsible for the horrors of the Holocaust.[9]

However maintenance of the social order may be seen by the authorities to involve more than keeping the lower orders in their place. Those in power

may perceive their position to be threatened by increasing disorder in the society. Punitive measures may then be thought necessary. During the first half of the sixteenth century in south-west Germany, drinking, violence and disputes became increasingly habitual and seemed liable to endanger the communities. The authorities attempted to suppress these tendencies by using informers and by imposing fines for minor offences. The punishments for fornication and premarital sex were increased several times over sixty years in the mid-seventeenth century.[10] In addition to such social disorders, high-status individuals may see attempts by subordinates to rise in the social order as attempts to cheat on the *status quo*. Interestingly, cheater detection seems to be easier for high-ranking individuals than for those lower in status.[11]

Those in power do best if they can avoid conflict and use power, persuasion or guile to convince others that the *status quo* is in their own interests. If they can convince others that high status is a matter of moral right, they can control others by using the moral code to their own advantage. They may assume divine support, and emphasize the moral righteousness of loyalty. They may promote the view that humility is a virtue leading to ultimate reward for those lower in the hierarchy. Thus moral codes in many societies contain precepts enjoining individuals to show behaviour appropriate to their position in society. The Anglican Catechism requires the Confirmand to undertake

> To honour and obey the King (or Queen), and all that are put in authority under him (or her): To submit myself to all my governours, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters: To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters … and to do my duty in that state of life, unto which it shall please God to call me.

While such precepts safeguard the positions of high-status individuals, and were probably imposed by them,[12] they also have the effect of avoiding conflict in the society. Acceptance by the less powerful may also be facilitated by the realization that humility is a good strategy in the current circumstances – and, indeed, in some circumstances low-status individuals may profit from the protection of high-status ones or from their benevolence (see p. 96). In addition, lack of humility in the form of boastfulness may arouse antagonism in others, whose sense of self-efficacy is diminished by comparison. But lower-status individuals, having accepted humility as a virtue, may then use it to castigate their superiors.

Thus it would be simplistic to suppose that the maintenance of status differences is merely a matter of immediate pressure from those at the top: the maintenance of hierarchical order depends on its acceptance by those at the bottom, as well as on the power of those at the top. This is epitomized by a group in Zimbabwe where social personhood is not conflated with indi-

viduality, but is defined by reference to fixed and hierarchically arranged social categories. In that society 'paying respect' is an issue of prime importance, and paying respect downwards is as important as paying respect upwards. Good manners implies recognition of the *social* personhood of the other, that is, the social position that he or she occupies in relation to yourself, rather than recognition of his or her individuality. In that society hierarchy is the cornerstone of social personhood, and the obligation is to treat other people as social persons, not as individuals. In any encounter, individual selfhood must be concealed, strict self-control and formality becoming the ideal.[13]

Thus status-seeking, resulting from assertiveness, is to be found in all human societies. Status is sought in its own right, but is likely to bring access to resources. The criteria for high status differ between cultures and subcultures. One way in which those with power can maintain it is by manipulating the moral code.

Individual autonomy and rights

Yet another way in which the tendency of individuals to assert themselves is related to moral issues concerns individual autonomy and 'rights'. In many cases the demand for individual autonomy and rights can be seen as a means of protection against control by those with higher status. We have already touched on this in the context of the moral development of individuals (pp. 57–8).

The development of a sense of personal rights in the individual is intimately related to the developing sense of agency and, whilst apparently of minimal importance in some societies, has become of increasing importance in the West. 'Preserve your own autonomy' has become a basic moral principle for many. That at least some individuals have, or should have, certain rights has probably been recognized at least since Greek and Roman times.[14] Equality and matters of individual freedom have become increasingly important in Western countries – in Britain especially since the demands of the Levellers in the mid-seventeenth century. Nowadays the newspapers contain references to human rights almost daily. The Constitution of the United States of America is based on certain 'inalienable' human rights. Freedom of opinion, speech, movement, freedom to realize the essential self, have come to be regarded as absolutes. It is for that reason that (not necessarily selfish) assertiveness (see p. 28) and the accompanying autonomy have come to be valued by feminists. In general, it could be argued that such freedoms are basic to the ideals of equality and democracy, for if I claim the right to my own opinion, I must allow others the right to theirs. The rights of the individual must be tied to a responsibility to grant similar rights to others.

To what extent are these rights a legal matter? Some philosophers (e.g. Bentham) have held that no rights exist unless they are encapsulated in the

law. But if the law were the ultimate determiner of individuals' rights, then there could be no moral objection to a government introducing laws to restrict individual freedoms in any way it wished. If the law were to be equated with morality, the police would have a *moral right* to search suspected terrorists, even though others might feel that it was *morally* wrong for them to be empowered to do so. It is the pre-existence of a moral principle concerning (in this case) individual freedom that would make it possible for the right of the police to be challenged – and in some cases enable the law to be changed.[15]

In modern legal systems in the West the law now tends to be seen as based on human rights, rather than vice versa, and rights have become a moral matter, not mere cultural convention. However, it is possible that too much or too rapid movement in that direction could be counterproductive for society. Increasing individualism in the West is leading to a tendency for the rights of individuals to become increasingly emphasized, and this can involve an erosion of social responsibilities. Although the assertion of individual rights may benefit the individual, it may not be to the advantage of the community: individual autonomy must often be curtailed for the good of others. This is not only a question of curtailing behaviour directly detrimental to others, for limitations on individual rights can have a beneficial effect on all. This is illustrated by the 'tragedy of the commons'. So-called 'common land' usually belonged to a landowner, but commoners owned restricted rights to graze their animals, cut wood, and so on. So long as the rights were restricted, the danger of the land becoming overgrazed was eliminated; when that system broke down, and the rights were jointly owned by the commoners, competition between them led to the resources being overused. It then became necessary for the commoners themselves to control usage.[16]

But should we really see rights as moral issues, and not as matters of convention? The rights that are recognized differ to a considerable extent between cultures, implying that they are a matter of convention. But seeking after autonomy is presumably related to the propensity for selfish assertiveness, and may be a pan-cultural psychological characteristic, though differing markedly between cultures in its expression. A speculative but reasonable assumption is that a right to autonomy is felt by individuals early in development, and that particular rights are claimed gradually as a consequence of individuals seeking more extended autonomy, limits being set largely by cultural convention. If that is so, the so-called 'inalienable rights' have themselves emerged over time from pan-cultural bases in some societies, but are so firmly embedded in the socio-cultural structure that they have the quality of absolutes.

Closely related to the question of rights are certain issues regarded as virtuous. Thus, in the West at least, we approve of those who make the best of their talents, who seek to improve themselves, and who maintain their integrity: 'self-realization' is regarded as a proper goal. All of these are

presumably related to selfish assertiveness, and perhaps striving for autonomy, in the short term, though perhaps with long-term prosocial goals.

Clearly, there is a delicate question of balance here. For some, self-realisation in the long term, maintenance of one's integrity, and expression of one's needs in the short term, are reified into overriding moral principles. This can be justified on the grounds that the suppression of self-expression leads to frustration, while its release is accompanied by satisfaction and a tendency to behave beneficently to others. In addition, the display of personal integrity may encourage others to do likewise. Thus, if all could express themselves fully, all would be better off. The downside of this as an overriding principle lies in the fact that self-expression can be to the detriment of others, and requires consideration from others. Either others must inhibit their own need for self-expression, or the need for self-expression must be tailored by consideration for others. While self-realization and self-expression must be seen as moral rights accompanying individualism, they must also be attenuated by the need for considerateness.

In any case, whether or not an individual is seen to have rights depends on whether she or he is recognized as a person. The denial of some degree of personhood to certain categories of individuals has already been mentioned. Even more glaring examples sometimes followed in the wake of colonialism. Abuses of the aborigines in Australia, and of the Indians in Central and North America, are well-known. As another example, in the late nineteenth century land rights in the Congo were given to private companies, who were given almost absolute power. The Africans were dispossessed of their rights to the land and its fruits, and received miniscule returns for their labours in collecting those fruits. Vast profits were made from rubber and ivory – the major part of which went into the pockets of King Leopold II of Belgium. Africans were shot, or had their hands cut off, if they failed to bring in an adequate quantity of rubber. There are descriptions of hunted women clutching their children as they fled panic-stricken into the bush.[17] In brief, the Africans were considered as non-persons.

Again, in the wars of the twentieth century, propaganda machines in each group or country have endeavoured to deny personhood to enemies, and even to present them as having an animal status, in order to justify their destruction. In an experimental study of a simulated prison, college students who had been randomly assigned the role of guards began to treat those assigned the role of inmates in degrading and punitive ways.[18] And when experimental subjects were given punitive power, they showed much greater punitiveness towards people characterized in neutral terms than humanized targets, and even more to dehumanized ones.[19] These experiments illustrate also how the attribution of personhood to others is not an all-or-nothing matter; denying rights to certain categories of individuals in a society (for instance, the insane or criminals), thereby making them effectively non-persons, is usually a matter of degree.

Summary

1 Moral precepts conducive to prosocial behaviour, as discussed in the last chapter, are made necessary by the potential for selfish assertiveness. Selfish assertiveness leads also to striving for status.
2 Status differences are almost ubiquitous in human societies. High status seems often to be sought as a goal in its own right. It is a reasonable presumption that striving for status, or the assertiveness that leads to such striving, has been selected for, because it can carry access to resources.
3 High-status individuals can promote precepts and values (e.g. the virtue of humility) likely to maintain their own high status.
4 The assertiveness of individuals can also be linked to the value placed on autonomy and the assertion of rights.

10

SOURCES OF MORAL PRECEPTS: SEX- AND GENDER-RELATED ISSUES

Introduction

The relations between sex and gender have provided endless fuel for debate in recent decades.[1] Many of the feminists of the 1960s and 1970s tended to assert that there were no differences between men and women except in reproductive functioning. That view is no longer accepted. Sex differences in brain structures as well as in behaviour are now well-established, with prenatal hormonal influences playing an essential role.[2] That, of course, does not diminish the importance of experience during post-natal development: sex and gender differences require consideration of both nature and nurture. Furthermore, not only are there differences between how men and women behave and are seen to behave in any one culture, but there is also cultural diversity in how gender differences are perceived and conceptualized. As an example, for the Vezo of Madagascar identity is not a fixed state of being into which people are born, but a way of doing which makes them 'Vezo' contextually and contingently. Thus, a Vezo person can become transformed into a member of another group by what he or she does. In the same way, some Vezo men become 'like women' by virtue of the way in which they dress and the acts in which they engage. Their gender is created by what they do.[3] Earlier, Strathern described a group living near Mount Hagen in the New Guinea Highlands who saw gender as a process rather than what one is, and bodies as multiply gendered. Such a processual approach may exist alongside categorization based on external genitalia.[4]

For any discussion of gender differences, two common sources of misunderstanding must be dealt with from the start. First, whereas virtually all human individuals are, with rare exceptions, of either the male or female sex as indicated by their genitalia, gender differences in attitudes, values and behaviour are a matter of degree, individuals showing lability during development. It is essential to be clear that the differences in gender between men and women are statistical only. Many men show characteristics usually regarded as typical of women, and vice versa. Just as men are on average taller than women, but some women are taller than many men,

so also is there a broad overlap in psychological characteristics: some men show more characteristics regarded as feminine than do many women, some women show more masculine characteristics than many men.[5] In studies of sex/gender differences, individuals are usually assigned to groups according to their biological *sex*, but, because the characteristics assessed are influenced by socialization and enculturation, such studies are often referred to as concerned with *gender* differences. Comparisons of gender differences between members of one biological sex (e.g. between more and less feminine men) are less common, and tend to be the concern of psychologists.

The second common source of misunderstanding concerns the difference between the goals of biology and the social sciences. These have already been discussed in Chapter 2, but the issues are especially relevant here, and another word may be justifiable. Social scientists are mostly concerned with issues within one society, or with differences between societies, groups, age classes, and so on. Presumably for that reason, social-science explanations of gender differences often tend to stress the manner in which children grow into the social roles accepted as appropriate in the culture or subculture.[6] The biologist's initial approach here involves a broader brush, attempting to find general principles valid for most human societies; exceptions do not necessarily invalidate the approach. Thus, if there are roughly equal numbers of men and women in the world, but 97 per cent (say) of the world's national leaders are men, that is a fact that needs explaining. An explanation in terms of differences between the biological natures of men and women may be appropriate, but that does not mean that it will be a total explanation, or that cultural factors (perhaps involving social roles) are not involved. Nor would the suggestion that biological factors are important necessarily be invalidated by the 3 per cent that are exceptions. But the involvement of cultural factors means that the genesis and mode of action of those cultural factors also need explanation, and again biological factors may ultimately be involved. A continuous teasing apart of the dialectic is essential (see Figure 2.1, p. 23).

This chapter attempts to integrate the biological and social-science approaches to the study of sex/gender differences, with special reference to moral issues. As in other chapters, an attempt is made to relate the way in which people actually behave or are expected to behave to the behaviour, and behavioural differences, that would be predicted from the principles of natural selection. Coincidence between the two implies at least that cultural developments have paralleled the requirements of natural selection, and more probably that they have been directly influenced by it. Thus we are concerned with the relation between biologically based predispositions, cultural stereotypes and gender differences in moral attitudes and behaviour within cultures, though any review of all the complexities would take us too far afield.[7] *Biological propensities* influence *behaviour* and (indirectly) cultural *stereotypes and expectations*. Cultural *expectations* about sex and

gender differences in behaviour may or may not closely resemble differences in how men and women *actually behave*, but *they affect and are affected by their behaviour*. We shall see that it is often in the interests of the members of one sex to promote or maintain the stereotypes, even though they bear little relation to reality.

Sexual relations

Sexual intercourse is essentially a private matter. In most, and probably every, society it is normally conducted in seclusion. There may be immediate reasons for this in individual cases – the danger of the act arousing jealousy or inviting interference from others, as occurs in some non-human primates. Discovery is liable to bring automatic embarrassment, and infringements of privacy are regarded with disapprobation in at least the majority of societies. To an extent that differs between cultures, sexual activities performed in public, as well as voyeurism, are morally disreputable. It is possible that this is a secondary consequence of the ways in which sexual relations are hedged around with moral precepts and conventions in every culture in the world.

Every culture has norms, often elevated to the status of moral precepts and/or secular laws, specifying when and where sexual relations are and are not permitted, though their nature differs greatly between societies. Many Hindus see intercourse as a model for mystical union. Some Protestants, likewise, have regarded sex as important as a spiritual experience, but others as a necessary evil and/or, more pragmatically, as necessary only because sexual lust must be satisfied inside marriage to prevent adultery. In sixteenth-century Germany either husband or wife could sue the other for refusing intercourse, but sex outside marriage was seen as indicative of social disorder, and authorities might not only punish offenders but fine those who failed to report illicit sex in their households.[8]

Some societies are monogamous, some polygynous, a few polyandrous.[9] Male motivation to possess more than one wife may stem from sexual desire, from a wish to have many children (who may have economic value), or from the status of having more than one wife. In some societies, like the Aché and Bari of Amazonia, a woman may have intercourse with many partners, thereby acquiring their subsequent help in rearing the child. The practice is sustained by a belief that a foetus requires repeated doses of semen.[10] In some societies by convention parents do not live together. The Moso, in south-west China, do not recognize biological paternity: most brothers and sisters remain in their natal 'house', the men taking a paternal role with their sister's children but visiting their sexual partners at night.[11] Some societies permit or encourage sexual relations in adolescence, others prohibit it. The diversity is almost endless.

Differences in sexual practices can sometimes be seen as the result of the translation into social precepts of customs that have been seen to be

reproductively successful. Sexual intercourse between spouses is usually required, and some world religions prohibit contraception. Intercourse during menstruation may be forbidden, but that is likely to increase its frequency during the fertile period. Such principles are not only in the reproductive interests of the individual but also tend to increase the size of the religious community and are thus in the interests of the religious specialists who uphold them.[12]

Differences between men and women in sexual freedom

In many societies the very nature of sexual relationships differs between men and women in ways that can be understood in terms of the different reproductive consequences of extra-pair mating by the other.[13] The point here is that the reproductive interests of the woman may not coincide with those of the man. A woman always knows that the child in her womb is her own, but a man who provides paternal care has no such assurance that a child whom he helps rear is his. In most societies, therefore, extramarital mating by men does not lower the reproductive success of their wives unless it is accompanied by the diversion of resources to another woman, but extramarital mating by a woman may result in the man expending paternal care on a child that is not his. It is thus in the interests of men to restrict extramarital (and often premarital) mating by women (see also p. 119). Many cultures emphasize female modesty and chastity, prescribe concealing clothing for women and/or restrict their movements. Even the social norms that prescribe time-consuming occupations for women, tasks such as sewing or weaving that keep them in the home, have been seen as male devices to restrict women's freedom.[14] That such practices have been applied to women more than men is understandable from this biological perspective. In harmony with that, many more societies forbid adultery by wives than proscribe it by husbands,[15] and in most societies men are allowed more sexual licence than women – though no doubt this has been reinforced by the greater power of the men.

We may consider two examples from areas with different religious and cultural traditions. In many parts of the Muslim world the notion of male honour is related to challenges to the protected sphere of the *haram*. While women's moral behaviour is related to the concept of modesty, this is essentially subordinated to male notions of honour and status, and women and children are seen as protected appendages to men's honour. By her actions, a woman can damage the honour of her husband. Within Islam, *haram* denotes that which is legally and morally forbidden. However, as a consequence of historical and geographical factors, the extent to which the concept actually informs practice differs between regions of the Islamic world, between its several traditions, between social classes, and between the differing contexts of family and kinship. In peripheral parts of the Muslim

world *haram*ization is much diluted or absent, and women are seen as able to defend their own honour.[17]

In Mexico, with a different religious tradition, the same issue, involving fundamentally the same world-view, is played out in a somewhat different way. Here also different moralities for men and women co-exist. Women act as mediators in men's relationships with each other, and also act as a threat to men, because their actions influence men's reputations. A bride's virginity is a matter of honour for both the bride's family and for that of her prospective husband, sealing a bond between the men. If this is disproved, vengeance on her family is called for. The *machismo* of family members is thus associated with the woman's virtue. Women are seen as the keepers of men's honour, men as the guardians of women's virtue. Resulting from this, sexuality is seen in terms of virility for men, chastity for women; but, while masculinity is assessed as a continuum, women are seen as either good or not. Masculinity is seen as the encompassing value, both between men and between the sexes, articulated through relations of dominance. But, at the same time, the feminine is seen as containing the masculine. This arises because virginity is seen as an expression of female potential sexuality and fertility, as well as of chastity. Sexual intercourse, and the transformation from virginity to motherhood, are institutionalized through marriage. The symbol of the Virgin mother (specifically the Virgin of Guadalupe) appeals to women as linking the virtues of chastity and motherhood, because both the Virgin and motherhood are associated with self-sacrifice and suffering. Needless to say, the contrasting male virility and female chastity are associated with differing expectations in other areas of life. For instance, a man is expected to support his family, and a woman's place is in the home – the latter both because the husband should be an adequate provider and because work outside the home might put her chastity at risk.[17]

In this culture suffering, because of its associations with the Virgin and with motherhood, has become a moral issue – the more you suffer (for reasons of virtue), the better you are, and mothers are assumed to suffer. This necessarily introduces an ambiguity, because the positive associations of suffering motherhood, inside or outside wedlock, can override the distinction between women with and without virtue. For men, however, this issue does not arise, for fidelity does not have the same significance, and they can be father, husband and lover at the same time. Nevertheless the ambiguities associated with gender permit a mutivocality in moral interpretations.

A relation between family honour and female chastity was also present in the West until recently,[18] though of course things are now changing. In Sweden, where premarital sex receives little discouragement, and single mothers get more advantages from the social system than in most other countries, chastity has much less importance for men choosing a bride than in other European countries.[19] Thus, while the virtue of chastity probably has a biological base, its importance varies cross-culturally. Women still tend

to carry more blame for infringements of the sexual code. With the wide availability of contraception in most Western countries, sexual intercourse in the absence of a marital bond seems to carry little or no further obligation for the male. This is a situation very different from, for instance, that prevailing amongst the Aché, where intercourse carries with it an obligation to help in the rearing of any child that the woman conceives (see above). Many, but by no means all, societies recognize the vulnerability of deserted women and make special provision for the protection of them and their children.[20] This may involve, for instance, a return to the family of origin, or special responsibilities for a member of her kin-group.

Restrictive sexual practices are often viewed quite differently by those within and outside the culture. This is especially apparent in discussions about 'genital modification'. While male circumcision is usually accepted without comment in Western societies, genital modification of girls or women is seen as a means to restrict extramarital intercourse by depriving them of sexual responsiveness, and is described as mutilation.[21] Much evidence indicates that the often crude and cruel surgery has adverse medical consequences, although some evidence suggests that this has been overstated.[22] However, for those involved, genital modification is usually seen as a means of acquiring adult status and full access to group customs, law and religion, and thus as an important part of their cultural heritage.[23] The foot-binding of women in China has also often been cited as an example of a practice intended to prevent women's extramarital sexual intercourse. It may have done so, though hard evidence that it prevented extramarital sex seems to be at least scarce, and it certainly did not prevent women travelling. Others maintain that it was a means to keep women subservient, as sex objects for male sexual fantasies. However what it meant to men and women at the time may have been rather different. In late Imperial China it was regarded by contemporaries as a marker of élite status, as a sign of civility and Han identity and of the superiority of Han culture.[24] It is therefore clear that caution in the interpretation of such practices is essential, and that distinctions must be made between the origins of the practice, its current consequences, and its perception by those involved. Cultural practices are often accepted and valued without inquiry into their origins or consequences, and the meaning of any such practice, as well as its precise nature and the ways it is experienced, change with time.

Differences between the reproductive requirements of men and women are paralleled by differences in the psychological characteristics seen in many societies as appropriate to them. Men have to compete with men for a partner or partners (see below) and, once they have acquired one, to protect her from the attentions of other men. Masculine characteristics of aggressiveness and assertiveness, and a machismo tradition, are in harmony with this. Chivalry to women goes with men's protective role. Reciprocally, women are expected to be chaste, modest and faithful, with less licence than is allowed to men. Commitment is important to both men and women in

most societies, depending on the socio-sexual system.[25] Parenting brings further requirements. For long-term relationships men tend to choose women with high reproductive potential who will be 'good mothers'. The qualities of good motherhood vary with circumstances, but sensitive and gentle responsiveness is likely to be important in most. In a study involving diverse societies, women were found to value dependability and commitment, emotional stability and kindness in potential marriage partners, as well as (or as indicative of?) potential as a good provider.[26]

Are there sex/gender differences in morality?

Studies of moral orientation

The question of whether members of one sex can be said to be 'more moral' than, or moral in a way different from, members of the other has come into the limelight largely because of the work of Gilligan[27] and other feminist psychologists. It was earlier claimed that women tend to score lower on the frequently used Kohlberg[28] stages of moral reasoning. Gilligan claimed that this was because the scales emphasize issues of justice, focusing on rules, rights, reciprocity and autonomy, and place less emphasis on the feminine virtues of caring, responsibility and relationships. Discussion of this view will require us to go somewhat beyond differences in moral orientation to consider some general matters relating to sex and gender differences.

The evidence for Gilligan's view is conflicting, in part because what women and men are supposed to do, and the stereotypes of how women and men are believed to behave in a given society, often do not correspond closely with what they actually do. In any case, a number of recent studies have failed to demonstrate a clear difference between women and men on the Kohlberg stages,[29] and it is clear that both use both justice and care orientations, though the matter is much influenced by situational context and culture.[30] Indeed a meta-analysis of (mostly North American) studies of adolescent and adult helping behaviour showed a tendency for men to help more than women. However, the contexts tended to be different – men's help is often directed to strangers in 'heroic' contexts, women's given in the course of long-term relationships (which are less susceptible to quantitative study).[31]

Other studies do show a tendency for women to use the care orientation more than men;[32] and a meta-analysis of studies of prosocial responding by children, while showing considerable lack of consistency across studies, indicated that girls showed more behaviour classified as prosocial than did boys.[33] The difference was present in studies in which the subjects knew what was being assessed and were in control of their responses (e.g. self-report measures), but was less evident when physiological measures or subtle observational techniques were used. There was therefore some suggestion that differences become more marked as children become aware of gender-role

stereotypes and expectations, and as they internalise these. Other studies suggest that the appearance of a difference in tests on adolescents depends on the dilemma with which the individual is faced: although few differences were found when children were asked to reason about hypothetical dilemmas, some differences were found with adults on real-life dilemmas.[34] Eisenberg and Fabes have suggested that females may be more likely to embed their prosocial behaviour in their own personal relationships, while males are more likely to engage in impersonal acts of prosocial behaviour, such as donating to charity.

Evidence from other branches of psychology

Data from several quite different sources in psychology, mostly more closely related to real-life situations, are in harmony with the suggestion that women are more caring than men in close relationships. Thus:

1 A wide variety of studies of married couples or heterosexual partners shows that close relationships with others are more important to girls and women than to boys and men.[35] The difference is present in very young children: young boys tend to play in groups, girls to form one-to-one relationships. Later, in distressed marriages, women tend to want more closeness, men more autonomy. Women are more prone to attempt to deal with marital conflict than are men. Women disclose more than men, and in describing their relationships focus on intimate feelings, while men focus on shared activities. It is important to note here that it is not so much biological sex that matters, but feminine characteristics. One study showed that married couples in which both partners were feminine or androgynous (see footnotes, p. 104) reported the highest relationship quality, those in which one partner was undifferentiated or masculine the least. Another showed that marital satisfaction is greater in couples where both partners are high in femininity or emotional expressivity. Another found the happiness of each spouse to be more closely related to his/her assessment of the partner's femininity than to the partner's own assessment of his/her own femininity.[36] As so often in personal relationships, what matters is what each partner perceives to be the case, not what actually is.
2 Sexual behaviour (at least in North America) is associated with close relationships much more by women than by men.[37]
3 Studies of worries in seven-year-olds[38] and adolescents[39] show that, when asked about their worries, males are more likely to refer to issues of achievement and autonomy, while females refer to concerns about relationships.
4 An important study of self-esteem in 14-, 18- and 23-year-olds suggests that the ability to relate positively to others promotes self-esteem in girls

and women, whereas for boys and men interpersonal connectedness is less critical, their sense of identity depending on their ability to control social anxiety and to function effectively. Specifically, in girls an increase in self-esteem over this age-range was correlated with a personality profile reflecting warmth and a communal orientation, whereas an increase in boys was related to a self-orientation. At twenty-three, 'young women with high self-esteem emphasize interpersonal connectedness far more than young men with high self-esteem. They tend to be warm, gregarious, talkative, giving, closely concerned individuals, whereas young men with high self-esteem are relatively unemotional, uninvolved, and independent in distancing ways'.[40] This study shows that the internalisation of cultural norms is associated with high self-esteem.

5 Individuals with a primarily prosocial orientation are reported to have more sisters (but not brothers) than those with individualistic or competitive orientations,[41] suggesting that sisters enhance a prosocial personality development.

It must be noted that most of this work has been carried out in Europe and North America, and things could be different in other cultures. However, although the issue is not finally resolved and the extent of the differences is not clear, the evidence is clearly in harmony with a difference in moral orientation between men and women. Girls and women tend to be or to become more caring than boys or men, especially in relationships with other individuals. There is nothing in these studies to show that that is necessarily so. In any case, in many real-life situations caring and justice considerations are interwoven.

Gender stereotypes

Judgements concerning what is 'right' behaviour for women and for men are likely to be related to cultural stereotypes concerning their behaviour. Given that the concepts 'woman' and 'man' are in part culturally constructed, it is not surprising that gender stereotypes differ between cultures. Nevertheless, women are usually portrayed as more caring and prosocial than men. Data presented by Williams and Best[42] and published in 1982 indicate that this is (or was) a near-ubiquitous phenomenon. These authors presented 300 items of an adjective check-list to adult students in 25 countries, asking them to specify whether each adjective was associated more with men or with women. There were between 52 and 120 students in each country, and approximately equal numbers of men and women. Items that more than 67 per cent of respondents classed as male-associated or female-associated were used to specify the male–female stereotype in the country in question. The data showed that the sex stereotypes bore considerable similarity across countries, with the North American samples being around the middle of all

countries tested in the degree of male–female difference. The authors present a list of items that were female- or male-associated in at least 19 of the 25 countries. The female-associated list included 'affectionate' (24 countries), 'gentle' (21), 'kind' (19), 'pleasant' (19), 'sensitive' (24), and 'soft-hearted' (23). In contrast, no adjective which could be said to refer to a prosocial characteristic appeared amongst the male-associated items, though there were a number related to selfish assertiveness – such as 'aggressive' (24 countries), 'boastful' (19) and 'opportunistic' (20) – and others that could be called antisocial – such as 'cruel' (21), 'egotistical' (21), 'hardhearted' (21) and 'unkind' (19). Furthermore, in an analysis of these data based on Berne's transactional analysis, 'nurturant parent' scores were higher for females than for males in 24 of the 25 countries. There is thus considerable support for the view that the female stereotype is more prosocial than the male in at least the great majority of countries. In other words, in general women are both believed to behave, and expected to behave, in a more prosocial and nurturant fashion than men.

Source of the difference in stereotypes

A critical question is how this difference in expectations for men and women comes about. We may consider two approaches to this problem, which have often been seen as incompatible. The first stresses the power differential between men and women, the second their reproductive requirements.

Male power in the social and political spheres

Moral codes tend, as we have seen, to be strongly influenced by those in positions of power, and most stratified human societies appear to be male-dominated. Perhaps the status difference between men and women is simply dictated by men.

Male domination probably has several roots. First, it is often argued that men have the advantage in physical strength. Perhaps related to that, women may need protection. But there is also another, related, issue stemming from differences between the natures of men and women, in particular differences in 'achievement motivation'.[43] Experimental evidence suggests that this is higher in men than women, at least in the USA. Of course, that could be the result of enculturation and inherent in the political rhetoric in a male-dominated society.

In any case, given that men have socio-political power in the majority of societies, we must ask why that should be so? Here a biological approach can be used. In the course of human evolution, men's reproductive success was limited by access to women, while that of women was limited by the demands of, and time required for, pregnancy and lactation. Men's access to women was enhanced by power and prestige consequent upon their assertiveness

(see pp. 91–2), while women's desire for social control was attenuated by the demands of parenthood to a much greater extent than that of men. Of course, during cultural evolution parental roles have diversified, and in some cultures mothers have delegated responsibilities to wet nurses or to nannies,[44] but the issue here concerns pan-cultural differences in dispositions between men and women. The extensive literature on other differences in attitudes and behaviour strongly suggests that the differences in self-assertiveness and status-seeking are based on an inherent difference between men and women.[45] That cultural factors are also involved, however, is indicated by the existence of cultural differences in the degree of male power.

Men have been able to reinforce and accentuate the difference in socio-political power by the use of mythology and stereotypes that tend to serve masculine interests. Some anthropologists have ascribed male dominance to a widespread equation of women with nature and men with culture, and the (supposed) superiority of the latter.[46] The portraying of women as dangerous and evil, found in so many societies, may be a male device to subordinate women.[47] And, in the same way, it may have been and be in men's interests to emphasize the caring side of women's natures, since they and their children are the recipients of that care. This suggests that the greater social power of males may not be due solely to an inherent difference between the sexes, for pre-existing differences in predispositions may be accentuated by stereotypes that serve male interests.

If the differences in stereotypes are due to male power, there is still a further question: how, in so many societies, have men managed to impose stereotypes advantageous to themselves more effectively than women? But perhaps it has not been all men's doing. Women may accept the social norms, and find their own satisfactions in ways that are not affected by those norms,[48] or by laughing at the pompous men behind their backs. And there is another issue. Detailed studies in many cultures have shown that, as mates, women prefer high-status men.[49] Presumably high-status males are (or were, earlier in human evolution) likely to pass on better genes and/or were likely to be better providers, so that selection has maintained the female preference for high status. A stereotype of males as status-seeking would thus be supported both by women who wanted men of high status and by men as epitomizing what they would like to be. Women who selected men able and willing to aspire to high status, and the males whom they selected, would have more children and grandchildren than others, and thus high status-seeking by males would be maintained in the population. Thus one comes back to an answer in terms of differences in the natures of men and women.

Of course, there are some exceptions to the generalization that societies are male-dominated. Of two communities in the New Guinea Highlands, in one the women are cast as irresponsible and give up their cash for male enterprises, and in the other the reverse is the case.[50] Some African societies

have had female rulers, and in other societies women have had some political influence – though often in the form of female power 'behind the throne'. It has been suggested that this is especially the case in sub-Saharan Africa, where women's status is generally higher than in the Mediterranean area, and matriliny is common.[51] Again, in the Ga of urban Ghana, men and women live separately in men's and women's houses, and women can earn and can own property. Men and women do not share resources, and a few successful women acquire power through their accumulated wealth, while others use it as a way to gain a livelihood independently of a man.[52] However, ideologically and institutionally the society is patriarchal. Such examples show that there is much variation in gender dominance by class, social status, ethnicity, religion and life-cycle stage.[53] But, in general, in the public and political spheres men have more power and receive more respect than women in the vast majority of societies. In the very few societies where women do have significant political power, it tends to be limited.[54]

Female domestic power

Power in day-to-day living is not an easy thing to measure. For one thing, it may depend on the context in which it is assessed and the precise question asked. In a study of marriages in UK the researchers divided decisions into a number of spheres (holidays, children, finances, and so on) and found that power in one did not necessarily mean power in others. Furthermore, within each sphere the decision as to the level at which power should be assessed was to some extent arbitrary. For instance, would it have been more appropriate to ask who bought the tickets for the holiday, or who decided where they should be to, or who decided who should decide where they should be to?[55] Thus, in general male political power does not necessarily mean that males have power in all spheres of life.

In addition, it is important to recognize that people of either sex can and do act differently from the stereotypes that define their gender.[56] In some societies women are derided but nevertheless have considerable power, and sometimes it is the men who are derided and yet have power.

The difficulty of making generalizations about gender differences in power is illustrated in a study of the Berti, a group of Muslim cultivators in the northern Sudan. There the men have a model of male dominance and female subordination, and this is supported by various aspects of symbolism (e.g. the saying 'The man is in front and the woman behind'). The women accept the leadership role of the men in public matters and subscribe to the symbolism, but assert a different model of gender relations, especially when they are with each other and making fun of men. Their model depicts men as dependent on women and is made manifest in the division of labour. There are certain tasks that only men perform, others that are customarily done by women, but the division is such that a woman can live on her own

while a man cannot. A woman temporarily without a man can usually buy meat or a leather bag, items that men normally provide, but men cannot cook and cannot brew beer. Furthermore, a man's status in the public domain depends on his being the head of a household, with a wife to cook for him. Thus the women can see themselves as providing the men with their status. They can exert their power in the house both by refusing sexual access and by refusing to cook – the latter is especially effective, as men tend to eat together, and a refusal by a wife to cook for her husband soon becomes public knowledge and exposes the husband to ridicule. Both men and women accept the validity of the other's model, and in their practical attitudes the two subscribe to different models of gender relations. The credibility of the verbally asserted models is maintained by the different interpretations placed by men and women on their representations of gender relations.[57]

In some respects the situation in Langkawi Island (Malaysia) is similar. The 'correct' terms for spouses to use when addressing each other indicate male dominance. Wives are supposed to address their husbands as '*abang*' (elder brother), and husbands are expected to address their wives as '*adik'* (younger sister), but in practice these terms are very seldom used. Men are dominant in formal politics and religion (Muslim). Women are slightly contemptuous of the men's politics, which they see as divisive. At feasts roles are reversed, but not entirely: the men do the cooking, but they also eat first. Men's and women's work outside the household, though segregated (fishing and rice cultivation respectively) are seen as equally important. Both spouses earn, and money is shared. Important decisions are taken jointly. But in the household things are rather different: everyday matters in the household are controlled entirely by the wife, who is in charge of household expenditure.[58] In Burma (Myanmar), likewise, the socio-cultural domain is male-dominated, but in the domestic domain women are dominant,[59] and in Java women are generally regarded as inferior, but exercise control within the household.[60]

Thus there is evidence that in the domestic sphere the position is often the reverse of that in the social/political sphere,[61] for there are many other societies in which women tend to be dominant in the household.[62] Examples are well-known to feminist anthropologists, but the matter is too seldom recognized in discussions about gender roles, and a few further examples may be considered. But two caveats are in order. First, the literature on gender roles in different societies is diverse and growing rapidly (the studies cited are admittedly selected, though I hope not unfairly so). Second *there is no suggestion that, because women are dominant in the domestic scene in many societies, that is where women should be.*

On the surface the society of the Endo (Kenya) is institutionally patriarchal – men controlling all the property and making all the decisions. Women are said to owe obedience to their husbands and are not allowed to inherit land. But the representations of the society do not portray the real

relations between the sexes. In practice the women have substantial and well-institutionalized rights of use in their husband's property. Marriage is acknowledged as a joint enterprise, the women doing most of the cultivation and the men minding the cattle. The wives control their food stores. A great deal of ritual and practical knowledge is passed on in female initiation ceremonies, and is not available to the men. In addition, the men are dependent on the women in crucial ways, and the women can employ a number of sanctions if they disapprove of their husbands' behaviour or dislike his decisions. They can refuse to cook, deny the husband sex, and encourage gossip about him. On occasion women club together to chastise a man who has been ill-treating his wife. The women have generally positive self-images, and take pride in female sexuality and in motherhood. It appears that the women support the dominant male order in order to value themselves within it. Valuing themselves within the dominant male frame, and participating in it, they thereby appropriate some of its quality.[63]

Although upper caste Hindu women are often portrayed as victims of an oppressive social system, a number of writers have suggested that their acquiescence to male domination is only apparent. 'The husband treated like a lord or deity to his face may be derided behind his back.'[64] In practice, the senior women in the extended family households control and manage all household affairs, including financial matters. By participating in family life they gain meaning and a sense of power in their lives. Although adjusting to a husband's extended family may be difficult, the women see themselves as being reborn there. Junior wives bide their time and seek assimilation into the family in which they will later gain status.

In north-west Portugal peasant wives have had power equal to or greater than their husbands' in the home and are often seen as joint heads of household. Landless girls find it difficult to find a husband, and daughters are favoured in the inheritance of property.[65] In urban Greece the complementarity of wife and husband in the home is recognized and is accompanied by a belief that neither could perform the other's roles in the house. But, while the husband has ultimate authority, the considerable power that the woman has over her husband is recognized.[66]

In China the forms of the houses, especially those of the élite, seem to have been such as to sequester women within their walls. Although in the Song dynasty much emphasis was put on the agnatic line, within the household both men and women apparently had equally important roles in the Confucian rituals. Spinning and weaving provided important work, of both practical and symbolic value, for women in the family.[67] Between the Song and Ming dynasties increasing commercialization reduced the role of women in weaving. Nevertheless in élite households, at least, the wife was in charge of the household economy and was responsible for the maintenance of order. It was she who paid wages, dealt with tenants and ran the estate.

She could even invest in businesses. It has been argued that, in the late Imperial period, the wife was the husband's social and ritual equal.[68]

In early modern Germany Christian morals decreed that marriage had been created by God as a basis for social order. However, wives often retained a feudal-contractual understanding of marriage, so that, if the husband failed to provide protection, peace and nourishment, the wife would cease to feel obliged to be obedient and faithful. Women were able to challenge male authority within the household – perhaps in part because they shared in the family's work-load.[69]

Again, there are exceptions: there are at least a number of societies in which men are dominant in the home,[70] or in which the autonomy of some women in the home is restricted.[71] But the above examples show that women are often dominant in the home. How are such data to be interpreted? It should be noted here that to contrast the socio-political and domestic spheres is sometimes inappropriate. Many factors interact, and any simple antithesis distorts reality, for in some cultures the two spheres overlap, and each affects the other.[72] For instance, the socio-sexual arrangements amongst the Moso in south-west China were mentioned above. Social organization focuses on the 'House', where brothers and sisters continue to live together, the men helping to rear their sisters' children. The head of the house, who has moral though not legal authority, is responsible for its internal affairs and is also its representative in social, political and economic matters. In recent times approximately half of the heads were women and half were men.[73] However, across societies (although there are exceptions) the data indicate that men almost always have the greater power in socio-political matters, and it is at least often the case that women dominate in the domestic arena.

Female power in the household is perhaps the more surprising because men could usually exercise power if they chose to use their greater physical strength. Extreme examples of this are to be seen in cases of partner abuse. This is usually perpetrated by men who insist on being in complete control in their own home, and who lash out when the woman fails to meet their every wish.[74] Interestingly and sadly, many abused women accept their ill-treatment as punishment and feel guilt at their supposed shortcomings. A recent study in the USA[75] identified two categories of women who are prone to maintain relationships in which they are ill-treated. The first includes individuals whose socialization has emphasized loyalty and commitment: this is often augmented by the advice of outsiders, including priests. The second includes those with negative self-concepts and disturbed views of what relationships could be like. It may be fair to suggest that both of these may build on values acquired in childhood in a male-dominated value system – the importance of dutifulness in female partners and the evil nature of womankind.

Of course, it can be argued that men simply do not want to be involved in cooking and weaving, but that hardly applies when it comes to controlling the purse strings. Or perhaps, according to the nature of the society, the men are too busy hunting, ploughing or earning a living to do the cooking, while the women are too preoccupied with their children to care about political issues but are able to exert control in the household. But such immediately practical answers are unsatisfactory if, as often seems to be the case, the men sit around gossiping for much of the day.

Could it be that the case for female power in the household is being overstated by those who wish to assert that women can be dominant if they really want to? Is it that the women have the illusion of power merely because men allow it, and could easily withdraw control over domestic matters from their wives if they wanted to? Perhaps that could be the answer in the case of the Chinese and Indian households mentioned above. But in many cases it seems that women owe their power to their control of resources. That may be a matter of things that only they can provide, such as sex and nurturance,[76] or more generally their control of material necessities. Provision of resources does seem to be an important issue in modern Western society: a study of couples in the USA found that domestic power depended on the relative earning powers of the partners.[77] However, in a number of the cases cited above the women's role as providers is equal to that of the men, but is not necessarily associated with equality in power.[78]

Biological approaches to the gender differences

In summary, the evidence indicates that, in at least a number of societies, women do exercise control in the domestic arena. This may be a matter of their ability to control domestic resources desired by men – an ability which may be due either to their inherent characteristics or to a social system that gives them control over more tangible resources. In any case, there is still the question of why on the social scene men should tend to be more powerful, whereas women often are in the household, and why men should be more interested in the welfare of the group, and women apparently more household- and child-oriented. How does it come about that women often exercise power in the house and much less in public? Indeed why is it that in virtually all pre-industrial societies women are responsible for nearly all domestic activities, as well as cultivating, gathering and preparing plant foods?[79] It may seem that such a situation is natural, but why should it be natural?

Here an evolutionary approach may help, though it is concerned with biological or cultural selective forces, rather than with the immediate causation of behaviour differences. We have seen that, in all species, natural selection has operated to ensure the long-term reproductive success of individuals, and the factors upon which that depends differ between the sexes. A biological understanding of gender differences attempts to specify the differ-

ential requirements of males and females and to see how those relate to the observed differences in behaviour and orientation between the sexes. If they do relate, it is a reasonable hypothesis that the gender differences are a consequence of selection, which has acted to modify the course of development in the two sexes. Initially, of course, that leaves open the question of whether natural selection has affected the biological nature of men and women, or the cultural stereotypes that shape their behaviour, or – indirectly – both. Further support can be sought from comparative, ontogenetic and genetic data.

First, in broad terms for males in general, reproductive success is maximized by inseminating as many healthy females as possible, and by ensuring that the eggs or young are reared successfully according to the species' requirements. The former requires competing successfully with other males. In general, males tend to be larger than females, the difference being related to the degree of male–male competition inherent in the mating system. For females, reproductive success requires attracting a suitable mate and ensuring adequate food and safety for herself and her offspring. In mammals, including humans, the requirements of pregnancy and lactation mean that females must invest more resources in the rearing of each offspring or litter than does the male, and this means that the successful rearing of the offspring will be more important, in biological terms, to females than to males. When human psychological characteristics were being influenced by natural selection, the male requirements could be met by individual men attracting women with high potential fertility; ensuring that they had sole access to one or more such women by either bonding with them or taking other precautions against being cuckolded; acquiring such resources that the women, by reason of their reproductive state or for other reasons, could not provide for themselves; and by ensuring that those women were protected from abduction by other men. In addition, it might be to their advantage to inseminate other women as occasion permitted, but this would be liable to arouse opposition from other males. The female requirements would be met by mating with a male who could endow her children well genetically and, in most but not all societies, by having a partner who could ensure that she had access to adequate resources and protection for herself and her child. That partner could be male or female; another female with whom child care could be shared would be ideal in many circumstances, but the male who had inseminated the female would have the strongest biological incentive to contribute, and might be a better protector.[80] In practice, the male role in child care is extremely variable, both within and between societies,[81] and must have been culturally constructed in relation to the circumstances and history of the group. Where that responsibility for the resources needed for child-rearing is borne by the mother's brothers, biological fathers have virtually no role.[82] However, since the offspring are biologically more important to the mother than to the father,

and since in many socio-sexual systems a male who had mated with a female could not be certain that others had not also done so, and thus that the child was his, the male–female bond is likely to be more important to her than to him, especially if his role as a provider of resources is important.

All of these requirements are likely to have been present in the environments in which humans evolved, though they are not necessarily present in all societies to-day. In keeping with this approach, studies in a number of societies indicate that, while men are more susceptible to jealousy over sexual infidelity than women, women are more prone to jealousy over emotional issues than men[83] – perhaps because the latter might mean a diversion of resources or protection away from them. In harmony with this, we have seen that women's status is enhanced in societies where men and women are both producers.[84] As the earning power of women increases in Western societies, the man's importance as a resource-provider is likely to decrease. And in some societies there are exchange relations of equality between husbands and wives and there is little pooling of resources: in the East African groups studied by Caplan, men and women hold property, there is little sharing of resources, and women can use their resources as they please.[85]

In addition, again in line with the offspring being more biologically important to women than to men, if successful parenthood depends on male cooperation, we should expect the male–female relationship to be more important to her than to him: this is in accord with the many studies in Western societies.[86] For the same reason we should expect the woman to prevent the man's intruding on the resources she required for herself and her offspring. Such requirements are in accord with the behavioural differences found across a wide spectrum of other mammals, and with developmental data indicating differing propensities in boys and girls.[87] Furthermore, a considerable amount of data on human adults, although based on questionnaire methods and largely referring to Western societies, indicates similar tendencies.[88]

Integrating the biological and social science approaches

It seems from this that the biological approach, far from conflicting with the data from the social sciences, nicely complements it. The suggestion is that, earlier in human evolution, men required proper organization of the group to ensure protection from marauding men from other groups, and proper internal structure so that their own women were protected from other in-group males – in other words, they need control in the socio-political arena. In most societies, women need to bond with the male, and do so by continuing to provide sex and nurturance, including cooking, for him. This ensures that he will continue as a protector and provider. Furthermore, they exercise control in the domestic arena so that they can safeguard the resources they

need for themselves and their children. Selection led to male–female differences to meet these different requirements, and traces of its action remain to-day. In this context the division of labour seen in some hunter-gatherers (see pp. 91–2) takes on a new significance: men choose to go after large game, which brings them prestige but is not the most efficient way of providing for their families, while women ensure that their families' needs are satisfied by gathering.[89] The biological approach would suggest that such principles apply widely, despite the differences in sociosexual arrangements between human groups. It implies also that males' interest in the rearing of children is not solely due to the nurturance and sex that their mates can provide: both men and women have a biological interest in their children, but in women this is enhanced by the limitations on their reproductive potential.

A male orientation towards what men see as 'justice', and a female orientation towards nurturance, is thus quite compatible with biological principles. There remains the question of whether these differences lie in the natures of men and women, or whether they have been culturally selected and are imposed by the effect of gender stereotypes in the socialization of successive generations. Biologists have tended too easily to answer in terms of genetic differences, social scientists in terms of cultural ones. The answer probably involves both.

Evidence for the former view comes from several sources. First, the observed differences are compatible with the socio-sexual arrangements likely to have pertained at an early stage in the evolution of our species. Those arrangements can be deduced from comparative study of the anatomy and physiology of the reproductive systems. Across all animal species including humans and the great apes, species differences in the genitalia and reproductive physiology are related to sex differences in socio-sexual behaviour. For example, paternity for the chimpanzee male depends in part on sperm competition inside the female, for females are often mated by several males in succession. Compatible with this, chimpanzee males have a large penis, conspicuous when erected, and relatively enormous gonads and accessory glands. The gorilla male must defend a group of females from other males and, in harmony with that, is much larger than the female. He has almost undisputed access to the females, so sperm competition is not an issue and, compatible with that, he has a relatively small penis and accessory glands. The close fit between the anatomy/physiology and the socio-sexual arrangements in these (and many other) species suggests that both have been co-evolved. We do not know the nature of the socio-sexual arrangements in early humans, but the genitalia provide some strong indications of their nature. Humans differ from their close relatives (chimpanzees and gorillas) in their only moderate sex difference in size, suggesting that our ancestors had a monogamous or only mildly polygynous mating system. Unlike nearly all other female primates, human females are continuously sexually receptive and have sexually attractive

breasts, suggesting that sex played a role in bond maintenance as well as reproduction. Unlike female chimpanzees and some other species, ovulation is concealed. The significance of this has been much discussed, but one hypothesis is that it requires the male to stay by the female and mate with her over a considerable period in order to be sure of paternity, and that it facilitates bond formation and maintenance – presumably important to the female for protection or help in child-rearing. Continuous female receptivity and attractive breasts are in harmony with this. The penis is large compared with most other primates and this also is in line with this view. And the relatively small male accessory glands suggest that the males have not been strongly selected for success in sperm competition, suggesting that they had more or less undisputed access to one or more females.[90] These characteristics are in harmony with social control by males, but bond maintenance by the female and female power where the welfare of children is concerned.

Other evidence that male–female differences depend in part on biological origins comes from differences between the sexes in brain structure and in attitudes and behaviour – for instance, the very early onset of behaviour differences between boys and girls (e.g. boys tend to form groups and girls one-to-one relationships), and the marked difference in predispositions for physical violence or risk-taking (peaking at the stage at which male–male competition for mates is likely to have been most intense).

On the other hand, we have already seen that, although there are considerable cross-cultural commonalities in gender stereotypes and in sex differences in behaviour, there are also great cultural differences. The impact of cultural norms and values in socialization is apparent. The changes in gender relations in the Western world in recent decades argue strongly against genetic *determination* of gender differences in behaviour, attitudes or morality, but are compatible with the role of differences in tendencies to acquire masculine or feminine attitudes and behaviour. As indicated in Chapter 2, predispositions to learn some things rather than others, and constraints on what can be learned, are characteristic of many aspects of the behaviour of other species – and of humans.

Conclusion

Thus the most reasonable hypothesis at the present time is that sex differences in anatomy and physiology are accompanied by sex differences in behavioural propensities, which probably include predispositions to acquire differences in behaviour and moral attitudes. Cultural stereotypes and expectations, created on the basis of the biological predispositions, are the result of a two-way relation over time between what individuals do and what they are supposed to do, and of the social roles into which they grow. The basic and essential differences in predispositions between men and women

could be small, but interaction between the behavioural characteristics of each sex and cultural norms accentuate them. Parents play a part in this, labelling a child as girl or boy, and providing what are regarded as sex-appropriate toys and facilities so that the child's self-concept increasingly includes notions of femaleness or maleness, and sees him or herself as a member of one or other group. In addition, the gender differences are exacerbated by differences in the behaviour of boys and girls. Children tend to play in unisexual groups and, in middle childhood in our society at least, tend to denigrate the members of the other ('Boys are dirty'; 'Girls are sissy'). Later they exaggerate in themselves those characteristics that they deem to be attractive to the other sex: this may include both gender-stereotypic behaviour and the wearing of clothes that accentuate secondary sexual characteristics.[91] These differences in turn must stem from differences between the natures of boys and girls in interaction with cultural norms. The problem for the future is thus to tease apart the interaction, not to subscribe to a view of either genetic or cultural determination.

This may seem to have brought us some way away from the initial question of moral values. But members of both sexes attempt to acquire the characteristics seen as normal and desirable for their gender, and will tend to see those characteristics as 'right'. Furthermore, members of each sex, impelled in part by motivations evolved because they promoted reproductive success and still present in their natures, will support norms and expectations concerning the other sex if those norms and expectations favour their own interests. From a neo-Darwinian point of view, it was, and still is, in men's interests that women should be nurturant and caring; it was, and still is, in women's interests that the man with whom they bond should be successful in competition with other males. Differences in gender stereotypes have bases in differences in psychological characteristics, themselves selected in evolution but exacerbated by those differences in stereotypes.

Relating gender differences to basic psychological predispositions, and ultimately to natural selection, has the unfortunate result of emphasizing conflicts of interest between men and women. While men and women in general have had, and indeed do have, different requirements for successful reproduction, they also need to interact as individuals. To that end they must, at least to some degree, understand each other's points of view. Perhaps, therefore, the finding that each employs justice and caring orientations in making moral judgements is something that should have been expected from the start.

But the differences in stereotypes are related to other aspects of the socio-cultural structure, itself the product of two-way interactions over time between (ultimately) individual propensities and cultural expectations (Figure 2.1). It is therefore essential to remember that biologically based tendencies, or what is called 'natural', are not necessarily 'right'. Just because, in early human groups, natural selection fostered certain

behavioural differences between men and women, that is no reason why those behavioural differences should be favoured to-day. From both biological and cultural perspectives, things have changed. There is no longer a positive correlation between political and social power and reproductive success for men – indeed, in industrial societies the opposite is the case (see p. 97). The availability of contraception means that for both men and women some of the factors that have influenced sexual mores are removed. Changes in the organization of society have led to the possibility of equality of opportunity in resource acquisition between the sexes. Whether that is to be taken as meaning that women and men should have identical opportunities, or whether each should have equal opportunity to develop their own potential, is a further question. However, to facilitate steps towards realizing either possibility, it is necessary to remember that some statistical differences in values, attitudes and behaviour are still at least latent, and that it will be necessary to take them into account.

Incest and kinship

Another problem that requires an integration of biological and social approaches is the ubiquitous presence of incest taboos. This is another issue over which there have been sharp but unnecessary differences of opinion between biologists and social scientists. Part of the problem lies with a difference in definition. While biologists define incest as mating between closely related individuals, anthropologists see the incest taboo as a moral rule that regulates the exchange of wives across social groups.[92]

From the biological perspective, the fact that mechanisms to prevent inbreeding occur in animals suggests that incest taboos have a biological basis. Close inbreeding is associated with reduced breeding success in a wide variety of mammals,[93] including humans. Just why this occurs has been a matter of debate. One possibility depends on the fact that many infectious agents can mutate rapidly in a way that makes it possible for them to remain undetected by the immune system of their host. This problem is much ameliorated in the offspring of parents who are not too closely related. While the offspring of closely related parents may not be sufficiently genetically distinct from their parents to gain immunological protection against the agents to which their parents have ceased to be resistant, out-breeding may provide sufficient genetic distinctiveness for the immune system to be able to recognize, and deal with, a broader spectrum of infectious agents.[94] Another, more traditional explanation is that inbreeding can lead to lethal recessives becoming homozygous. In any case, the evidence indicates that consanguinity can have deleterious consequences. For example, in an area of Pakistan where first-cousin marriages were common, child mortality was associated with low educational status and age of the mother, and with a short birth interval. However, when these were controlled for, consanguinity

still accounted for a significant proportion of the variance in mortality. It is reasonable to suppose that, earlier in human history, the first three of these variables would have been less variable between individuals, and thus less important, and consanguinity relatively more important.[95]

The animal data appears to show not a preference for totally unrelated individuals, but for moderately related ones. For example, Japanese quail show a preference for individuals moderately, but only moderately, different from those with whom they were reared.[96] Biological reasons for this have been suggested. An individual mating with a relative, though running risks from inbreeding, would be more likely to be perpetuating genes identical with his or her own than one mating with a more distantly related individual. But, at the same time, mating with a too distantly related individual, who had a markedly different gene complex and was thus less closely adapted to local circumstances, could also be disadvantageous. A compromise is thus called for, and in practice evidence that mating occurs most readily between individuals that are only moderately closely related is available for a number of animal species.

But the biological effects on reproduction are certainly not the only issue in incest prohibitions in humans, for the biological effects of inbreeding fall far short of explaining the wide diversity among cultures in the prohibitions against marrying relatives. In many societies individuals considered as kin are not close genetic relatives, or close relatives are not considered as kin.[97] Social parenthood may or may not correspond with biological parenthood. Among the Moso biological paternity was traditionally left to the mother's lovers, and might not be known, while social fatherhood was not acknowledged, and among the Nayar, one of the woman's sexual partners would claim paternity and thereby confirm the caste of the child.[98] To the anthropologist, therefore, incest involves sexual relations between individuals whose relationship culturally debars them from having sex with each other. The relationship may be defined in terms of degree of consanguinity, or in terms of membership of some socially defined group.

Although there have been exceptions,[99] most cultures discourage or prohibit marriages closer than those between first cousins, in harmony with the view that the prohibition has a biological source. However a degree of endogamy is sometimes prescribed, and marriages to close kin have been allowed and even encouraged in some societies. The advantages to be had from this are perhaps more extensive than those in animals. In small, isolated communities, an unrelated spouse may be difficult to come by. Marriage to a relative is likely to simplify premarital arrangements, facilitate compatibility with in-laws, involve less need for dowry or bridewealth, ensure that possessions remain within the extended family, and assist the perpetuation of the blood-lineage. Close-kinship marriages consolidate relationships within kin groups, as exemplified by brother–sister marriage in ancient Egypt.[100] Marriage to the father's brother's daughter is said to be

common in the Near and Middle East. The importance of such factors may be affected by the way in which property is inherited, and has been influenced by interested parties in the society. In Europe, the Christian Church, contrary to previous practice, discouraged close marriages in order to weaken ties of clanship or kinship so that they would not threaten the Church's control over the population and its power to obtain bequests from them. This would have been in the interests of the religious specialists.[101] More generally, regulating inbreeding among non-nuclear consanguineous kin limits the ability of families to concentrate power and wealth within families, and is in the interests of rulers in hierarchical societies.[102]

In humans living in small communities, evidence on relatedness is available, though it may not be fully reliable, but in addition there is evidence for a psychological mechanism involving reluctance to mate (or a predisposition to learn not to mate) with an individual who became familiar in early life. Thus individuals brought up together under the Israeli kibbutz system rarely married, and Taiwanese 'minor marriages', where husband and wife had been raised together as children, had poor reproductive success. There is also evidence that early sustained cohabitation between siblings operates as a barrier to potentially reproductive acts (genital intercourse) but not as a general suppressor of sexual interest.[103] Supporting evidence comes from studies of other species: as we have seen, quail mate preferentially with birds more distant than siblings but not with those very remotely related. It thus seems that a biologically based inhibition against mating with familiar members of the opposite sex has been elaborated in humans into prohibitions, differing between societies, whose precise form has been influenced by considerations other than biological.

In conclusion, most moral precepts and social conventions concerned with sexual behaviour are such as to augment its reproductive consequences. Many of the moral precepts and conventions controlling sexual behaviour can be understood by the fact that the reproductive interests of men and women are best served in different ways. Some are the result of individuals in positions of religious or secular power manipulating moral codes to favour their own interests. Those governing the degree of relatedness permitted between husband and wife seem to be based on a basic inhibition reducing the sexual attractiveness of individuals known since childhood, but have been manipulated in various ways to serve the material interests of the individuals concerned, their relatives, other interested parties, and perhaps the group as a whole.

Summary

1 Differences in psychological characteristics between men and women are statistical only.

2 Sexual relations between individuals are regulated in every society, but there are great differences in the proscriptions and prescriptions that operate.
3 A man can never be certain that a child is his own. As a result, there tend to be greater restrictions on the sexual freedom of women than on that of men.
4 Men and women both show justice and caring moral orientations. Evidence from a variety of subdisciplines in psychology is in harmony with the view that women are more caring in close relationships than men.
5 Cross-cultural studies show marked differences between the social stereotypes for men and women, with prosocial behaviour emphasized more in the latter.
6 The question thus arises, why should this be so? One type of explanation emphasizes male power, and men do indeed usually hold power in socio-political affairs.
7 However women tend to be dominant in the domestic arena in at least many societies.
8 Male power in socio-political affairs and female power in domestic ones is in harmony with the differing reproductive requirements of men and women.
9 The social-sciences and biological approaches are thus not incompatible. It is suggested that the male–female differences in psychological characteristics stem from biological differences in what males and females are predisposed to learn, and the resulting behaviour and attitudes are moulded in socialization and enculturation.
10 Incest taboos are found in nearly all societies, but there are considerable cultural differences. They probably originated from the need to regulate inbreeding vs. outbreeding, but have been much influenced by the structure and culture of the society.

11

SOURCES OF MORAL PRECEPTS: SOCIAL AND RELIGIOUS SYSTEMS

The social group

We have discussed the probable biological bases of precepts governing relationships between family members, those between fellow group members who are not (closely) related, and those between men and women. We now turn to the integration of groups and to relations with members of other groups. Our early human ancestors lived in small groups of largely related individuals, so that help given to another group member was likely to be help given to a relative and was also likely to be reciprocated. One can speculate that group membership was advantageous in facilitating intra-group exchanges of skills or resources, in permitting cooperative group hunting, and in the sharing of information. It may also have been important in inter-group competition (see p. 83).

As discussed earlier (Chapter 5), individuals put considerable energy into maintaining their personal identity, the integrity of the self-system. But individuals see themselves not only as individuals, but also as belonging to groups, and they strive to maintain also their social identity, and thus the integrity of those groups to which they see themselves as belonging. For some, social identity as a member of a group may become more important than personal identity, so that the group's goals can override their own principles: this has been advanced as a partial explanation of the cruelty of the guards in Nazi concentration camps.[1]

Human groups, in the sense used here, have three defining characteristics. The individuals see themselves as members of the group; they see themselves as in some degree interdependent; and their interactions are mediated by rules, norms, values and institutions that may be more or less specific to the group.[2] A number of pan-cultural characteristics of individual psychology, mostly related to the self-system, facilitate group coherence. Personality develops initially through relationships in the family, and for most people personal relationships thereafter become central to life: one's self-concept depends on one's perception of how others see one. Related to that, maintaining one's identity involves minimizing uncertainty about oneself, and one

route to that is to categorize oneself as a member of a group, with a reduction in the focus on oneself as an individual.[3] Perhaps more importantly, one likes to feel that one's view of the world is a correct one and to maintain a consistent world-view within one's self-concept (pp. 39–41). It is at least partly for that reason that people associate preferentially with others whom they perceive to be like themselves. In a similar way, they see other in-group members as more similar to themselves and to other in-group members than they perceive in-group members to be to outsiders. Defending the integrity and consistency of their self-concepts, which include their social aspects, may also be related to the development of loyalty to the groups to which they belong. Individuals like to see themselves in a good light and, in harmony with that, they tend to see their own group as favourably distinct from other groups, and find group membership congenial. Such psychological characteristics are probably ubiquitous, and it is reasonable to suppose them to have been the result of natural selection. However it will be noted that at least some of the psychological characteristics conducive to group integrity may have been originally selected for their effects in other contexts as well as, probably, for the advantageous consequences of group living.

Based on such pan-cultural characteristics, a variety of cultural devices contribute to group integrity. These include a whole spectrum from moral precepts to social norms that contribute to the maintenance of group cohesiveness and distinctiveness. Both norms and precepts were probably originally based on shared understandings, but precepts were subsequently reified, perhaps as a consequence of a tendency for conformism. For instance, the virtue of loyalty can be seen as arising directly from the advantages of group living. If individuals were better off in well-integrated groups, they would do better to advertise their loyalty. Group leaders should seek to promote such attitudes in the interests of their own status and promulgate 'Be loyal' as a moral principle. Symbols such as national flags and anthems, rituals such as parades, and metaphors (brothers-in-arms) encourage individuals to see themselves as interdependent and interrelated, while out-group members may be denigrated as evil, dangerous, and sub-human. The elaboration of group-specific symbols, absent in most other group-living species, was presumably facilitated by the evolution of language, and is important in enabling humans to form larger societies.

The symbols may acquire a sort of sanctity, so that in some societies it has been seen as morally right to salute or defend the flag, morally reprehensible to insult it, and morally correct to insult or burn the symbol of a rival group. Righteous indignation (see p. 86), leading to moralistic punishment, is elicited by disloyalty.[4] The use of kinship metaphors (e.g. motherland, fatherland, brothers-in-Christ) can be regarded as parasitic on the products of kin selection and the moral precepts associated with it. Such devices are, of course, especially prominent in time of war.

But war demands something further – individuals must be willing to put

their lives at risk for the sake of the group. Often this depends on financial reward: before the twentieth century – and more recently in some parts of the world – a high proportion of combatants were mercenaries. Leaving that aside, the qualities of courage, self-sacrifice and group loyalty must be seen as virtuous – and military training, military legend, military decorations and the qualities seen as giving military status all facilitate that end. The religious system may ascribe special status to those who die in war. In the United Kingdom many war memorials have used the concept of sacrifice to imply a relation between Christ's Crucifixion and death in war, thereby ennobling the latter.[5] According to Euripides,[6] certainty that their death would be honoured was a potent incentive for men to go to war in classical Greece. Expectations of honour in this world, or rewards in the next, presumably underlie the actions of modern suicide bombers.

Group distinctiveness is also maintained by moral precepts promoting differences from other groups. The dietary prohibitions in Leviticus, male circumcision and even monotheism are probably to be seen as devices to maintain group distinctiveness.[7] Rituals also make an important contribution to group (and religious) solidarity. The rituals are usually distinctive – learning the appropriate ways of performing them is part of joining the group, and the distinctiveness of the ritual perpetuates group differences.

Many norms that one simply takes for granted are in fact conducive to group integration. For instance, people normally eat in groups – in the family or in institutions. There may be pragmatic reasons for this – economy in food preparation, for instance. But it also makes a contribution to group integration: in many universities eating at the same table is seen as enhancing group coherence, and the feeling of community may be fostered by the saying of a grace. In Western cultures individuals prefer to eat with others, and in many societies it is seen as improper not to join in group activities: individualists are denigrated. A variety of such norms favour the cohesiveness of groups, often in opposition to the self-assertiveness and independence-seeking aspects of human nature. To be effective, the attitudes and ways of behaving that are conducive to group integrity must be compatible with the autonomy of individuals, and to be fully effective they should be seen not as an imposed duty but as something desired by the individual. Here early socialization (Chapter 6) and tendencies for conformism (p. 84) are of special importance.

Group formation can be seen at many different levels: national, state or county, institutionalized group, firm, team, and so on. While membership of some groups is seen as an almost incidental and trivial issue, in other cases actions related to group membership take on the importance of moral issues – for instance, patriotism and nationalism are seen as virtuous, especially in time of war. As an intermediate case, the importance of group integrity at the village level is well illustrated by a study of the antagonisms between locals and outsiders in a village in Cumbria (UK).[8] The outsiders were seen as taking over houses (often as second homes) and institutions (such as the

Church). Conflict was perceived at a number of levels: the community (for instance, villagers were concerned with the use of land, even though it was not their own); the family; and the individual. In each case the nature of the rhetoric, as well as the tone of voice used in discussion, indicated that the issue was seen as a moral one. At each level, outsiders were seen as a moral affront, and as fundamentally different, a threat, and their presence as morally reprehensible.

In this case, then, defence of the social self occurred at a number of levels of social complexity. But it is also the case that at any one level an individual may have a number of different loyalties – to his church, to the firm for which he works, to the football team he supports, and even to different styles of football. Archetti,[9] using a broad concept of morality and writing primarily about the role of football in the Argentinian sense of national identity, describes this as 'the plurality of male identities and moralities'. Football is a matter of enormous importance to many Argentinians: Archetti's informants spoke of the beauty and aesthetics of the game, the shame of defeat, of how the happiness engendered by seeing a moment of really skilled play could last for days and be encapsulated in memory, making the spectator a better person. But there were here two opposing moralities, one focusing on skilled ball-play while dribbling (beauty and elegance), and the other on strength (giving goals and victory). There was therefore always the possibility that mere goal-scoring could be unsatisfying to the supporter in the absence of the skilled ball-play. For the spectator honour and shame could be attached to the presence or absence of either of these, with repercussions on group loyalty and male national pride.

In summary, the integrity of groups is facilitated by a variety of psychological characteristics. Many of these seem to be related to maintaining the integrity of the self-system. These are assisted by social norms and moral precepts, with behaviour conducive to group integrity being usually seen as virtuous. It is reasonable to assume that the characteristics conducive to group living have been selected in the course of evolution as well as culturally elaborated.

So far we have considered only relations between members of the in-group. But groups must maintain relations with each other, and these also may demand that competition be balanced by cooperation. Discussion of this would take us too far afield, but the importance of the exchange of gifts for some societies has already been mentioned (pp. 77–8). In the modern world this may be attenuated into displays of mutual respect (often coupled often with displays of military might).

The religious system

That the ubiquity of religious systems can be understood in terms of the basic psychological needs that they satisfy has been argued elsewhere.[10] In

most societies the moral code has been maintained and purveyed within a religious system; indeed an important part of most moral codes is concerned with respect for the religious system and for the religious specialists. In many non-literate societies the secular and religious systems are virtually indistinguishable, and in more advanced societies they have usually been mutually supportive. Many apparently religious precepts contribute to group maintenance and may be conducive to the smooth functioning of the society as a whole, so that attempts by the authorities to maintain social order often seem to the post-industrial mind to involve a mingling of religious and secular values. The injunction to 'Do God's will' may include purely secular actions as well as religious observances. While obedience to such a precept may be promoted in the interests of all members of the society, it is clearly also in the interests of those whose place in society depends on the maintenance of the religious system. For example, in some parts of early modern Germany opening a shop or tackling household chores while a sermon was being preached was regarded as an offence.[11]

As noted earlier, the effects on health of the dietary provisions of Leviticus are unlikely to have been primary, their main function probably being the maintenance of religious and group distinctiveness. Their very non-rational character imposes a special way of living on the pious Jew, who is constantly reminded in the course of everyday life of his/her religious duties.[12] To the non-practising Jew they may seem like mere conventions, but to the strict adherent ritual sin involves breaking a commitment to the religious system. Again, while the evidence that male circumcision has a beneficial effect on penile and cervical cancer is far from univocal, the practice has profound religious significance for Muslims and Jews, who regard carrying out the operation on the eighth day as symbolizing Abraham's covenant with God, and a sign of becoming a group member. Again, those who promoted such precepts may well have believed in their absolute validity, but one notices that the precepts are also such as to safeguard their own status or those of their descendants. Perhaps their motivation was not always pure, as with the many secular rulers who have claimed that they hold office by 'divine right'. And sometimes the reverse process operated, moral leaders postulating social consequences from adherence to their views. Buddhism first promoted itself in China as the best religion for the protection of the state, legitimating the existing hierarchy,[13] and the Confucian texts promoted in the Han period contained ethical ideals that were such as to maintain social stability and social cohesion.[14]

The official rules made by missionaries for the early Christian Church in Chali (southern Sudan) provide an example of how precepts concerned with secular activities could be used to foster the integrity of a religious community. Those promoted by the missionaries seem to have been devised to create an effectively separate society for the converts. For instance, those who were baptized and those called to be believers were prohibited from

drinking, and from making or contributing to the making of beer. Since taking turns at making beer for collective work in the fields was central to the Uduk village economy, this involved severing normal cooperative relations with kin and neighbours. Christians were forbidden dancing and tobacco, and from following the practices of other religions or consulting the oracles of the 'Ebony Men'. Women were not permitted to take their children to their maternal uncle's homes, which might be at some distance, as was the usual custom. Christians were buried separately, and the traditional burial practices forbidden.[15] Thus the Church tried rather to create localized groups of Christians, based on paternal authority.

Inter-relations between categories of moral precepts

Moral codes in both literate and non-literate societies do not consist of a series of totally unrelated items. In the first place, the relations between basic propensities and moral precepts are not always straightforward: selfish assertiveness may contribute to the ardour with which moral precepts are propagated, and prosocial characteristics may contribute to the integrity of antisocial groups.

Second, the categories of moral precepts are interrelated in a number of ways. For instance, at an early stage in human evolution, when group sizes were small, family and group loyalties may have been nearly coincident: we have seen how, in modern more complex groups, family metaphors are used to facilitate group cohesion. Furthermore, moral precepts are used to maintain not only the distinctiveness of one group from another, but also that of subgroups within a society. For example, in the *Bhagavad-Gita* one of the three paths to the Absolute was the path of action, which included pursuing those activities appropriate to the caste to which one belonged. The applicability of moral precepts varied with the status of the individual: the lives of lay followers of Buddha, householders, and monks were regulated in increasingly exacting ways.[16]

Status-seeking influences moral codes in a number of ways. As we have seen, individuals in positions of power may seek to amend the code in their own interests. Religious leaders may seek to augment their own authority, and secular authorities may use religious vindication for their actions, such actions negating prosocial principles. The evils of theft will be emphasized by those who have something to steal, the evils of fraud by those who have money in the bank. Status-seeking influences sexual ethics in a number of ways, some of which are detrimental to individual reproductive success: the special status accorded to (or demanded by) religious specialists may be accompanied by requirements for celibacy in some societies. (While it has been argued that joining a celibate religious community may have advantageous reproductive consequences for the individual's relatives,[17] this may not apply very widely.) In pre-industrial societies high status tends to augment

reproductive success: as a result, high-status males may have a very large number of offspring.[18] The possession of a number of wives may itself be seen as a status symbol, reinforcing its effect on reproductive success.[19] In some societies males high in the hierarchy have had a right of sexual access to the spouses of their servants (*droit de seigneur*).

Precepts concerned with sexual behaviour are usually closely related to the structure of the society, and may play a part in the integration of groups.

Insofar as the moral precepts of a culture are related, it is reasonable to suppose that adjustment has taken place so that the system runs reasonably smoothly. That goes some way towards explaining why the basic principles become translated into precepts in different ways in different cultures. But that does not mean that conflicts do not arise – an issue discussed in Chapter 13.

Summary

1 The integration of social groups depends on pan-cultural psychological characteristics, many of which are related to the maintenance of the self-system, and on cultural devices, including moral precepts, based on psychological predispositions.
2 Some moral precepts serve to maintain the religious system; in some societies this is closely related to the social system. Such precepts may sometimes have been promulgated by individuals who have power and vested interests in the maintenance of the system.
3 The several categories of moral precepts are interrelated.

12

SPECULATIONS CONCERNING THE EMERGENCE OF MORAL SYSTEMS

The five preceding chapters argued that moral precepts were related to certain pan-cultural psychological characteristics. In some cases the links are easy to see: the propensity to care for one's children and close kin is linked to precepts concerned with child care and mutual aid in many and probably all societies. In other cases the links differ, at least in degree, between societies. In these cases it is suggested that the relations of the pan-cultural psychological characteristics to precepts have been influenced mainly through two-way interactions between how people behave and how they are supposed to behave. An important but difficult question is just how this came about. We have seen that there are parallels between pan-psychological characteristics and moral principles, and it has been implied that moral precepts were related to the latter. But just how those basic human characteristics gave rise to precepts in the course of successive generations is a further issue. How, for instance, could a general propensity for prosocial behaviour and reciprocity lead to the last five of the Judaeo-Christian Commandments (proscribing murder, adultery, stealing, bearing false witness, and covetousness)? It is one thing to argue that moral codes stem ultimately from pan-cultural psychological predispositions, but quite another to see exactly how that happened. The time spans involved mean that studies of such developments are scarcely possible, so any approach to this problem is inevitably hypothetical. Yet the issue is an important one: understanding how moral codes have been elaborated over time within societies would help greatly in understanding their nature. In these circumstances it is perhaps permissible to speculate. A possible scenario emerges from the earlier discussion, though it involves stringing together separate studies, ordering them as if they represented stages, and constructing a sort of narrative that gives no more than a plausible sequence. It is, of course, likely that the development of morality has differed in many ways between societies. This chapter must therefore be read with that in mind: its aim is heuristic, and it claims merely to establish some possible routes for moral evolution.

We can assume that early hunter-gatherers, like ourselves, had capacities to show both cooperative prosocial behaviour and selfish assertiveness. They

almost certainly lived in small family-based groups. We do not know the size of these groups, but the correlation between group size and brain size in ancestral forms suggests that the number of individuals of whom each individual had 'social knowledge' (which is greater than group size) may have been over 100.[1] It may have been advantageous to live in groups for protection from predators and for group hunting. Since many of the individuals in such groups would have been related, it is reasonable to presume that kin selection played a part in their genesis. We may also presume that those aspects of group coherence that depend on the integrity of the self-system (see Chapters 5 and 11) and a general tendency for conformism were present before moral precepts conducive to group integrity were formulated.

Although living was in groups, evidence from comparative anatomy, discussed in Chapter 10 (pp. 121–2), suggests that early in human evolution the socio-sexual arrangements involved monogamy or mild (possibly successive) polygyny; there was therefore likely to have been some inter-male competition for women. Selfishly assertive competition amongst both women and men over material resources must also have occurred (indeed, murder is by no means rare in modern hunter-gatherers). Nevertheless, for group living to be possible, cooperative prosocial behaviour must have predominated over potentially disruptive assertiveness within the group.

The structure of early human groups is a matter of dispute, the only available evidence coming from modern hunter-gatherers. Many of them are unusual in having egalitarian relationships amongst individuals, or at least amongst the males, with no one having significantly more possessions or power than others. While emphasizing that not all hunter-gatherers are egalitarian, Woodburn[2] suggests that this is made possible by their customs – their nomadic life with flexible groups, individuals being free to choose with whom they associate and not being dependant on particular others for basic requirements. Their relationships stress sharing and mutuality, but do not involve long-term commitments. The men spend time gambling, ensuring that objects of any value, like metal arrowheads, tend to become fairly evenly distributed.

Boehm[3] likewise emphasizes the egalitarian nature of hunter-gatherer groups. Help is given to band members who are ill, incapacitated or ageing, provided such help does not threaten the overall welfare of the band's members. Helping in times of adversity may even extend to members of other bands. It is as though helping others acts as an insurance policy against future misadventure. Of course, the propensity for selfish assertiveness can never have been entirely absent, and there must always have been individuals who attempted to further their own interests and to impose their will on others. But in Boehm's view egalitarian relations in modern hunter-gatherers are maintained by individuals acting together to curb attempts at self-aggrandizement. Any would-be leader or charismatic individual who gets too big for his boots meets resistance from other individuals or from

coalitions, and is subjected to adverse public opinion, criticism, ridicule, and even assassination. Leadership, if present at all, is therefore low-key, leaders maintaining a low profile and identifying themselves as peers. Presumably, selfishly assertive behaviour by one individual would be seen by others as threatening their autonomy or the well-being of the group. In Boehm's view, such suppression of deviant behaviour could initially have been an individual matter which, perhaps with the development of language, became collectivized. Something akin to moral indignation could have helped in this. A similar tendency towards the collective suppression of individuals who attempt to dominate is found also in some societies that have abandoned the hunter-gatherer life style. For instance, in the Uduk of East Africa 'strong leadership and power are viewed with deep suspicion, and men who have become influential have been killed, even in recent times'.[4] And even in societies as complex as that of the North American Blackfeet, decisions were made largely by consensus, with leadership muted.[5] At the least, collective suppression of attempts at leadership implies shared understandings about what was and what was not acceptable behaviour.

However, there is no general agreement that egalitarianism is ubiquitous in modern hunter-gatherer groups,[6] let alone that it was in the past. The social groups of virtually all non-human primates are organized along hierarchical lines. Where egalitarianism occurs in human hunter-gatherers it may be a secondary consequence of their having been forced into peripheral environments by more successful groups.[7] It is possible that, in the past, the diversity of social systems in hunter-gatherer groups adapting to different environments was more diverse than can be seen to-day, so that the nature of modern hunter-gatherer groups may be a poor indication of the situation in human ancestors. Furthermore, Black (a sociologist) has cast doubt on the importance of group control in inhibiting selfish assertiveness and status-seeking by individuals. Rather he argues that, in hunter-gatherer groups, there is no collective conception of law-like rules of conduct: individuals handle their own conflicts, and most potential conflicts are terminated by the two parties separating themselves from each other. Furthermore, there is no general pattern for the sequelae of conflicts, which differ according to the social and status distance between the parties concerned. After a killing, the severity of the consequences for the killer increases with the relational distance between killer and victim, and depends on their relative status: the killing of a superior invites more severe reprisals than that of an equal or inferior. In Black's view, selfishly assertive behaviour is dealt with individually, and there is little social control by the group as a whole or recognition that it might be detrimental to the group.

To some degree, both Boehm and Black could be right, since restraining would-be leaders is a different matter from the settling of individual disputes. Whatever the structure of early human groups, most selfishly assertive actions would impinge primarily on particular individuals, and it

would be absurd to suppose that the victims of such acts took them lying down. Indeed, their selfish assertiveness would have caused them to resist infringements of their autonomy, and their resistance could have provided a basis for shared understandings concerning what could and could not be done to another individual.

In the absence of an effective overarching authority and/or a legal system, readiness for resistance or revenge is a person's best protection against attack,[8] and the possibility of revenge by the wronged party can provide the principal deterrent to any behaviour that might infringe the well-being of others. Revenge is known to have been the central factor in conflicts in many non-literate societies. For instance, after a homicide among the Nuer vengeance was the most binding obligation of paternal kinship: homicide was likely to lead to a blood-feud, which might then influence relations between larger groups which participated indirectly in the conflict.[9] The requirement that like be paid for with like (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth), was pervasive in discussion in classical Greece, and its origins are certainly even more remote.[10] Stories centring on vengeance are to be found amongst the earliest preserved literature[11] and have played a major part in European literature[12] as well as in Nordic, Chinese, Indian and no doubt many other literary traditions. In Europe vengeance continued to be the main tool of justice even in the early Middle Ages. No doubt the tendency to cooperate with kin ensured that relatives would aid in, or if necessary take over, the act of vengeance.[13]

Revenge involves harming another individual, and thus the temporary suppression of the prosociality more usually exhibited, at least towards members of the same group. What were the proximate sources of the motivation to seek revenge? Assertive aggressiveness probably played a role. In the absence of any sort of law-enforcement, what else can an individual who feels himself to have been wronged do? Evans-Pritchard[14] wrote of the Nuer: 'When a man feels he has suffered an insult or injury there is no authority to whom he can make a complaint and from whom he can obtain redress, so he at once challenges the man who has wronged him to a duel, and the challenge must be accepted. There is no other way of settling a dispute, and a man's courage is his only protection against aggression.' The absence of an overarching authority has similarly been seen as a critical factor in endemic war in New Guinea. 'Political units organised themselves for defence and could count on no higher body than themselves for their security …. For order they relied on the principle of reciprocity, tit for tat, the right of equals to exchange gifts or blows, to match help or retaliate.'[15]

Revenge can be seen as a form of reciprocity. In taking revenge, it is desirable on pragmatic grounds that the action taken should involve no more than the injury received, for if those who seek revenge inflict more injury on the original aggressor than they received, it incites further revenge and thus escalation.[16] While revenge is widespread, it is not an entirely satisfactory

way to solve disputes just because of the difficulty of obtaining agreement on what is fair compensation. Perhaps that is why it occurs primarily in the absence of a superordinated authority able to impose a solution seen as fair, or at least accepted, by both parties. We shall see later that, where such an authority is present, revenge may be supplemented by punishment, the penalty exceeding the injury caused.

In any case, revenge depends on shared understandings about what is and what is not acceptable behaviour: if there were no understanding that stealing was improper, there would be no cause for revenge if one's cow were stolen. How the shared understandings, presumably based on the joint action of kin selection and reciprocity (pp. 83–4) became replaced by more or less formalized rules governing interactions between individuals is a further question. To some extent, the elaboration of rules or precepts can be seen as a consequence of conformism leading to the reification of moral principles and precepts.[17] Individuals tend to do what most others are doing, and to value what most others value. Conformism may have played a major part in transforming what most people do into what people ought to do, and to rejection of what a minority does. If, as has been suggested, successful groups are those in which prosocial and cooperative behaviour are frequent, such behaviour would be imitated, and any form of selfish assertiveness would be rejected. Conformism would have been almost inevitably associated with a feeling of group solidarity, with disputes between individuals being seen also as a disturbance of the collective peace.

The formalization of precepts could have been simply the collective result of the experience of individuals, or the action of a Moses-like figure with the insight that the community would function better if such shared understandings were formalized into specific precepts. Probably both were usually involved, with the general experience of individuals being formulated by charismatic figures. Revenge could then have led to punishment for non-compliance, and this to rewards for those who tried to prevent or punish antisocial behaviour in others (see p. 86).

But the integrity of these groups cannot have depended solely on negative responses to the perpetrators of disruptive behaviour. Prosociality and a degree of cooperation must have existed if the groups were viable in the first place, and conformism could have led to the virtue of behaviour conducive to group living being recognized. In addition, because it pays individuals to interact with others who behave prosocially and with reciprocity (p. 76), such individuals would be liked and admired. Prosocial behaviour, or the reputation for behaving prosocially, would bring status, and that would bring dividends; others would be more willing to act prosocially and with reciprocity to those with high status;[18] and high status would be likely to bring greater success both in everyday life and in reproduction. Thus positive feedback could operate, and each advance in group cohesiveness would have provided a context for more. As social norms became recognized they could

become 'oughts', and 'oughts' would provide a context for defector detection, and that for moral indignation. It seems likely that such changes were first customary, but may then have been both formalized and selected for.

Such an account, however, supposes a similar sequence of events in all societies. In practice, the balance between prosocial behaviour and selfish assertiveness varies widely between human groups and societies. How is this to be accounted for? Here a hint from biology is useful. Natural selection has acted rather differently on animal and plant species according to whether they live in variable and unpredictable conditions, or in more constant and predictable ones. Organisms in the former conditions tend to reproduce rapidly and to have an excellent capacity for dispersing to new habitats; those living in more constant conditions tend to have slower reproduction, with development geared towards giving the offspring greater competitive ability. The success of *homo sapiens* is due in large part to evolution having produced not specialization for a particular environment but flexibility that enabled individuals to cope with and settle in a wide range of environments. Some of these environments will have favoured cohesive groups of cooperative individuals, while in others greater competitive abilities with respect to other individuals will have led to success. And as groups moved about, the relative advantages provided by different styles will have differed. Even for groups which remained in the same area, the climatic conditions may have changed dramatically, with fluctuations lasting a few decades.[19] In these circumstances, we may suppose that individuals who could themselves cope with diverse circumstances, and whose offspring could do likewise, would be most successful. Now, we saw in Chapter 6 that the balance between prosociality and selfish assertiveness is affected by the early social environment, and particularly by parental style. Parents with an authoritative style tend to have children showing more prosociality and less selfish assertiveness. On the assumption that the current environment provides a reasonable indication of the environment that the children will experience later, the relation between parental style and the subsequent characteristics of the children is in harmony with the view that parents tend to rear children with characteristics suitable to the conditions they are likely to experience. Parents who experienced harsh conditions and showed a more authoritarian parental style, with harsh discipline and less sensitivity, will tend to behave similarly to their own children, who will then show selfishly assertive characteristics that provide a competitive edge in difficult conditions. Given that the predominant style influences the moral precepts, this will have two results. In relatively simple societies living under relatively constant conditions, one can expect the moral code to settle into a pattern suitable to those conditions. This would help explain the diversity of codes between societies (see also below). In complex societies, in which individuals live under diverse conditions and there are, for instance, wide discrepancies in resources, one would expect a diversity of parenting styles – as we have seen to be the case.

So far we have assumed a simple social structure. But some modern foraging bands have (or have had) complex social structures, with small bands forming part of a larger grouping, itself perhaps part of a still larger society. Such groups, integrated by a common language, institutions, rituals and customs, may nevertheless separate into bands for much of the time, but keep in touch and help each other in time of trouble. By this stage, some means for maintaining amicable relations between groups must have become necessary, and the exchange of gifts between groups, or between individuals representing groups, may have played an important role (see pp. 77–8).

Within more settled societies and with increasing structural complexity and individual ownership of property, the assertiveness of individuals must usually have led to a hierarchical structure, so that status differences came to characterize most groups and societies.[20] One must assume that, even if groups were egalitarian and efforts were made by group members to suppress the selfish assertiveness of others, there would always have been some who influenced group decisions more than others. Such individuals may not have been recognized as leaders at first, but the transition from following their advice to obeying their orders could have been seamless. In addition, individuals who were to the fore in the moralistic punishing (p. 86) of defectors could have been more likely to become leaders. In the majority of societies, those who achieved a degree of status might become able to reinforce their position by imposing precepts conducive to the *status quo*. Dissent and competition for power could then be controlled from above, high-status individuals using force to control subordinates. In so far as peace in the society was conducive to the maintenance of the *status quo*, it would have been in the ruler's interests to promulgate rules to control the behaviour of individuals, and to claim divine authority for doing so. Thus, around three to four thousand years ago the Babylonian rulers prefaced their laws by justifying their authority and virtue.[21] As groups became larger, group control may have been facilitated by dispersing limited power to subordinate leaders or groups through chains of responsibility from the top.[22]

But leaders with unlimited power are always liable to use it for self-aggrandizement, and this is liable to lead to attempts to overthrow them. To maintain the *status quo*, the power of those at the top must be limited from below, or by institutions set up to do so, and their followers must receive compensation for their acquiescence. Thus, in early European societies the lord had to provide protection or access to resources in return for the services and respect of his liege. As we have seen, leaders can also use other means more subtle than force and less prone to provoke resistance – for instance, ascribing virtue to humility. Such an approach must long have been present in adult/child relationships, formulated in Victorian times as 'Respect your elders and betters'. Leaders can also ensure that actions in accordance with the societal code can bring praise or prestige – prestige

which can be cashed in in other ways. In yet more complex societies they can also permit local political organizations and agree to consider their recommendations.[23]

Religious specialists have another tool. They can insist that a deity or deities would reward behaviour conducive to the maintenance of their religious system and respect for the incumbents of positions within it. They can let it be known that infringements of religious rules will be followed by exclusion (e.g. excommunication), by threat of Hell, or by misfortune in this life or lowered status in a subsequent one. They can also proclaim that it is morally right that they should receive a proportion of each family's income. Alternatively, social sanctions may be used. In some Islamic countries that observe strict codes for the public and sexual behaviour of women, such as Pakistan, what appear to an outsider to be relatively minor infringements can lead to the murder of the offender being seen as justifiable homicide.[24] Identity between secular rulers and religious specialists, or liaison between them, can provide precepts maintaining hierarchical differences and giving those precepts additional force. Rulers and religious specialists can also enhance their own position by indirect means; we have seen an example of this in the elaboration of rules concerning who may be married to whom (pp. 125–6).

Although the reputation and status acquired by behaving prosocially will contribute to maintaining moral precepts, there are always likely to be some who try to evade them. Adherence to conventions and moral precepts must be reinforced by secondary mechanisms. Sanctions against non-compliance with conventions may involve merely mild social disapproval: in closed élitist groups even incorrect dressing may lead to social ostracism. Infringements of moral rules are liable to evoke guilt or shame (p. 87) as well as incurring social, legal, and/or religious sanctions. The sanctions employed may be the result of considered decisions by those in positions of power. For the most part, the psychological mechanisms underlying the sanctions involve little cost to those who invoke them, but their implementation is important either for the society as a whole or for some of its members.

It will be apparent that the dynamics even of complex societies still involve psychological mechanisms present also in simpler ones – most obviously status-seeking on the part of those in power and those who accept limited power under them; desire for power, appreciation and prestige by those in local political organizations; and so on, as well as prosocial propensities.

The different ways in which incest prohibitions have been elaborated pose rather different problems. Since there is evidence for the regulation of the degree of relatedness between breeding partners in animals, and since close inbreeding can have deleterious consequences in humans, it is reasonable to suppose that the initiation of incest prohibitions was a consequence of natural selection. This does not necessarily imply that degrees of relatedness

were recognized early in human evolution: the diminished sexual attractiveness of individuals who have lived together in childhood provides a possible mechanism by which inbreeding was restricted initially. In small groups, in which most individuals had been familiar with each other virtually all their lives, members of other groups would have become more sexually attractive than members of one's own. Sexual relations with members of another group may have become the norm, and then become an accepted means for regulating inter-group relations. But in more recent times the elaboration of incest prohibitions were due to the actions of interested parties having some degree of power in the group or society (see p. 125).

Finally, it is important to stress an obvious fact, familiar to everyone yet often neglected in discussions of morality – namely that the difference between what prescriptions and proscriptions demand and what people actually do may be considerable. It is this discrepancy that often provides the major engine of change. Changes in the relations between code and action, often influenced by context, lead to change in one or the other. Religious orthodoxies have attempted to slow the rate of change.

The differences between societies in the moral precepts and conventions that arose in due course must be regarded as consequences of ecology (as noted above) and history, and in part as the result of cultural selection between groups. Hunter-gatherers can be expected to have rules concerned with behaviour in the hunt, agriculturalists with the distribution of land. Modern societies elaborate their own rules to deal with new conflicts of interest – patent, copyright and fiscal laws, for instance. And circumstances may lead to a greater emphasis on precepts related to autonomy and self-expression, as was apparently the case in the 1960s.

Many changes are mediated by those in a position to change the *status quo*, who usually find themselves in conflict with conservatives who are opposed to change: both may be guided by what they see as 'right', and both may be influenced by their own best interests. The interaction is often complex. Thus in the United Kingdom the Church formerly tended to support conservative views on such issues as abortion, homosexuality and divorce. However, changes in public opinion were assimilated by some Church authorities, who played a part in the subsequent changes in legislation towards a more liberal stance. Influencing the action from the sidelines have been the moral philosophers, bringing new judgements that sometimes result in pressure for changes in precepts and their justifications.

The emergence of moral precepts from pre-existing principles and propensities is by no means always a gradual process, for rational thought or a collective decision may have an important role. Rational decisions have clearly been especially important for conventions and other precepts not immediately related to the welfare of others – that is, for those not based on prosocial propensities (see p. 95). But rules imposed from above are not necessarily advantageous either for the group or for the individual[25] – for

instance, we have seen that changes in the rules governing who could marry whom in Europe acted to prevent the consolidation of kin groups that might threaten the wealth of the Church[26] – and, conversely, some rules that seem arbitrary may contribute to the integrity of the group (p. 129).

Analogies with the development of legal systems

In many societies moral and legal systems are often closely related, and may indeed be hard to distinguish. Western legal systems have tended to reinforce religious values, with secular authorities justifying the severe treatment of offenders as divinely sanctioned. Conversely, religious authority has often been couched in terms derived from civil law. The very foundations of law as we know it depended on interaction between secular and religious authority.[27] In early modern Germany it was believed that infringements of sexual mores could bring God's anger on the whole town; it was only later, with the Enlightenment, that legal and religious 'oughts' became to some extent disentangled.[28] In these circumstances, perhaps some light on the historical development of moral codes can be obtained by using the analogy of the early development of legal systems, despite the difference that one is dealing with legal rather than moral issues and with secular rather than (from some perspectives) transcendental authority. In using this material I am assuming that, in this speculative chapter, it is permissible to skip unashamedly between civilizations and between millennia.

Some of the earliest available material on this issue comes from the Code of Hammurabi, of the early second millennium BCE, and seems to imply shared understandings of what was, and what was not, acceptable behaviour. The religion of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia involved belief in a collection of anthropomorphic beings seen as superior to human monarchs, who were themselves superior to the people as a whole. All imperatives of life received their value from the fact that they represented the will of the gods, as conveyed by the King, who claimed to be dedicated to accomplishing divine wishes. The Code makes no reference to formulated laws but implies an accumulated mass of traditions passed down the generations. It records decisions made by the King regulating problems of social life that had not previously arisen or had previously been dealt with differently, and mostly specifying the punishment he considered appropriate for particular offences. The judgements were presented not primarily as precedents but as proving his wisdom as a judge and administrator in handling issues that were presumably seen as problematic. Apparently the decisions were made on the basis of universal principles that were assumed to have been assimilated by individuals in the form of shared understandings.[29]

Such shared understandings must have preceded every legal or religious code. But their reification or enforcement may not initially have required the authority of a ruler. As we have seen, revenge, or the threat of revenge, was

probably important in keeping order in early human groups; its formulation as the 'legal' principle of repayment in kind ('talio') was presumably a later development. Revenge may have the same psychological basis as reciprocity (Chapter 8). As a deterrent, a straightforward 'eye for an eye' may be inadequate: Athenian law went somewhat farther than simple reciprocity, recognizing the necessity for punishment involving something more than the restoration of the *status quo* – though limits were set on that 'something more' (see p. 138).

A history of Anglo-Saxon law by Adams[30] raises two related points of interest. First, offences initially seen as offences against an individual or the community came to be seen as offences against the King's peace. Thus the old folk-community, as a confederacy collectively bound to peace, came in Anglo-Saxon times to be held together by the King. What had been *folk-peace* became the *King's peace*. Anyone who broke the peace was the King's enemy as well as being 'untrue to the folk', and might become an outlaw. Thus authority for retribution for wrong-doing, having become invested in the community instead of being exacted by the offended party or his kin, was later transferred (at least nominally) from the community to the King. There seems, therefore, to have been a change from near-egalitarianism to a status-determined system.

A related change concerned the sequelae of offending. Early on, the system was based on vengeance, which can be seen as a form of reciprocity rather than punishment.[31] As we have seen, the cohesion of a group depends on agreement about what is and what is not acceptable behaviour, and this led to the emergence of systems of law that required punishment suited to the crime. At first outlawry was declared for killing and almost every offence, and the outlaw was seen as an enemy of both the people and the King. Later many offences were recognized as minor, and could be expiated by a payment. At first the payment was agreed between the parties, but later authority intervened. Part of the payment went to the injured party as damages, and part to the state or King, the latter representing the purchase of the forfeited folk-peace. Offences expiable by payment even included killing, but severe offenders were liable to be outlawed if the composition was not paid. In time a third class of particularly disgraceful offences – including treason, desertion, cowardice and adultery – came to be recognized. In these cases the state appeared not as a belligerent party against a member of society, but as a castigator administering punishment. The punishment could involve outlawry, but this might be of a duration appropriate to the severity of the offence. In most cases those offended against were no longer permitted to exact retribution without going to the court, so that authority completely replaced personal revenge. In this way outlawry gave way partly to a system of compositions or retributions, and partly to a theory of punishment for offences that could not be expiated. With time the number of offences for which no compensation could be received increased,

and even when the crime could be compensated, the offender might be punishable by the King as well. The punishment was presumably seen as a deterrent to possible future offenders. The King also had an unlimited power of pardon.

Further insight into how systems based simply on concepts of social order become transformed into closed legal systems are provided by a comparative study by Saltman,[32] on whose synthesis the following depends. Saltman uses a distinction between two types of legal system. 'Formal' legal systems involve axioms related to power, authority or sovereignty. They can be seen as involving primary rules of obligation, which reflect shared understandings within the society, and secondary rules of recognition involving authoritative criteria for distinguishing those shared understandings that have the force of law.[33] Such 'formal' legal systems derive their logical rigour from an axiom concerning the uses of power.[34] By contrast, 'speculative' systems 'are concerned with different concepts relating to the social order, abstract concepts of justice and morality, ideological considerations, or even psychological assumptions about man's nature'. They can, however, be formalized.[35] A first question arising from Saltman's differentiation between these two systems must therefore be, how can a system, based on some sort of social understanding or ideology, become transformed into a closed, logical positivist, legal system – that is, one in which decisions are deduced from rules that are components of the system? But, where the authority of religious systems seems to be in decline, an even more important question must be, can speculative systems become formalized without recourse to a power-based axiom?

Saltman has cited examples bearing on these issues. In discussing how a speculative system based on social order becomes transformed into a closed legal system, he cites cases involving land law originally stemming from a concept of social order – one concerning mediaeval England[36] and the other the Busoga of Uganda.[37] In both cases the initial situation involved a feudal concept of social order with links based on personal bonds of inferior to superior in an ascending hierarchy. There were shared understandings about mutual rights and obligations, including services rendered to the landowner in return for security and rights in land: a subordinate had inalienable rights to his land so long as he paid homage to the superior. The (proto-)legal systems reached decisions simply by interpreting the meanings of feudal relationships, the shared understandings about feudal social control forming their bases. For example, after the Norman Conquest, William I regarded all England as his by right of conquest, but granted lands to his followers, not by way of out-and-out transfer, but upon certain conditions. These might involve supplying the King with a certain amount of military support, or performing specified services for him. Those granted rights in land in this way could grant land to others to hold in return for services, and this process could be repeated. The land might be held for life, or for so long as the

tenant, his descendants or his other heirs were alive. However, all land was held ultimately by the King.[38]

Thus, the subordinate's right to an allotment of land depended on his paying homage, and fulfilling his obligations, to the ruler. Failure to do so, by him or his successor, allowed the ruler to reclaim the land. However, problems arose in the lifetime relation between landlord and tenant when the principle of heredity, which guaranteed succession to the tenant on the same terms, clashed with the reversionary rights of the landowner. This and other issues led to the gradual replacement of feudal obligations in kind with simple monetary payments. In England the holding of land by knight's service was transformed into a cash arrangement quite early on, and hereditary succession often required a fee. For instance, if the heir were a woman or a minor, a fee might be demanded in lieu of the obligation for service. Changing circumstances, together with the conflicting systems of heredity and reversionary rights, undermined the old legal system, which had difficulties in reinterpreting the rationale of the feudal order. In Uganda chiefs evicted tenants, reallocated the land and charged entry fees to the new tenants. In English land law, interests in land gradually came to be transferred outright by the current holder, rather than involving increasingly long relations of landlord and tenant which would increase the distance between the tenant actually on the land and the King as ultimate grantor of the estate in the land. After 1290 conveyance of land held in fee simple (i.e. held so long as the tenant or any of his heirs were alive) had to be by out-and-out transfer and did not involve a lord-and-tenant relationship. Thus, land came to be treated as an economic commodity, with rights of use defined by law, rather than as an integral part of a feudal structure consisting in mutual obligations of loyalty and protection. Although all land is still officially held in tenure of the Crown, this is no more than a symbol for the power of the law of the community.

These changes were accompanied by conflicts over authority. In England the King was attempting to establish his sovereignty over the feudal lords, resulting in the establishment of Royal courts. In Uganda, the African Local Government, trying to reduce the authority of the chiefs and headmen, established courts that provided an alternative access to justice. In both situations a form of common law emerged that maintained continuity with past historical realities but used a different logic for litigation. Rights in holding became the criterion for land ownership, the issue of allegiance to a landowner becoming irrelevant. There was thus a transition from a condition in which the law was guided by the principles of an ideological system external to the law to one in which decisions were made on the basis of observable acts (e.g. the initial allotment of land). This led in turn to a legal system expressing rules by the use of abstract concepts created by legal thought itself.

What, it may be asked, is the relevance of this to the development of

moral codes? Of course, it is no more than an analogy. But the 'shared understandings' of the feudal system could be analogous to a state in which individuals recognized each others' propensities, including reciprocity and status-seeking, and acted accordingly. The shared understandings came to be seen as obligations to the community and later to a central authority. They became standardized as a system of rules through the influence of a king or leaders whose interests included, perhaps, maintaining order amongst their subjects. However the role of the king or leader(s), important at least nominally in the formulation of the legal system, tended to become attenuated, with the law and its attendant apparatus taking over. One wonders whether a parallel can be drawn with the manner in which moral codes, formerly seen as divinely ordained, are now seen in modern European and American societies as involving obligations to society and its laws rather than to divine authority?

Turning to the second question, of how a speculative system can become formalized without recourse to a power-based axiom, Saltman again cites two cases, though here there are marked differences between them. The first concerns the Kipsigis of Kenya. Originally concerned solely with cattle-herding where land was plentiful, they were confined to reserves by the Pax Britannica, and placed more emphasis on cultivation. Cultivated land had to be enclosed to prevent cattle straying onto it. As a result, individual ownership of land developed, and disputes arose. Here there was no existing legal system that could be applied to the new contingencies, and no traditional hierarchy of chiefs and headmen that could legislate. The British colonial government allowed decisions to be made by the elders of local communities. The Kipsigis solved the situation by extrapolating from a shared understanding – namely that a man who cultivated a small plot of land near his hut had been allowed damages against anyone who allowed his cattle to stray on that plot. The right to the plot depended on its use, and a system of criteria for defining usage was elaborated (clearing stones, erecting a fence, putting up a building, and so on). In difficult cases, a criterion of 'greater need' was added. Later, appeals about the elders' decisions to magistrates courts were permitted, but the elders' decisions were usually upheld. In that way an extension of sanctions from an indigenous law process to state courts provided it with legitimacy. Thus, in Saltman's terms, an initially speculative system became formalized with minimal input from a superordinated authority.

Of even more interest is the second case, which involves development within the kibbutz movement. This originally had an anti-law ideology. The earlier stages assumed that social control could be based on ideologically conditioned shared understandings. Public law was regarded as a bourgeois ideological weapon developed primarily under capitalism, which would wither away in a just society. However, this did not happen, and a multitude

of written rules and regulations arose. Apparently in time prescription is likely to become necessary if people are not to do exactly what they please.

Each kibbutz had a General Assembly dealing with all internal matters, which could apply sanctions to offending individuals. Decisions were made not on a case-to-case basis, but each one was treated on its own merits. The judgements apparently depended not solely on the rights and wrongs of a specific act, but also on the nature of the individual offender. In one instance where two persons were accused of the same offence, one, who was highly regarded and seen to have made considerable contributions to the community, was effectively pardoned; while the other, deemed to have no redeeming features, had to leave the kibbutz. Decisions thus came to be made on pragmatic considerations: the 'Whole Man' was constantly measured and evaluated against shared understandings derived from a common ideological position. Rule-making was used only to strengthen the generally accepted ideological position.

In these cases, therefore, we see sets of 'social understandings' transformed into legal systems which provided a coherent solution to the problems facing the society. The precise nature of the systems which emerged differed, but the differences were influenced by the past history and present conditions of the society. For instance, the Kipsigis extrapolated from a previous social understanding, while we may speculate that the difficult conditions facing the early kibbutz members, coupled with their history of escape from totalitarian regimes, led to the establishment of a system involving usefulness to the community, with decisions taken democratically.

Legal systems provide yet another analogy with a characteristic of moral systems – namely their lability (see Chapter 4). Although the law is usually seen as determining the behaviour of citizens, the reverse is also true, the behaviour of citizens affecting the law. The sumptuary laws of thirteenth- to sixteenth-century Venice provide an interesting example. These were intended to reduce the citizen's expenditure on fine clothes, lavish banquets and costly decorations. Their aim was primarily egalitarian, and perhaps to curb discontent amongst merchant families who were excluded from the newly created hereditary noble caste. But they were seldom successful, citizens bringing themselves to near bankruptcy in order to outshine their neighbours. They had to be revised, reaffirmed, augmented or revoked around twenty times in just over 250 years.[39]

It must be repeated that these are only analogies, but they do show transitions from attempts to achieve justice through revenge to justice imposed from above or by consensus based on shared understandings. The kibbutz case, especially, shows how a system of rules seems inevitably to be necessary. One can also see how shared understandings, in the morals case derived from basic human propensities and in the legal cases concerning shared understandings based on those propensities, could be transformed into

codes sharing common basic principles but with precepts differing between societies.

Conclusion

In previous chapters the connection between pan-cultural human psychological propensities and moral precepts has been emphasized. Prosocial predispositions are part of human nature, and people usually act prosocially without consideration of explicit rules. However there has always been also a tendency for individuals to look after their own interests, and moral precepts and/or laws are necessary. The question thus arises of how moral precepts were derived over time from the basic psychological propensities. This chapter takes a speculative approach to this problem. Several processes are suggested. Even in egalitarian groups, acceptable behaviour based on prosocial predispositions was expected in shared understandings. Disruptive action could be constrained by the threat of revenge by wronged individuals or by coalitions. Authority was likely to replace individual revenge, and offences previously seen as 'against an individual' and later as 'against the community' were seen as against the leader as representative of the group. Revenge was supplemented or replaced by graded punishment. Rules became formalized, conformism and other basic psychological principles helping their instantiation. Precepts proscribing behaviour that did not conform were elaborated. Groups became larger and hierarchically organized, and justice through revenge became completely replaced by justice by authority. At the same time, those in power could elaborate precepts that sustained their own positions.

However, historical evidence is mostly lacking. As a partial substitute, some studies on the development of legal systems are cited. These provide instances of change from the maintenance of harmonious relations by threat of revenge, to obligations to the community, to law administered by authority, and of comparable change with minimal involvement of power-based authority.

Summary

1 A possible scenario for the development of a formalized system of precepts from more abstract principles is described.
2 The development of legal systems provides some possible analogies.

III

SOME PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES

Chapter 13 is concerned with an issue of practical importance – the ubiquity of conflict and the difficulty of applying moral codes to real-life problems. Chapter 14 focuses on a more theoretical problem – the relation between morality and free will. Finally, Chapter 15 draws together some of the previous discussion, and argues that understanding the origin of moral codes can help us to deal with moral problems.

13

SOURCES OF CONFLICT

If moral principles were absolutes and never incompatible one with another, there would be no difficulty in distinguishing right from wrong. In practice, there often is. Morality must be concerned with practical problems in the real world, and these are often far from simple. Moral precepts, often supposed to be impersonal and ubiquitously applicable, may seem inapplicable, inappropriate, or inadequate for the particulars of a situation.[1] Too often, we are faced with incompatible 'oughts'. Conflict may be internal to the individual, or may involve groups of individuals who have different interests, different goals or different world-views. The conflict may involve different moral precepts, or clashes between moral precepts and self-interest, allegiance to abstract concepts (such as patriotism, courage or love) or conventions. Insofar as one of the conflicting precepts or values has been internalized, solution may be automatic and easy. But in many cases decision-making may be a long and agonizing process. While a decision may be reached on rational and objective grounds, other considerations may enter in. Especially important in many cases are the extents to which alternative courses of action are compatible with the individual's self-system, for emotion will accompany and even guide the decision. One feels moral satisfaction if one feels that one has taken the morally right course, but guilt or shame, requiring apologies or atonement, if one's perceived actions are incongruent with internalized precepts. With many such situations, the validity of the feminist philosophers, who emphasize the importance of the context and the particularity of each case, becomes apparent (p. 6–7).

Many of the problems that arise involve a difficulty in being morally consistent. We prefer to see our various attitudes and beliefs as consistent with each other. Sometimes we can get round this by convincing ourselves that the precept does not apply to the present instance, or we can excuse ourselves by regarding the attendant circumstances as justifying an exception. Often, however, we have considerable difficulty in recognizing our own inconsistencies in moral matters, concealing inconsistencies from ourselves by the use of defence mechanisms. As discussed earlier, we seek

for congruency between our perceptions of ourselves, our actions, and how we perceive others to perceive us: lack of congruency is usually accompanied by changes in behaviour, attitudes or perceptions to right the situation (see pp. 39–40). There is also an immediately pragmatic reason why we should prefer to be consistent, namely that it pays: if we are inconsistent, others are likely to regard us as untrustworthy and find us difficult to deal with.

The problems that arise are complex and diverse, and do not fall easily into a series of categories. Furthermore, any distinction between moral precept and convention easily becomes obscured. In this chapter, especially, the concept of morality is used very broadly. The following paragraphs concern the diverse ways in which conflict arises. At the least, it illustrates their diversity and provides a link between academic discussion and the real world. In addition, perhaps distinguishing the bases of conflict may help conflict-resolution. But the relatively simple examples discussed must not conceal that in real life the issues involved are seldom so simple as implied here, for any one decision may involve many considerations.

Pragmatic considerations

Perhaps the least interesting case is where moral precepts are simply in conflict with pragmatic considerations for the individual: the choice is between moral and non-moral issues. An individual may feel he has no time to help the injured traveller lying by the roadside, or cannot afford to contribute to a charity: the self-respect that would be earned by a moral action is in conflict with the sacrifice involved. In such cases defence mechanisms are often called into play, an overriding reason, perceived as moral, for the traveller's haste being found.

As a more interesting example, there are circumstances in which the decision between honesty and dissembling is hard to draw: so many utterances involve compromise between the conflicting desiderata of truthfulness, self-interest, and the well-being of others. Too great an insistence on directness in communication, as well as too little, can be devastating for social relationships. Here respect for one's own integrity may be in conflict with respect for the other's, or for the relationship.

The problem is more complex if categories of persons are involved. For instance, we may regard it as morally right that all children should have their basic needs met, but does that mean that all children have equal rights, in all circumstances? This is not only a matter that 'needs' are pretty difficult to define, and children may differ in their needs. Suppose that resources are in short supply: does a child with an incurable disease and minimal life expectancy have the same right to those resources as a healthy child with prospects of a fulfilling life in which he/she can contribute to society?

Multiplicity of consequences

Problems arise from the diversity of the consequences of any one act. For instance, to cite Russell,[2] 'the effects of a sexual ethic may be of the most diverse kinds – personal, conjugal, familial, national and international. It may well happen that the effects are good in some of these respects, where they are bad in others.' Those who take a utilitarian stance must consider all possible consequences before reaching a decision. As another example, discussion of the rights and wrongs of divorce may involve the well-being of the parties involved, the well-being of the children, religious issues, and so on, each involving its own moral or conventional precepts, but with the precepts to varying degrees incompatible with each other. Of course, the problem is much simplified for those who take a stand on an absolute, such as 'Divorce is wrong'. Such a solution might be seen as benefiting society as a whole through the maintenance of values. But others would hold that in such a case decision should depend on identifying the alternative that has the best, or least harmful, consequences for all concerned. In practice that is likely to depend in turn on how each alternative would affect the self-systems of the decision-maker(s).

Hierarchies of precepts

Individuals often find themselves in situations where moral precepts conflict. For instance, one may feel that one should help another, but that doing so would involve an invasion of privacy, or be seen as damaging to the other's self-esteem.[3] This is a constant problem for those giving social support to the disabled, sick or aged. In some such cases one may convince oneself, or be convinced, that one moral principle is 'higher' than, or should take precedence over, others that one holds, or that one's actions do not 'really' contravene the moral code. Bandura cites a description of how a Sergeant York, originally a conscientious objector through deep religious conviction, was persuaded by quotations from the Bible given him by an officer, and by subsequent prayer, that he could serve God by becoming a dedicated fighter. He subsequently had a very distinguished military career.

The difficulty is well illustrated by a Kohlbergian problem. It is immoral to steal, but would it be morally correct to steal if stealing an otherwise unobtainable drug could save one's wife's life? Saving the life of a loved one could be seen here to take precedence over 'Thou shalt not steal', but what if stealing merely prevented a short illness? Or if the sick person were a stranger? When one considers such dilemmas, it becomes apparent that the impact of the alternative consequences on the person's self-system is likely to be the deciding issue.

The judgements that an individual makes in such situations may change with time. Life events or other changes in circumstances may give rise to a

change in salience within the self-system, and alter the priorities of moral alternatives. Recovery from a life-threatening illness may increase the importance of one's family and friends, or a burglary may increase (or decrease) the salience of one's remaining possessions, leading to changes in one's moral judgements.[4]

Again, a given act may be seen as more or less moral, or as immoral, according to the viewpoint of the observer. This is exemplified by the use of violence to bring about social change: one man's terrorist is another's gallant freedom fighter, and terrorists no doubt see their action as glorious. And at the societal level, the use of force against insurgents may be contrary to the democratic principles of the society. Again, actions that would otherwise be seen as immoral may be justified by comparison with more heinous ones: terrorists, acting to protect what they see as their rights, may kill innocent bystanders and then justify their actions by comparison with the cruelty of their oppressors, or in terms of what they perceive as the long-term collective guilt of the society as a whole.

Virtue and morality

It sometimes happens that virtues stemming from moral principles conflict with other moral precepts. Given an ideal of loving relationships, love itself is seen as morally valuable and something to be guarded – so that in triangular personal relationships, its preservation may conflict with personal loyalties or societal conventions.

An issue of special importance to the theme of this book is the conflict amongst scientists between the search for scientific truth and its social implications. Most people see virtue in seeking after truth. But many (though by no means all) scientists now believe that there are certain lines of research that should not be pursued because their probable social consequences involve moral issues: the development of weapons of mass destruction is an obvious case in point.[5] In many cases, however, the issues are not so clear. For example, the activities of scientists earnestly pursuing the truth about human nature have been decried because of the social implications that might be drawn from them. That bad science can be used for political ends was clearly demonstrated by Lysenko's advocacy of the inheritance of acquired characteristics in the USSR. But it is not only bad science that is susceptible to criticism because of its social implications. Clear examples here are attacks on the application of biological principles to human behaviour on the ground that they justify racism: the course of this dispute has been admirably documented by Segerstråle.[6] This, of course, in no way denies the possibility that even good science can be misused. A similar attack could be made on any attempt to understand the psychological bases of religious systems: some see scientific truth as an overriding good, others hold that it may undermine a religious orientation

that brings peace of mind to many people. No doubt some will feel that the current discussion of the role of biological and psychological factors in human morality might undermine the concept of free will and imply that we cannot help but behave in the way that we do. Anticipating such criticism, it can be said that the present enterprise was undertaken in the hope that it would help to provide a firmer basis for morality than the shaky transcendental underpinning that it has at present: the question of free will is discussed in Chapter 14.

Individual versus societal convention/morality

Some of the previous examples touch on the relations between individuals and society. Great difficulties arise when a person's moral outlook conflicts with that of the society. Accepting here the morality/convention distinction, moral offences are generally considered as more serious than offences against convention, but there are circumstances in which individuals will follow societal convention against their moral principles. This is especially likely if acting against convention will bring social sanctions, but acting against the moral precept will remain concealed. Thus an individual may tell a lie, which is morally reprehensible, to conceal that he has breached a convention in a way that would bring him into derision. In a somewhat different type of case, the power of many groups involved in (to the outsider's eyes) antisocial actions depends on the loyalty of the in-group members to each other or on that demanded by the in-group's ideals. Loyalty to other in-group members or group idealism overrides duties intrinsic to membership of the wider group or to humanity itself. This must be the case with the Mafia[7] and with terrorist groups like that responsible for the disasters at the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington in September 2001.

Closely related to such cases are those in which moral precepts conflict with conventional authority. In Milgram's[8] famous experiments subjects were required by an experimenter with conventional authority to perform actions that they believed to be inflicting harm on others. A surprising number of subjects complied, acting against their moral principles because of the perceived authority of the experimenter. A much grosser and real life example of the same issue lies in the behaviour of the Holocaust camp guards: moral action would have demanded insubordination and acts openly defying the ethos in which the guards were embedded.[9]

Conflicts between morality and group influences occur in many other situations. For instance, an individual is more likely to help others when alone than when others who do not intervene are present.[10] In retail shops and mail-order operations, deliberate deception of customers may be required from employees of impeccable integrity in their behaviour with family or friends, and loyalty to the firm may conflict with truthfulness.

Such conflicts can also be seen as involving abstract principles (e.g. loyalty, honesty) and the pragmatics of the situation.

As another example, in wartime some soldiers have great difficulty in fulfilling their duty to kill the enemy. Such conflicts may involve on the one hand the individual's own self-esteem, diminished if he capitulates to societal demands, and on the other the ostracism or other adverse consequences that will follow if he does not. Often action is seen as justified by necessity – if I had not killed him, he would have killed me. Or a new self-concept can facilitate the behaviour that such situations require: the frequently harsh training of military recruits is intended to provide this. Or other types of defence mechanism may operate: for instance, the relative potency of the individual's own moral precepts may be re-evaluated. Edel,[11] in distinguishing types of moral rules, recognized 'Break-only-with-regret' rules, so that 'Thou shalt not kill' is an aspect of every situation where violence is a possibility and must be taken into account, but may be outweighed by other considerations – such as 'duty' imposed by legitimate authority, or that killing will save more lives than are taken. In practice, yet another consideration enters in if the precept is to be fully stated as 'Thou shalt not kill other persons', for the victim can be considered not to possess personhood. This again contributes to the behaviour of soldiers in wartime and, more importantly, to the behaviour of the concentration camp guards – the prisoners were dehumanized.[12]

When duty or secular authority conflicts with moral principles, action taken in accord with the former may be justified by minimizing its importance with euphemistic labelling. Thus bombing attacks may be described as 'surgical strikes', and the civilian casualties that result as 'collateral damage'. The responsibility for immoral acts ostensibly performed as part of duty may be displaced onto others, as when former prison guards responsible for torturing or killing prisoners claim they were only acting under orders. Yet again, violence towards a victim may be attributed to the victim by perceiving his self-protective act as provocative.[13]

Sometimes moral precepts concerned with the public good and not generally seen as conflicting with personal morality are held with such intensity by an individual that they override other principles. Outsiders may then judge the resulting behaviour as unacceptable. The hunger striker may be seen by those unsympathetic to his cause as having no right to take his own life. Some individuals have a commitment to justice and to humanity in general so strong that their charitable acts result in detriment to their own families.[14] At any everyday level, this is an issue that medics and other workers in caring professions may perceive differently from their partners.

The value judgements of individuals may disagree with the society's moral code because circumstances are perceived to have changed, and inertia in the moral code may have lagged behind the continuing dialectic between what individuals do and what they are supposed to do. It is then

understandable that individuals should come to disagree with what had previously been accepted as correct. For instance, attitudes of Caucasians to people of other races, the institution of slavery, and the treatment of farm animals, are all matters that have come to be perceived by many as moral issues.[15]

Conflict between moral precepts and personal concerns and values seen as legitimate: individual autonomy and rights

Moral choices often involve overcoming self-interest, and what would generally be seen as the moral course may not be chosen because the individual uses defence mechanisms to justify self-interested action. But here it is important to distinguish 'legitimate non-moral concerns' from selfishness (see. pp. 99–101).[16] Individuals may have to weigh personal concerns that they perceive as legitimate against societal values, and the question of how far the former should be taken into account inevitably arises. Responsibilities may conflict with rights: a request for help from a friend may conflict with one's 'right' to freedom of action; and the needs of an ageing parent may conflict with one's career requirements. As mentioned in Chapter 6, this problem is present already in the relationships between parents and children: a parent may require an adolescent to be home by a certain hour, but the adolescent may argue that that is an infringement of his/her right to autonomy and not the parent's business.[17] (The child's perception of its right to autonomy may be a product of the way in which the child is treated: a parent may ask what a child wants to eat, or knock at its bedroom door, thereby instilling a sense of a right to autonomy or privacy. It has been suggested that such parental practices lie at the root of Western individualism.[18])

We have seen (pp. 99–101) that individual freedoms, reified into the USA Constitution as 'inalienable', are regarded as moral matters. Most such individual freedoms seem to concern things that one feels should be guaranteed to others because one would like them to be guaranteed for oneself, and are thus related to the Golden Rule. However what one wants for oneself is not necessarily good for others or for the society as a whole, and precepts concerned with individual freedoms are liable to come into conflict with those concerned with the common good. Most citizens of the USA endorse with fervour the moral right of individuals to freedom of speech, opinion, and so on, in the abstract, but take a different view when such freedoms are in opposition to other moral considerations, such as the general good, or the welfare of particular others.[19] For example, while the great majority of USA citizens supports the principle of free expression, Helwig (1995) cites a survey indicating that only fourteen per cent of respondents thought that books showing how to build bombs should be available in public libraries.[20] In his own studies Helwig found that adolescents regarded freedom of speech and religion as moral or universal rights not defined by law. Half of

the adolescents thought it permissible to violate laws restricting civil liberties in some circumstances; when questioned about situations where freedoms came into conflict with other moral concepts, such as doing psychological or physical harm to others, many respondents did not affirm the civil liberties. Such cases may be taken to justify limitations on the applicability of the right in question. As another example, when public demonstrations about taxes on fuel prevented its distribution in the UK, thereby paralysing hospitals, schools and other organizations as well as handicapping private individuals, the Transport Minister said: 'People have the right to a peaceful demonstration, but they don't have the right to interrupt the vital supplies in the country, or put the livelihood and convenience of other people at risk.'[21]

Such failures to endorse civil liberties in specific situations can be seen as resulting from conflicts between abstract principles and the complex particulars of the social situation, and may be taken as not invalidating the civil liberties themselves. In Helwig's studies the abstract conceptions of rights were judged by moral criteria (e.g. their generalizability) and justified by sophisticated rationales differing according to the type of freedom. Thus freedom of religion was conceived as an important way for individuals to express themselves through a group identity and shared traditions, and freedom of speech as important in the pursuit of truth and knowledge, and for facilitating social progress. Helwig emphasized the psychological complexity involved in the application of moral principles to specific situations (p. 192):

> understanding how morality is applied in context requires systematic efforts to disentangle the types of concepts (moral, social organizational, and psychological) instantiated in different situations and judgments, the role played by these concepts (as informational assumptions, as evaluations) and the implicit contracts, definitions of situations, and meanings that may operate in diverse settings to influence individuals' social reasoning.

Thus, while rights in the abstract may be universally recognized within a culture (though they may differ between cultures), and the language of rights has great rhetorical power, there may be considerable difficulties in their definition and in their application in practice. Sometimes the rights of two individuals conflict. A particularly difficult case arises when a foetus is at risk and, in the doctor's view, could be saved by intervention, but the mother refuses surgery. Does the foetus provide doctors with a proxy right to subject a woman to surgery against her wishes in order to protect the foetus? Some courts in the USA have refused mothers' rights as rational adults in favour of the foetus – thereby forcing a major intrusion into the body of an unwilling adult. In a related context Warnock[22] points also to the difficulty of defining what is and is not a right, to the frequent conflicts

between rights and other moral principles (see below), and to the practical difficulties that arise when rights cannot be recognized because of the shortage of resources (for instance, when, because of shortage of funds, a national health service cannot give the care to which citizens see themselves as having a right).

In such cases the choice is between a morally correct course and another line of action that can also be justified by what may be called considerations of value. In one study, students were asked whether a research worker should go abroad for a year to a prestigious laboratory, even though doing so would mean leaving his aged parents and cause them considerable grief. Seventy per cent said that the morally correct thing to do was to stay with the parents, but thirty per cent of those who thought it would be wrong to go said that they would advise him to go, or that they would go themselves in similar circumstances. When those who exhibited a discrepancy between their moral judgements and their behavioural choice were asked to explain it, they referred to considerations of self-actualization. Though they recognized that such a course of action would weigh on the person's conscience, they considered that there is an obligation, though it was not necessarily seen as a moral one, to fulfil oneself. It is thus necessary to make a distinction between personal preferences, personal 'values' assessed in terms of one's development and state of mind and of their utility, and morality assessed in terms of the welfare of others and of society.[23] Where the conflict is between a moral precept and a personal value, individuals tend to choose the alternative that will best maintain the balance of their identity: the alternative that is of personal value may be chosen over that of societal significance if it is of marked significance to the person's self-concept. In such cases the *choice* made by the individual concerned may differ from the *judgement* made by an outsider, and yet the latter can understand and not condemn the former's action. Where autonomy and self-realization are seen as values by the individual, but they conflict with social conventions or morality, other values may sway the balance: the 'courage required to follow one's own convictions', or 'love', or 'loyalty', may then be used as an additional support for acting in accordance with one's autonomy.

Inhabitants of Western societies tend to see personal freedom as a right and to evaluate societies according to the degree of freedom allowed to their members, though recognizing that societal coherence demands some constraints on individuals. Personal autonomy is inevitably often pitted against behaviour seen as societally correct, and the balance differs between societies. Members of generally individualistic societies tend to disapprove of social restrictions in generally collectivist ones, and members of the latter sometimes tend to disapprove of the social irresponsibility of members of generally individualistic ones. Of course, conflict between the integrity of important aspects of the self-system and the requirements of society has always been with us, but the balance has shifted with time. Perhaps the

conflict was especially salient in some strata of society in the 1920s, with the emphasis on personal freedom at the expense of conventional morality denying the selflessness of the Victorian ideal. The changing moralities of the 1960s led to an increased emphasis on personal freedom and personal fulfilment ('Be yourself, man (or woman)'), which again came into conflict with traditional societal morality and conventions (see pp. 100–1). Perhaps such conflicts are unresolvable because intrinsic to society.

As another example of changes over time, at the beginning of the twentieth century women were denied the right to vote in Britain. This may have been rationalized by the false presumption of an intelligence difference, or that women did not really know about politics, but in fact it implied that women lacked full personhood. It is salutary to remember that violence against women was recognized as a Human Rights Violation only as recently as 1993.

Conflicts between the morals/conventions of different religious systems

Important conflicts arise between the adherents of different religious systems. Even within Christianity there are disagreements about birth control, abortion and pacifism. And between world religions the differences are even greater – for instance, over the status of women. Some religious systems have idiosyncratic rules about such matters as diet; some would say that these are not truly moral matters, but to those who practice them they are of far more than conventional significance.

Conflicts between the morals/conventions of different secular groups

In modern societies, most individuals belong to several groups, and the groups may have different conventions or moral codes. This can make transition from one to another tricky, as a different persona must be adopted. Young people often find the transition from work to home stressful, not only because they are still liable to be treated as a child at home but because the moral/conventional values are different: for instance, the language used in the workplace may be seen as morally reprehensible in the home.

Sometimes the conflict is between private and public morality. Perhaps the most familiar examples are the conflict between loyalty to group and loyalty to family in times of civil war.

Cultural differences

The rights and duties (see above) an individual perceives him- or herself to have are determined to a considerable extent by the culture in which he or she has been socialized, for its precepts will have been incorporated into the self-system. Rights accepted as inalienable to individuals in one culture may

not be even thought about in another, or even by other individuals in the same society. Although Chinese thinkers have been concerned with what makes a person, individual rights have figured little in Chinese thought, and are a matter of debate in the People's Republic of China (see above).

An important issue here is personhood, which in some modern societies is denied to persons deemed to be insane[24] and to criminals. In different ways, slaves in earlier South American civilizations and in Africa were regarded as virtually non-persons, and denied the rights that others in the society claimed for themselves. As an interesting case of complex criteria for full personhood, amongst the Tallensi (West Africa) it depended on having had a normal and legitimate birth, having one or more male descendants and a father who is deceased, and having one's death attributed to an ancestor or other mystical agency (i.e. not to catastrophe, smallpox, drowning or suicide): thus full personhood could not be determined until after death, lack of full personhood being marked by the nature of the funeral.[25]

In many societies, cultural influences are inseparable from religious ones, often because issues that are religious to some are seen as secular by others. Problems may arise when religious freedom for a minority clashes with the perspective of the majority, and the mobility of populations has accentuated this issue in recent decades. The presence of immigrant communities has led to disputes over such disparate issues as the architectural and cultural clash produced by the building of mosques in Western cities, polygamy, religious education and the veiling of women. For instance, some see the headscarf as an element of Islamic ideology, and its prohibition as contrary to the principles of democracy and religious freedom, but others see it as a symbol of the oppression of Muslim women and the rejection of Western values, or as involving an attempt by Muslim leaders to exercise control over individuals independently of the state.[26] The case of genital modification was mentioned earlier (p. 108).

An issue especially current at the time of writing concerns polygamy. Many families in France involve polygamous households. Many of those concerned came to France, at a time when workers were needed, from countries where polygamy was normal. But French laws prohibit polygamy, and efforts are now being made to break up polygamous households. In many cases both husbands and wives object. Should the state have a right to force citizens to depart from the culture into which they were born?

As noted already, the Jewish dietary prohibitions might seem to the outsider mere matters of social convention, but to the insider they seem essentially moral. Shweder *et al.*'s[27] view on matters of dress and eating practices in India has been criticized by Turiel[28] on the grounds that it fails to take into account the world-view behind them. Turiel regards many differences between cultures that appear to be matters of morality to stem from differences in existential beliefs and not moral principles. For instance, in an Indian culture Shweder *et al.* found that: 'If a menstruating woman

were to enter the kitchen it would result in great misfortune for the family because the deceased ancestors would leave the household for several generations.' Turiel comments that in such cases an event on earth affects unobservable unearthly beings, and thus contextualizes the issue to include potential harm. 'As another example, in some cultures it is believed that individuals continue into the next world in the same state of health that they are enjoying when they die: this is taken to justify the putting of elderly parents to death.'[29] Such issues are discussed further in Chapter 15, with emphasis on the importance of distinguishing pan-cultural principles from culture-specific precepts, and insiders' views from outsiders'.

The extent to which moral judgements are seen as valid in another culture may depend on the information about the second culture that is available. When subjects in the USA were asked to judge 'acts that potentially included harm or injustice and that were perpetrated in another culture, subjects changed their evaluation of these acts significantly more if those acts were done in the context of different informational assumptions than if they were done in the context of different moral values'. The difference between the effects of a change in information as opposed to moral values apparently stemmed from deductions about intentionality. For instance, subjects who regarded it as wrong for parents to hit their children changed their view if asked about a culture in which parents believed that misbehaving children were possessed by an evil spirit that could be exorcized only by spanking. Such subjects ascribed good intentions to the parents who spanked and did not regard spanking as wrong.[30]

Differing perspectives in relationships: what is fair?

Reciprocity requires that exchanges be seen as 'fair', but difficulties arise when the participants in a relationship have different perspectives. For example, we have seen both that, while parents are morally required to look after their children even at some cost to themselves, a child may expect to receive more than the parent is prepared to give (pp. 62–3). There is therefore an increasing conflict of interests between parents and child, such that the parents show some tendency to persuade the child that behaviour they label as 'correct' becomes more biased towards that which favours their own interests.[31] A similar but much less easily resolvable dilemma arises in relations between the sexes: while some equate 'fairness' with equality, others would say that differences in attitudes, values and needs between the sexes should be taken into consideration. Discussions about this issue often become involved with contradictions between group and individual levels. For instance, if students compete for entrance to medical school, and more women than men are admitted, should a less talented man be preferred to a more capable woman to preserve equality of opportunity between the sexes?

Furthermore, in any interpersonal interaction, there may be differences as

to what is considered just or fair, and this is likely to be critical in the application of the principle of reciprocity. In commercial transactions in which goods are exchanged for money there may be no problem, and the matter is settled by what the goods are 'worth', or how much they would fetch elsewhere. But that is by no means always the case. When one individual performs a service for another – say a barrister for a client, or a doctor for a patient – what should the appropriate recompense be? Should one try to ensure that each gains equally from the transaction, even though that means weighing chalk against cheese? Should one take into account the length of the training necessary for the actor to acquire the necessary skill, the need of the recipient, the actor's financial situation, the recipient's means, or what? Or should one be guided by the law of the marketplace, barrister or doctor getting as much as the patient is willing to pay? And if such issues are to be taken into account, the yardstick being used may be very different from that by which the pay of nurses, school teachers or pop stars is assessed. It is easy for such judgements to be unduly influenced by the self-interests of the higher-status members of the society.

What an individual feels he deserves or is seen to deserve may vary with his or her own characteristics: wealth, status, beauty, sex, and so on, may contribute, their relative importance varying between cultures. In many societies considerations of status are especially important in affecting what is considered to be fair. Executives expect to earn more than those who work at the bench, and military officers expect to be paid more than lower ranks: the differential is usually not contested. Reification of such value differences by those in power may make it easier (or be designed to make it easier) for the less privileged to accept their lot. At the same time, greater power or abilities may be coupled with greater responsibilities and the expectation of greater contributions to others' welfare.

From a developmental perspective, children's judgements about what is fair seem to proceed through stages that can be described as involving self-interest, equality, equity and social justice.[32] In adults, Lerner[33] has suggested that judgements of fairness vary with two dimensions of the relationship between the persons concerned – do they identify and empathize with each other, or do they have a less close bond; and is the other seen as an individual person, or merely as the incumbent of a position in society. According to one study, individuals are more likely to use distributive criteria (equality, equity, etc.) when they were observers of other people's outcomes, but procedural and interpersonal criteria when judging their own outcomes.[34] Disputes are especially likely to arise if the two parties invoke differing criteria of fairness. For instance, one participant in a relationship seeks equity, feeling that he deserves more rewards from the relationship by virtue of his status, while the other seeks equality. Or the meaning ascribed to fairness or justice may be different: one may see retribution as just, while the other sees equity as fair.

In addition, in the public or semi-public domain judgements of fairness are influenced by the procedures used in reaching a decision. For instance, are the rules used applied consistently, and do all interested parties have an opportunity to express their views. Interpersonal issues, may also be important – for instance, in the manner in which a judge reaches and conveys his decision (Are the individuals concerned treated with respect and given adequate opportunity to understand the outcome?). It will be apparent that considerations of what is fair provide innumerable opportunities for conflict to occur.

Interpretation of moral concepts in terms of world-views

An important source of conflict arises from differences in the basic world-views incorporated in the self-systems of those concerned. Whereas the small communities in which humans evolved were probably bound together by shared understandings about appropriate behaviour, in modern societies groups and individuals with markedly discrepant views co-exist. A common source of conflict involves individuals ascribing different meanings to the same moral concepts. For instance, there can be no agreement between those who see freedom as the acceptability of individual economic initiative, and justice as righteous living, and those who define freedom socially (as individual rights) and justice economically (as equity).[35]

Usually, in the everyday world, some compromise or accommodation between incompatible views is found,[36] but too often the differences between groups are exacerbated by false stereotypes of the nature of the opposing group or of their attitudes to the issues in question. In the USA there are opposing but strongly held views on the teaching of evolution, which stem from differences in world-view – whether the individual accepts the literal truth of the Biblical story of the Creation or the scientific evidence for evolution. An analysis of the public discourse between the 'Religious Right' and the so-called 'Secular Humanists' by Pearce and Littlejohn[37] provides an excellent example. They report being impressed by the 'rationality, intelligibility, humanity and compassion of each intramural discourse', and the 'radical discontinuity' between the two discourses. In public, 'normal discourse consisted of reciprocated diatribe'. The differences stemmed from radical differences in the world-views of the two sides. The 'Religious Right' focused on the importance of morality – a category seen as absolute and clear-cut. Virtually all topics were moral issues, with right and wrong clearly established. By contrast, the 'Secular Humanists' were 'a rather loosely affiliated set of groups espousing academic freedom, liberal education, free press, scientific and technical approaches to social issues, and relativistic and/or pluralistic concepts of society'. Discourse between them was thus virtually impossible, because each side felt that its basic values were threatened, and that it must therefore oppose the other side. When such different social

worlds are in opposition, both the aims and beliefs of the participants differ, and each sees the others' actions as evil or false, even when basic moral principles are held in common.[38]

Medicine

The approaches considered so far are in the main those used by authors concerned with general principles, rather than those concerned directly with the new real-life moral problems that changes in society and advances in science and technology are posing. As exemplifying the latter, we may consider the complexity of the moral issues surrounding the application of new technologies in medicine. Discussions about therapeutic innovations involve the structure of medical and other institutions, sources and availability of funding, competitiveness between medical and scientific specialists, the needs of desperate patients and their families, the spectre of prosecution for malpractice, and so on.[39] In addition they are likely to be affected by the medical or other world-views assimilated by the protagonists. We may consider three examples.

The first concerns the testing of new treatments and the care of the dying that arise with the treatment of HIV/AIDS patients. Ethical decisions about trying new treatments arise when, for instance, there is potential research or other benefit for the medical staff, and the benefits for the patients are dubious. How far is it helpful for the patient to be informed about what is going on? How long should aggressive treatments be continued with terminally ill patients? How should a balance be found between treatment and palliation?[40]

The second example involves the application of moral principles to a new problem thrown up by scientific advances in the field of health care, namely 'Paid egg-sharing'. This involves the donation by women undergoing fertility treatment of some of their ovulated eggs to a recipient, in return for the latter covering the costs of the donors' treatment. This raises many ethical issues, to which Johnson[41] has applied the four principles of health care ethics developed by Beauchamp,[42] namely respect for autonomy, justice, beneficence and non-maleficence. These provide a focus round which the various concerns can be organized, but also illustrate some of the complexities when abstract principles are applied to new problems. In considering autonomy, the doctor must consider, for both donor and recipient, questions of confidentiality, the quality of consents, and his own honesty about possible alternatives, risks and likely outcomes. Furthermore, conflicts of interest can arise: it would be preferable for donor and recipient to be treated by different doctors, for if only one were involved, it might be difficult for him or her to respect fully the needs for autonomy of each party. And, if the treatment is privately funded, should the sharers be advised by the doctor who has a financial interest in their accepting the treatment?

With respect to justice, there are three problems. First there is the institutional injustice that the availability and cost of the treatment is not uniform, so that some individuals have easier access than others. Doctors can do little about this except campaign or attempt to set up a system to overcome it. Second, is it acceptable that people should pay for eggs, and how far is this comparable to the sale of body parts, prohibited in many societies?[43] Third, there is considerable doubt as to whether paid egg sharing is within the letter and the spirit of the law. Finally, considerations of beneficence and non-maleficence require doctors to develop and maintain their skills, to optimize their treatments, to be clear about the risks, and to strive for net benefit. These will depend in turn on research on human oocyte maturation *in vitro* and their cryopreservation, referred to below. It will be apparent that any doctor confronted with deciding whether or not to recommend this technique is confronted with ethical problems with far-reaching implications, and general principles must be tailored to the individual case. The solution of real life problems cannot simply be read off from the ethical precepts discussed by theologians or academics.

The third example concerns the bitter differences of opinion about the morality of *in vitro* fertilization and abortion, differences that depend on beliefs in the origins and sanctity of life and the beginnings of personhood.[44] Warnock, who chaired a UK committee on the former issue, has shown how the framing of legislation on these issues involved considerations of public opinion, practicality and the law. The critical issue in the case of *in vitro* fertilization was the necessity for continuing research on human embryos. The committee, taking what is essentially a utilitarian view, felt that infertility is a cause of intense distress to many individuals, and that the effects of artificial fertilization on problems of world population would be miniscule. But, since many see it as wrong that any embryo should be used for research and then destroyed, for no one must deliberately take a human life, the matter must be regulated. The committee decided that the critical issue was when the embryo could be seen as a human individual. A wide choice was open – conception, a certain cell stage, the appearance of brain waves, viability with minimal support, birth.[45] The committee focused on the fact that up to fourteen days from fertilization the embryo consists of a loose collection of cells, each of which could contribute to form any part of the embryo. At fourteen days the 'primitive streak', which will form the central nervous system, begins to form, and the cells to differentiate. The committee therefore argued that there was a morally significant difference between the pre- and post-fourteen-day cells, in that only after fourteen days can the human individual properly be said to exist. They therefore recommended that embryos could be used but only up to the fourteen-day stage, and must then be destroyed. Warnock emphasizes that, of course, even the prefertilized egg and sperm are human and alive, but what matters is when we should start treating them as we should treat another human being. That,

in her view, is a matter that society must decide, though the scientific evidence is to be taken into account – 'the true emergence of one single individual, on however physically tiny a scale, seemed to dictate the judgement that one could treat the collection of cells before this stage differently from its treatment thereafter'. The physiological changes in the embryo provided a convenient marker that the Committee could use to counter the view that any experimentation on human embryos would be the start of a slippery slope, which might lead to even greater permissiveness.

Warnock discusses the contrast between the UK law on experimentation with human embryos and that on abortion – which, in certain circumstances, permits the destruction of a foetus up to twenty-eight weeks of gestational age – pointing out a number of differences between the two cases. There are two distinct issues here. The first concerns whether the pregnant woman has a right to choose what course she should take, or whether the foetus has an inalienable right to life. Here an important practical issue must be considered: even if made illegal, abortions would continue, though under highly undesirable conditions. The second issue, which arises if abortion is permitted, concerns the state of foetal development up to which it can be carried out. Here Warnock points out that the law already presumes that there is something wrong with aborting a foetus, though it is not so bad as murdering an adult: therefore abortion must be regulated. (This is not to say that legal issues have precedence over moral ones, but only that in this case the law is an index of preceding opinion.) Already 'there is a strong belief that an early abortion, say within the first twelve weeks of a pregnancy, is to be preferred to a late one'. This is partly a pragmatic issue, but also depends on the general view that the more the foetus acquires the ability for independent existence, the more abortion comes to resemble infanticide, and thus murder. But, unfortunately, in this case there is no clear developmental stage that can be used as a criterion. At the public-policy level, abortion is something that will happen anyway, and must be regulated in a way that is 'acceptable' to most people. At the individual level, each case must be judged separately, according to circumstances.

Conclusion

It will be apparent that conflict is virtually ubiquitous and unavoidable. A simple set of moral precepts and prohibitions does not take one very far. It not infrequently happens that precepts seen as absolutes conflict. Many dilemmas can be seen as involving the self-systems of those involved: the relations between the values, precepts or world-views of their self-systems and the problem in hand often have a more important influence on the decision taken than rational consideration of the conflicting issues. This is a fact about what often happens, but not one to be taken as a licence to follow one's whim. Rather, one must constantly be wary of defence mechanisms

and devices for moral disengagement that permit immoral action.[46] In such cases an attempt to weigh alternatives, even if it means the comparison of incomparables, is essential – and perhaps most useful if it leads to adjustment of the self-concept before the need for action arises. If that is right, then discussions of how to reduce conflict within and between social systems must shift towards a focus on the socialization of individuals – not so much on instilling rigid principles but on inculcating perspective-taking and tolerance as a preliminary to rational discussion.

Finally, the very existence of conflict may be a moral matter. It may require courage to speak out on moral matters, rather than conforming with the majority. 'Standing up for what is right' can be incompatible with 'Blessed are the peacemakers'. Compromise may be a virtue for some, moral failure for others or in other situations.

Summary

Moral conflicts are inevitable and occur at a number of different levels. In many cases decision involves an attempt to maintain congruency in the self-concept.

14

EMPHASIS ON BIOLOGICAL BASES IS NOT BIOLOGICAL DETERMINISM

Since the thesis presented here is that moral precepts arise from biological predispositions, however indirectly, it is necessary to address the criticism that this is a form of biological determinism,[1] and that the approach is invalidated by our impression that we have free will. Morality is concerned with our attitudes towards our own and other people's behaviour, and some argue that if we feel that an individual could have behaved only in the way that he (or she) did, he would not qualify for praise or blame, for his actions would be outside morality. On this view, moral judgements depend on the presumptions of choice and of unpredictability. If our actions were determined, we would have no power of choice, and moral judgements would be irrelevant: behaviour would be entirely predictable. The suggestion that moral judgements have biological origins can be taken to imply causal determination, and is then seen as incompatible with our perception that we can choose to behave in this way or in that. A similar issue arises for anthropologists, who must simultaneously focus on individual agency and the behavioural determinants provided by culture.

This is an old issue, and has been the subject of debate amongst philosophers for centuries. Some, the so-called compatibilists, hold that free will is compatible with determinism. On their view, to have free will is to be free from constraints of certain sorts. Personality characteristics, preferences and motivation may already have been set but, given that you are what you are, you can act without being physically or psychologically compelled to one course of action rather than another.[2] Against this view, others argue that even choices have causes, and thus we cannot have free will. Clearly, therefore, the issue is central to the nature of morality. Though, as a biologist, I am fully conscious of my own inadequacies in entering this central preserve of philosophers, I shall argue that this thorny question of free will is not relevant to whether or not morality has bases in human nature. In particular, the identification of some of the causes for behaviour tells us nothing one way or the other as to whether behaviour is *determined*, and the important issue for present purposes is that we *perceive* ourselves to have free will.

First, consider the two extremes. I shall assume that the view that the will

is totally free, and that every choice that one makes is completely open, is contrary to common experience. There is a degree of predictability, albeit often a small one, in the actions of every individual. One knows that X, who is an orthodox Jew, will not eat pork; that Y, who has no head for heights, will not be keen on going up the Eiffel Tower; that Z, a keen golfer, will prefer to play golf than to go for a hike. And if X, Y or Z do not act as expected, one can legitimately look for another determinant: perhaps X accepts pork because he is starving. But partial predictability still leaves room for free will, and in any case X may have chosen to be orthodox, Z to focus on golf.

The other extreme, that choices are totally determined, is more difficult to dismiss. One can nearly always postulate a cause, acting latently if in the past, acting currently, or acting as a real or imagined incentive. Nevertheless, we all feel as though decisions could have been taken in another way, at least some of the time. We have the impression that there is a non-material agent, 'I', who can influence the brain's activity. In other words, we all feel as though we have free will, and we treat others as if they had free will. If we believed that their behaviour was entirely determined, we would see it as difficult or impossible to try to change it. Indeed, perhaps it is to our advantage to believe that others have free will, because such a belief renders us less willing to accept it when they behave to our detriment. Is it possible, then, that our perception of free will is an illusion, acquired by nature or nurture, because it is to our advantage to have that belief? Whether or not that is the case, if one takes the view that the behaviour of others implies that they have at least a degree of free will, or that their behaviour is not entirely predictable, it is reasonable to assume that the same is true of oneself. We shall return to this issue at the end of this chapter.

Let me focus on the particular arguments presented by one whose philosophical concerns are closely related to the need to solve practical problems, and who is opposed to the view that behaviour is biologically determined. Warnock's[3] first argument to support her view that biological determinants are incompatible with moral choice is concerned with the relations between causation and predictability. She argues that natural sciences assume that every event is based on preceding events, and is therefore causally determined and *in principle* predictable. 'If an event is caused, it is causally determined. That and only that which occurs could have occurred, given the antecedent circumstances.'[4] (We may disregard the fact that not all scientists would agree with her view of natural science.) In her view, causality is linked to the possibility of prediction, and thus she argues that science in general leaves no room for choice, and thus no room for morality. But this argument depends on the view that science depends on the assumption of predictability in *principle*. Whether or not it does so, in *practice* no science of human behaviour can achieve more than partial predictability, and that leaves plenty of room for free will, or for the illusion of free will.

Turning to a biological argument, Warnock points out that individuals differ and change with experience, so that no two members of a species perceive the world in the same way. 'The brains of animals are not fixed like computers. They themselves change as circumstances change.'[5] Describing the complexity of the behaviour of individuals in a flock of goldfinches, she states her belief that no law could 'be discovered, that would enable one to map out in advance the behaviour of the individuals in the flock'. 'I would say that this [i.e. the possibility of prediction] is extremely unlikely. For it would be impossible to predict exactly what and when each bird would perceive a significant object and seek it or avoid it.' The same is even more true of the behaviour of individual humans. In her view, sheer complexity rules out the possibility of prediction. Therefore, she concludes, humans are not just like computers. But this argument from supposed unpredictability is just not good enough. In this case, Warnock's argument is concerned with *practical* predictability, not with prediction in principle. Agreed that it is currently impossible in practice to predict precisely the behaviour of individual birds in a flock, and agreed that it is unlikely to be so for the foreseeable future (should anyone ever wish to undertake such an apparently useless task), nevertheless a competent ornithologist would be able to make some, admittedly not wholly reliable, predictions. Again, partial unpredictability leaves scope for free will or the presumption of free will by the human observer, but also does not prove impossibility *in principle*. To say that an action has causes is not inconsistent with saying that the actor could have done otherwise. Warnock dismisses 'in principle' here as a 'useful defensive phrase', but we are dealing with matters of principle, not practicality. Nor does the incredible difficulty of prediction at one level disprove the view that the behaviour of each individual is influenced or largely determined by the current state of its nervous system and the environment. That precise predictability of human behaviour is beyond our reach does not prove that human behaviour is not in principle largely understandable in cause-effect terms, and certainly should not discourage the scientist from seeking to understand it in those terms. But it does leave scope for the possible operation of free will.

In further support of this line of attack, Warnock cites research purporting to show that the manner in which the neurones and dendrites develop in the embryonic brain is such that they interconnect in 'unpredictable' ways, so that no two members of the species are identical. The broad similarity between the brains of members of the same species conceals a lack of uniformity at a finer level of analysis. Warnock concludes that predictability is not merely difficult, but in principle impossible. This has 'made the spectre of total predictability of human behaviour in terms of physical laws recede, if not completely vanish. It is open to us now to say that determinism, within the subject-matter of biology, is not true.'[6] There are two points here, the first being embryological. Warnock is referring to an

earlier phase in the study of brain development: for some time now, physiologists have known more than enough about the tactile, chemical and electrical interactions between elements in the developing brain to invalidate her strong conclusion: the connections between neurones are at least partially predictable.[7] The second is logical. Consider two possibilities. Suppose that the connections made by individual neurones are in principle predictable, though the complexity is such that the task is far beyond our present capabilities. Then, if one accepts that the brain is responsible for behaviour, behaviour could be in principle predictable, though that again would in practice be far beyond us. Suppose instead that the behaviour of individual neurones is unpredictable. Even then Warnock could not deny the empirical fact that an individual's behaviour is predictable within limits. There are commonalities between individuals, and continuities within individuals, that at least permit us to say that there are some things that he or she might do and others that he or she will not do, even though precise predictions are not possible. One could interpret much of her argument as indicating that Warnock confuses 'caused' with 'determined': the material causes may merely constrain the possibilities for future behaviour, leaving a limited scope for 'free will'. In any case, unpredictability at one level is not necessarily related to unpredictability at another. If the connections of the brain cells are at least statistically predictable, statistical prediction at that level of complexity could permit more precise prediction at another – just as, to use the corpuscular theory of gases as an analogy, the pressure of a gas is predictable, even though the motion of particular particles is in practice not. Warnock seems not to realize that much of science, and especially science dealing with very complex systems, deals with probabilities, not hundred-per-cent certainties. Thus her conclusion that 'the reaction of an individual to the infinite variety of his environment is unpredictable'[8] as a *matter of principle* is without foundation. Leave aside the fact that it is a truism if it is taken to mean that the environment is unpredictable. If it is meant to imply that the reaction to any particular environment is unpredictable, it is false insofar as prediction, albeit not precise prediction, is possible. Warnock denies that her rejection of the power of causal analysis is a matter of the practical difficulty of prediction, but her only argument is the practical impossibility of predicting exactly what an individual will do. The inaccuracy of the predictions that are at present possible is no argument that prediction is impossible in principle, or that it is folly to think of behaviour in cause/effect terms. Even if the development of individual brain elements were not predictable, this would not be an argument against the view that their consequences at a more complex level do not depend on predictable causal sequences, nor is it proof of Warnock's view that there is room for another sort of subjective causation not amenable to scientific analysis. But again, since only partial prediction is possible, the evidence neither proves nor disproves the existence of free will.

We can also approach the issue in another, rather simpler, way. Choice means deliberately picking one or more alternatives. Tossing a coin or picking one alternative at random is not choice in the sense we are discussing it here. Choice, therefore must depend on some initial predilections, and it therefore follows that choices have causes. Behaviour based on choice without a cause would be random behaviour. As Midgley[9] put it: 'A being which was all will and no natural tastes could no more use its freedom than a blob of plastic jelly.' The predilections may be determined by past experience in a manner that does not enter consciousness. Thus partial determination is not incompatible with apparent choice and free will.

The conclusion that Warnock draws from her second main argument is more acceptable. Her point here depends on the fact that morality depends on seeing others as having feelings and intentions similar to our own, and that their actions are to some extent related to their subjective experiences – in other words, to use recent psychological jargon, morality depends on the possession of a theory of mind. Here she builds on Strawson's earlier argument that our moral actions, and their reception by others, 'really *are* … expressions of our moral attitudes and not merely devices we calculatingly employ for regulative purposes. Our practices do not merely exploit our natures, they express them.' We have intentions, and we believe we can change those intentions, and we behave to others as though they also had intentions and other subjective experiences. Accepting that our behaviour and subjective experiences depend on our brains, Warnock denies that each brain state is brought into being solely by a previous brain state (or, presumably, by an external event). On her view, behaviour may be explained not only by reference to scientific causal terminology, but also by reference to ' "subjective" phenomena, the events of people's inner lives. By this I mean the kinds of explanations we give and accept of why people *feel* as they do, or why they act from the motives they act from' (p. 103). We treat people as capable of acting responsibly, but can absolve them from responsibility in certain circumstances – for instance, if they make a mistake. Our immediate reaction to, for instance, pain inflicted by one person on another is linked to a more general, moral attitude through sympathy: we resent an action that caused us pain, unless it was an 'accident'. To Warnock it is 'self-evident' that we must treat others in this way, as part of our humanity, and this 'leads to the conclusion that physical determinism is irrelevant to the facts of human freedom and responsibility'. But why so? If behaviour results from brain activity, why should the 'choices' we make not do so too? Our tendency to treat others as if they had a theory of mind is indeed part of our humanity. The influences of the 'events of people's inner lives' must surely be mediated by their brains, and there is no need to invoke another realm of causation. Again, there seems to be a confusion of levels, but one can agree with Warnock's final conclusion that 'determinism is irrelevant to the facts of human freedom and responsibility … We can forget the question

whether we are free or determined. In real life, starting from the phenomena, what we do know is that our immediate and our more generalized reactions to people commit us to a belief in personal responsibility, and thus to ethics'.

In conclusion, from a scientific perspective my brain determines what I do, but this involves a complex series of neural events, so that my choice of action is only partially predictable by an outsider, and this gives the latter a sense that I am exercising free will. My self-concept depends on my perception of how outsiders perceive me (p. 39), and, in that outsiders treat me as if I had free will, I believe that I have. This in turn does not mean that those complex processes may not ultimately be understandable in causal terms, and leaves the philosophical question of whether I 'actually' have free will open.

Thus, the scientific analysis of causation is not incompatible with the existence or presumption of free will, and therefore is not incompatible with the suggestion that morality is elaborated from biological bases.

Summary

1 Some hold that morality depends on the presumption of free will, and that free will is incompatible with a scientific analysis of causality.
2 The view that behaviour is totally undetermined is unacceptable, and the view that it is totally determined is unproven. We behave as if others had free will, and it may be to our advantage to do so, because we should otherwise be less willing to try to influence their behaviour.
3 It has been argued that the scientific assumption that every event is caused leaves no room for choice or free will. But in practice only parts of the causal nexuses leading to behaviour can be identified. Thus predictability can be only partial and there is room for (the presumption of) free will.
4 The argument that the behaviour of animals and humans, and the functioning of the nervous system, are not predictable refers to predictability in practice, not in principle, and therefore does not confound the views either that behaviour has material causes or that we have free will.
5 If we have the power of choice, choices must be based on predilections. Therefore choice does not disprove the role of causality.
6 It is concluded that scientific determinism is not incompatible with the existence or the presumption of free will. It is the presumption that matters.

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CONCLUSION

The role of science

It is often said that science is concerned with the way that the world is, and can have nothing to say about morality. I have taken a somewhat different view. At any one time, individuals have opinions about what society should be like, and on how people should behave. The criteria they use must come from somewhere. One possibility is that moral codes are handed down by a transcendental authority; another that they come ultimately from human nature in interaction with the experienced world. This book does not attempt to expound the reasons for neglecting the first hypothesis, but explores the case for the second. In so far as it is seen to make that case, the transcendental hypothesis can seem unnecessary.[1] A scientific approach to understanding human nature, even though far from precise, can help us understand why people think as they do about what the world should be like and about how members of their society should behave.

The view that science can help us to understand morality does not mean that our values can be derived directly from evolutionary biology. Nor am I suggesting that an approach based on the natural and social sciences is now adequate to solve the pressing moral questions that beset societies. However, I can envisage the possibility that joint use of the natural and social sciences and the humanities will one day enable us to understand the mutual influences by which basic human psychological propensities are translated into moral codes, and help us to see how to act in problematic situations. This book is a move in that direction.

Overview of the approach

Some of the concepts that I have used inevitably simplify reality. In this final chapter it may be helpful to summarize them and to outline the bases of the thesis advanced.

Psychological characteristics

The model that I have used, which certainly simplifies reality, involves pan-cultural potentials that, in interaction with aspects of the environment experienced to varying degrees by all humans, give rise to pan-cultural psychological characteristics. These characteristics include propensities to show particular types of behaviour and predispositions to learn some things rather than others. Of the possible basic psychological propensities, I have focused primarily on two – one for the development of prosocial and another propensity for the development of selfishly assertive behaviour. But Chapter 3 pointed out that it is an open issue whether these are merely convenient labels for diverse types of behaviour, or basic causal categories. I have also discussed individuals' propensities for the preservation of their autonomy, presumed to be related to selfish assertiveness (see p. 99); and for preservation of group integrity, which can perhaps be seen as extending prosocial behaviour from particular other individuals to the group as a whole. Since such propensities are to be found to some degree in virtually all individuals in probably all societies, they can be regarded as part of human nature. This does not mean that they are genetically determined, for predispositions to learn behaviours appropriate to current situations and/or commonalities in experience may also be involved in their development. In any case, their relative influences vary greatly between individuals, presumably largely as a consequence of experiences during socialization and later.

Moral principles

These prosocial and selfishly assertive psychological propensities are closely related to pan-cultural moral principles. Amongst these I have discussed especially 'Look after your kin' and 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by', involving prosociality; and 'Look after your own interests, even at the expense of others', involving selfish assertiveness. 'Do-as-you-would-be-done-by', known generally as the 'Golden Rule', is seen as basic to moral precepts, values and conventions concerning the welfare of others. Prosocial behaviour to others is intrinsic to the Golden Rule because, in an ultimate evolutionary sense, reciprocity could not be maintained without prosociality, and both are essential for group living. In the short term, prosociality and reciprocity are linked because we want others to behave prosocially to us and because those who behave prosocially are likely to receive status.

The principle 'Look after your own interests, even at the expense of others' stems from the propensity for selfish assertiveness, and most would regard it as anti-moral, though its application may not be. In addition, I have mentioned the principles 'Preserve your own autonomy', or 'Be yourself', related to self-realization and presumably to selfish assertiveness, and 'Be loyal', related to group integrity.

I suggest that, in the course of human history, such principles have become reified to culturally differing degrees. Their reification has been related to systems of ideas, usually religious, which both supported and was supported by the moral code.[2] The first three principles are probably ubiquitously recognized; the others have been reified especially by particular groups or at particular times. Before reification, they would be merely equivalent to the respective psychological propensities, but they might be used as summary labels by an outsider for diverse types of behaviour. After reification they could serve as guides for action and be seen as the source of moral precepts. The relative importance of each of these differs between societies, between groups within a society, and between individuals.

Moral precepts and conventions

Moral precepts and conventions are more specific guides to behaviour. They come near to being empirical data, though they are not necessarily formulated in concrete form and may be merely intuitively perceived by individuals. They have arisen just because individuals have propensities that are often in conflict. It is an open issue whether the moral principles are to be seen as summaries of, or sources for, the precepts, though I have tended to opt for the latter alternative.

In general and as a broad approximation, it can be said that precepts are seen as moral if they are conducive to the 'well-being' of others in the society and to minimizing conflict in the society as a whole. (The precise criteria by which 'well-being' is judged at any one time will depend on the values current in the society at that time, themselves stemming ultimately from the pan-cultural principles.) The exceptions to this mostly concern precepts promulgated by those in positions of power, such as the virtue of humility, and some of the constraints on sexual behaviour: these may or may not foster the well-being of individuals.

Many psychologists distinguish moral principles and precepts from conventions, but for the purposes of this book I have not always found that necessary, and in many contexts I have used the term 'moral' quite broadly. My justification is that, while morals are seen as more basic (and at one level there may be differences in the psychological mechanisms involved), acting morally and according to convention also have much in common. Morals are usually seen as common at least to all individuals in a culture or subculture, but from some perspectives they merge with guidelines for behaviour idiosyncratic to small groups, to couples, and even to individuals.

The development and mode of action of moral precepts conducive to the welfare of others, to justice, and so on, resemble in many respects those of precepts (often individually constructed) conducive to selfish and immoral action. Although the study of morality properly concerns both, attention has been focused primarily on precepts conducive to positive behaviour.

The self-system

Central to much of my argument is that moral precepts are internalized in the self-concepts of individuals: that is, they are part of how individuals see themselves. I have used the term 'self-system' in a broader sense to embrace the individual's view of him- or herself, of his/her relationships, of the culture (including the moral code), and of society. Individuals strive to maintain congruency between their self-systems, their perceptions of their own actions, and their perceptions of how others perceive them. The self-system, though malleable in some degree, is largely formed in early childhood, and attitudes formed during development tend to persist. I have suggested that 'the conscience is aroused' when there is a discrepancy between representations of the moral code embedded in the self-system and representations of actual or intended action. Such a discrepancy may cause the actor to change the intended behaviour, or activate defence mechanisms such that the actor perceives his actions in a different light, or in some other way lead to an attempt to maintain congruency. If congruency is not maintained, the actor feels guilt and/or shame.

If an individual in one's own society behaves in a manner which is compatible with his/her own moral code, but which is seen as incompatible with that held generally in the society, his/her behaviour is seen as wrong. It will be seen as wrong even though it is 'understandable' in terms of the individual's own moral code or can be seen as a consequence of compelling circumstances.

Development

Any answer to the question of why we hold the values we do hold must consider both how we acquire those values and why we hold those rather than any others. In considering the former, we must not be trapped in a nature vs. nurture discussion, but recognize that we have predispositions to learn some things rather than others. Prosociality is likely to dominate selfish assertiveness in most social circumstances, but the moral precepts assimilated by an individual are maintained and changed through interactions within the family and with others in the society. Thus the nature and relative importance of the precepts that are internalized on the basis of the predispositions, though related to the pan-cultural principles, differ according to the conditions under which the society has been and is existing.

Evolution of moral codes

For group living to be possible, prosociality must be more in evidence than selfish assertiveness, but how that has come about has posed an evolutionary problem, because it might seem that selfish individuals would be more likely

to flourish and leave offspring than prosocial ones. However, evolutionary theory accounts readily for prosociality to kin and to others seen as kin. Beyond that, modelling techniques have shown that natural selection could, under certain conditions, act in such a way that prosociality to unrelated others, coupled with reciprocity, could evolve. This view is confirmed by many other pan-cultural aspects of human behaviour that support reciprocity, such as the virtues of honesty and trustworthiness, the emotions of guilt, anger and moral indignation, and the tendency to conformism.

Elaboration of precepts

How behavioural propensities became elaborated into moral codes poses a further problem, though one primarily relevant to the social sciences. It is suggested that, in early human groups, order was maintained by the threat of individual revenge. That, however, implies some degree of mutual understanding about what behaviour was and was not acceptable, and implies appreciation of the principle of prosociality and reciprocity opposing selfish assertiveness. Over time, such mutual understandings became formulated as precepts based on the pan-cultural principles. In each group these precepts were elaborated through mutual influences between what people do and what (other) people are supposed to do, and came to differ between societies through differences in ecology and history (Chapter 12). They were usually associated with the religious system. It is reasonable to suppose that precepts contrary to the requirements for the successful reproduction of a large proportion of the individuals in the society would not be viable: broadly, the precepts elaborated in a culture are usually, but not inevitably, compatible with the forces of natural selection. However some precepts within a society may be to the disadvantage of some individuals.

To understand how moral precepts came to be accepted in a society, one must take into account both the system of ideas, usually religious, that supports the moral code, and the complex mutual influences between individual propensities, interactions, relationships, groups and societies, and the socio-cultural structure – influences that will differ according to the history and circumstances of the society (Figure 2.1). The elaboration of precepts is influenced also by those in positions of power. Such influential individuals may act from self-interest, or from a genuine and far-sighted interest in the welfare of all individuals or, more usually, from both. It can happen that the elaboration of precepts through the influence of those in power gives rise to a code or to values that override the principle of prosociality/reciprocity – as in instances in Nazi Germany.

Individuals grow up in widely disparate circumstances even within one society, and develop their world-views as a result of their experiences. Some differences in the moral precepts and world-views embedded in their self-concepts are therefore inevitable – though, insofar as individuals can be seen

as members of one society, there must be some degree of coherence between their morality and world-views. Differences in world-views between individuals, and between the individuals of different societies and of different groups within societies, frequently lead to misunderstanding, conflict and even violence. Furthermore, in complex societies individuals may belong to a number of groups, and the groups may hold moral codes and world-views that differ in some respects. Within the individual, different moral precepts may predominate according to the context; and between individuals different moral precepts may be seen as relevant according to differences in their world-views.

Dilemmas circumvented

This approach to morality implies neither that moral precepts are absolute, ubiquitous and unchangeable, nor that they are entirely culture-specific. The basic psychological propensities and the moral principles are seen as pan-cultural. For that reason, and because each in appropriate circumstances can favour the inclusive fitness of individuals, the potentials to develop the propensities can safely be presumed to be the product of natural selection. However, selection has operated not to produce rigid characteristics, but rather to favour prosocial or selfishly assertive behaviour as conditions demanded. The balance may differ between cultures and with circumstances. The precepts have been elaborated to suit the circumstances of each society.

Thus, moral codes (and indeed all aspects of culture) are not simply out there, fixed and immutable influences on how humans behave. Rather, they have been created, maintained and adjusted by the mutual influences between behaviour and culture. Cultural differences in moral codes and values depend on differences between the current situations and the past ecologies and histories of the societies concerned. But the differences that are possible are limited by the necessity for viability in each society and the tolerance of its members, and thus depend on human nature.

In addition to steering between absolutism and relativism, this approach avoids two other dichotomies often seen as problematic, and renders their discussion unnecessary. Moral behaviour may be either deliberately intentional, or automatic, or somewhere between the two. Moral precepts are internalized in the self-system and, in simple situations, they may determine what one does 'automatically'. Most people, in most social situations, have regard to the feelings and desires of others: moral behaviour does not have to be deliberately chosen. But if the situation is complex, if conflict is intense, then long and perhaps painful deliberation may be involved, though the resulting behaviour may still be influenced by an emotional response consequent upon lack of congruence in the self-system.

Related to that, the question of whether morality depends on emotion or

cognition is an irrelevant issue. We have seen that both are involved in the acquisition of moral precepts, and the 'arousal of conscience' involves emotion often consequent upon cognitive comparison.

What is natural, what the moral code prescribes, and what is right

That pan-cultural psychological characteristics influence, and in the long term determine, moral codes does not mean that what is natural is right. It is natural to act cooperatively and prosocially, but it is equally natural for behaviour to be motivated by selfish assertiveness.

Nor does the view that the psychological characteristics that affect the acquisition and elaboration of moral codes are likely to have been products of natural selection mean that precepts, developed by the mutual influences between individuals and their culture, are *necessarily* 'good', 'right', or appropriate for the cultural circumstances prevailing. The criteria of survival and reproductive success by which the basic psychological characteristics were selected are not the same as those we use to assess moral codes in the world today. In the short term, most precepts that we call moral tend to swing the balance in favour of prosocial or against selfishly assertive behaviour, and in most circumstances they provide the guidance we use and are such as to preserve stable interpersonal relationships and societal integrity. In the long term, by and large, most of the moral precepts we observe are compatible with the biological requirements of individuals and lead to viable societies. But they often conflict, and do not always provide a simple guide to action. For instance, there are circumstances in which we might think that individuals, and even the group to which they belong, should look after their own interests.[3] And some precepts and virtues have been promoted to favour the interests of individuals or groups within a larger society, and involve the manipulation of others.

This approach does not see humankind as wholly good, trailing clouds of glory, nor as bad, in need of being civilized. Nor does it see the so-called 'civilizing' influences of society as wholly good or wholly bad. Social influences can be such as to potentiate the individual to contribute to the well-being of others and of society, but equally they can lead to a selfish and disruptive personality. 'Civilizing' influences have led to scientific knowledge that has permitted important reductions in human suffering, and has also made possible mass extermination by nuclear weapons or the systematic murder of the Holocaust.[4] But this approach does provide us with a reasonable perspective on the nature of the moral systems that have been elaborated in societies. They are a joint product of human nature and of the nature of the world, social and physical, in which humans live and have lived.

The relation between 'is' and 'ought'

Thus I have suggested that the answer to the question implied by the title of this book is threefold. We see some actions, virtues and attitudes as good, and others as not so, because of

1 the manner in which *natural selection* has shaped human nature;
2 the *mutual influences* between human characteristics and the cultural factors that influenced and have been influenced by them over the course of human history; and
3 the *relationships* to which each individual is exposed (and influences) during childhood and later.

But is that enough? Does this account of how people have come to accept certain actions as good or right and others as bad or wrong provide a basis for deciding how people *ought* to behave? We have seen that moral precepts sometimes seem inadequate: they do not always allow us to judge what is right and what is wrong They may conflict, but nevertheless we act as if making a judgement about which course of action is more 'right' or less 'wrong'. New moral problems arise to which the accepted precepts give us no obvious answer. And we may judge the moral code of another culture to be 'wrong'. Does all this mean that we must look for an external source of values? Given that the moral precepts of the society sometimes appear to be inadequate as guides to behaviour, are we to assume that there are absolute values 'out there' with which we should compare our moral precepts and on which we should fall back when the precepts fail? Though again trespassing on the province of moral philosophers, I shall argue that there is no case for seeking absolutes outside the trans-generational relations between human nature and human cultures.

Many hold that the precepts themselves, and guidance when they seem inadequate, can come only from transcendental authority. That seems to me (and here I confess my bias) to be a convenient fiction for many but hardly a solution. I take this view in part because the guidance is always mediated by a human being. Often the mediator is a priest or other religious specialist, but even when the subject feels in direct contact with the deity, the nature of that contact is determined by the characteristics of the experiencing subject.[5] Furthermore, if the precepts or guidance are god-given, stemming from a theistic pronouncement, the nature of that god is a matter of great interest. In practice, most deities have a mixture of human and improbable characteristics.[6] Insofar as their properties are human, the source of morality lies in human nature, whether or not morality itself does. Insofar as the properties of the theistic source are anthropomorphically improbable, like a creator god with the ability to be everywhere and know everything at once, or like the absolute principle of *tao*, one may suggest that the deity was constructed in part to maintain (or in interaction with) the religious

system. In that case, it would also imply an influence from human nature, the very absence of some human limitations making the deity more effective. The present approach cannot show that to be the case, but does supply an alternative to an independent theistic source for morality that seems to render belief in such a source unnecessary. And, if morality does not come from a transcendental power, it must stem ultimately from human nature.

Others would say that morality can be rationally constructed or justified, or that we know 'intuitively' what is right and wrong. If 'rationally constructed' implies the existence of an external standard against which its construction could be monitored, it would appear to involve a dualism differing only in degree from belief in a transcendental authority. As a product of human rationality, it usually takes the form of one or more axioms, such as that the moral code should favour the greatest good of the greatest number; if such axioms are not god-given, they must themselves be a product of human nature. And if morality is known to us through an 'intuitive moral sense', that again is in effect saying that morality stems from human nature, and leaves the question of the nature of that intuitive sense open. With any reference to an 'intuitive sense' we must beware of the 'instinct fallacy'. Just as the postulation of an 'eating instinct' to explain eating behaviour in itself explains nothing, so does an 'intuitive moral sense' fail to explain the moral judgements that we make.

This brings us back to the question of what is meant by 'moral sense', and perhaps allows us to go one step beyond the position reached earlier. We have seen that humans have propensities to behave prosocially and with selfish assertiveness, with the reservation that this may be an heuristically useful simplification (pp. 27–9). We have reviewed evidence that these propensities have become part of our repertoire through the action of natural selection, and that pan-cultural moral principles have been based on them. I have also indicated that natural selection has acted not to promote rigid characteristics, but lability according to the prevailing circumstances – and in particular the development of an appropriate balance between prosociality and selfish assertiveness. In turn, systems of moral precepts have been elaborated, though differing in some respects in content and in balance between cultures. Our behaviour is guided by the relation between the moral precepts embedded in our self-systems and our perceptions of our own actual and intended action. It is that relation that we refer to by the term 'moral sense'.

But what about our judgements of others? We have seen that we endeavour to maintain congruency between our perceptions of our own behaviour (including the balance between prosocial and selfishly assertive principles) and our perceptions of how others see us (pp. 39–40). If others, behaving by the standards of *their own* precepts, judge us by *their* standards, then an individual behaving contrary to *our* precepts would see *our* behaviour as wrong. Reciprocally, if we are to maintain our own precepts,

we must see their behaviour (and precepts) as wrong. Thus our 'moral sense', when we are concerned with others' behaviour just as when we are concerned with our own, depends on the relations between the moral code embedded in our self-systems and our perceptions of actual or intended behaviour.

This suggestion, that we often judge others' behaviour in terms of the precepts and balance between principles that govern our own, fits a number of facts. We normally judge the behaviour of individuals who do not behave prosocially and with reciprocity to be wrong – perhaps because we feel that, if they see their own actions as right, they must see ours as wrong. (The moral judgement we make is, of course, to be distinguished from any feeling that we may have that their behaviour is 'understandable' in terms of the constraints they were under.) However, the extent to which prosociality 'should' dominate varies with the context: we think a degree of assertiveness and individual autonomy is proper and indeed sometimes expect it – perhaps because we sense how we would behave in another context. Though not necessarily 'wrong', excessive unselfishness and prosociality may be seen as at least embarrassing – perhaps because it saddles us with a debt that we feel we shall never be able to repay (see p. 74). The extent to which we allow individual assertiveness and autonomy to impinge on prosociality is constrained also by the effects that we imagine individual autonomy might have on society as a whole; to a limited extent, these effects may be beneficial (the capitalist's emphasis on entrepreneurship uses this argument), but they can also be disruptive (see p. 101). Our moral judgements are not such as to promote unlimited prosociality, but rather a balance between prosociality and individual assertiveness according to the context.

The extent to which prosociality dominates differs also across cultures, according to their circumstances. In judging another society, the distinction between pan-cultural principles and possibly culture-specific precepts is critical. Societies or groups whose moral code contravenes the prosociality/reciprocity principle are seen as wrong. Thus both the moral codes that justify death squads and the Nazi concentration camps, and the individuals within those groups whose actions contravene the Golden Rule, are to be seen as wrong, though the behaviour of the individuals may be seen as 'understandable' in terms of the way in which they have been socialized or coerced. But practices in another society that merely contravene the precepts or practices of one's own, such as some incest prohibitions or dietary restrictions, may be seen as strange by outsiders, but are not necessarily judged by them as 'wrong'.

However, beyond that, when we judge the moral codes of other societies the standards that we use tend to be those we apply in our own culture. Thus, individuals brought up in democratic countries tend to judge totalitarian regimes as too restrictive of individual autonomy and freedom, while

those brought up in a totalitarian regime with little knowledge of any other may see democratic countries as egoistic and unsocial.

It therefore seems unnecessary to postulate any criteria of what is right and wrong, and thus any source for morality, beyond the products of the interaction between our own self-systems, the ways in which we perceive ourselves and others to behave, and the moral code of the culture in which we live. Most of the time the moral code serves us pretty well. Sometimes it fails. When it fails and a decision must be made, we attempt to minimize the emotional response to discrepancy between the proposed action and our moral codes. In the longer term, a rational approach may help us to adjust the code so that it makes a surer fit with the basic principles. It is those principles, and what we see as the contextually appropriate balance between them, that we use as the ultimate court of appeal.

This in no way denies that great difficulties arise when moral judgements of other societies are made – difficulties epitomized by some of the errors made by colonialists when judging other cultures. Take the case of young girls forced to marry the man of their parents' choice, and perhaps thereby foregoing the chance of further education. 'Forcing' contravenes the reciprocity principle and implies that autonomy is curtailed, and so it must be seen as wrong. But what if the girl wants to follow her parents' wishes, because she thinks it is right to do so? Is she morally wrong, or merely misguided? Is it right to deny her the opportunity to do what she believes to be right? As outsiders we may see the parents as selfish, but what if they are acting according to their own principles? Our wish to deplore the denial of education may stem from our outside view of the culture, but an arranged marriage may not be seen like that from within the culture. And if one holds that such marriages are wrong now, as most of us would, must one also take the view that they were always wrong, before the society came into contact with Western values and possibilities, including the possibilities offered by education? One is then siding with the missionaries and coming near to regarding the people as having been ignorant savages. Or is it a matter of history – it was right then, but is not now? Then one must accept that moral codes, and the balance between prosociality and selfish assertiveness, are labile and relative.

Take the even more dramatic case of a society in which widows are burned. Nobody from a Western culture would hesitate to condemn such a practice as wrong. But it is necessary to distinguish between the cultural practice and the moral judgements of those who implement it. We have no doubt that the cultural practice is wrong. It contravenes the prosociality principle and denies the widow what we see as her essential rights as a person. But those within the culture see the practice as morally right. That may be so even for the widow herself. We can say that the precepts by which they act, and the cultural framework on which they depend, are wrong by

the basic principles. But can we condemn those who are acting according to precepts that they have had no opportunity to see other than as right?

That in turn raises the even more difficult question of what constitutes an opportunity to subscribe to a moral system other than the prevailing one. This arises with those who, though living in a system that we see as wrong, have had the opportunity to 'know better'. Consider an individual, brought up in what we would regard as a fully moral manner, who lives in a country that is taken over by a totalitarian regime with a genocidal policy. Suppose he becomes a concentration camp guard, ordered to put that policy into effect. Though he has embraced the political goals and sees the policy as 'right', we would not exonerate him for carrying out his orders, for he could (should?) have known that they were wrong, in that they contravened the prosociality principle. We might understand why he behaved as he did – perhaps on the grounds that he would have been executed himself if he had done otherwise – but that is a different issue, though one often difficult to disentangle.

Thus, I have argued that the impression that moral judgements depend on an outside source or standard is mistaken. The moral standards we acquire through experience are what we use, and must use, in making moral judgements. If moral precepts seem to fail us, as they sometimes do, we apply the moral principles, and/or the balance between the principles of prosociality and selfish assertiveness to which we are attuned, to make judgements. We may judge the moral systems of other cultures to be wrong, but should not condemn the actions of individuals in such a culture if they have had no opportunity to know another.

Moral dilemmas

This book does not aspire to provide solutions to particular moral dilemmas, and the approach adopted inevitably shares many of the limitations of any other. As discussed in Chapter 13, conflict between moral precepts, virtues or values in the practical problems of everyday life is inevitable. Such conflict is a consequence of human nature, and part of life in any society. Furthermore, from time to time aspects of the moral code subscribed to by the individuals in a society are likely to become out of tune with its circumstances; some individuals will then recognize that the code is in parts inappropriate or inconsistent with the basic principles, and seek to change it. Or the moral code may be the consequence of manipulation by those in power, and again some individuals may seek to change it to accord with the basic principles. Changes can occur quite rapidly, as with the acceptability of divorce or the application of medical research in recent decades. Whether such changes should be accepted or rejected will always be a matter of debate, and the straight application of basic principles is likely to be simplistic and inadequate. Recognition of that fact is not a way of

weaselling out of the need to make moral decisions: it is necessary to face the complexities of social life.

The approach to morality discussed here finds no need to postulate absolute standards of right and wrong that are independent of the basic principles incorporated into the self-systems of individuals. The code that we have has been honed over the generations in the social situation in which we live. The precepts do not always give us all that we need to solve moral dilemmas, but we then use the basic principles. Since those principles are pan-cultural, and their influence a consequence of human nature, they provide a means to meet some of the difficulties that arise when cultures clash, and especially those that arise in multicultural societies. The differences in religious beliefs between those brought up in different traditions are often an obstacle to mutual understanding. The differences in moral precepts do not help, especially if they are seen as divine decrees. But the capacity to be guided by pan-cultural moral principles is common to all humankind. For that reason, an emphasis on *commonalities* is coming to be seen as essential for conflict resolution.

A biological approach, more than any other, emphasizes what all peoples share as human beings. This is not only a matter of the basic needs of life. It includes also the need for understanding relationships, and for constructive social life. Because equitable relationships and group living require at least a degree of prosocial and cooperative behaviour, we are nearly always prone by our nature to prefer precepts that favour a balance in which prosocial reciprocity to in-group members predominates over selfish behaviour. This common basic assumption provides the best starting point for discussion when cultures clash. Of course such discussions must also take into account other human propensities, such as the striving for autonomy and in-group loyalties. But 'understanding' the points of view of those brought up in a different tradition, and of those who, though living in the same society, hold a different world-view, must start from an emphasis on the universal characteristics and needs of human beings.

Here, of course, I am stressing a general principle. I do not underestimate (and indeed have already referred to) the enormous difficulties posed by conflicts based on cultural differences. People who have been brought up in a particular culture, who have lived its own religious system, inevitably hold that their way is the right way and will not take kindly to any other. But surely the 'missionary' course of trying to convert them to one's own world outlook or religious system cannot always be the best. Nor will a simple explanation or reinterpretation of the cultural beliefs and practices of the 'other' group be likely to produce easy reconciliation. The approach taken here indicates that an initial emphasis on the universals of human nature, which goes on to explain how different cultural practices and even different religions can, in their different ways, satisfy common human needs and psychological characteristics, is the most hopeful way forward.

The present thesis, when applied to discussions of changes in the moral code within a society, indicates the need for certain orienting attitudes. Although constructed and maintained by mutual influences between how individuals behave and how they are supposed to behave, the lability of the moral code must not be overstressed. We must start from where we are and build on it. The values we place on trust, honesty, loyalty, compassion, understanding, responsibility and love have arisen as consequences of what we are and of our need to live in a viable society, and must not be discarded. Any change involving a major change in the balance between prosociality and selfish assertiveness, such as an increase in inter-individual competition, must be questioned. The code recognized in society has worked moderately well so far, and change should not be undertaken lightly. In any case, there are constraints on the precepts that are possible: changes that run contrary to many aspects of human nature will be difficult to implement and are likely not to be viable in the long run.

Furthermore, given the mutual influences between moral codes and how individuals behave, proposed changes in moral codes must be evaluated by the merits of their consequences *as perceived by* the individuals in the society in question. Of course rules can be imposed, but these are unlikely to be seen as moral rules except in those cases where they can be attached to a religious framework. And while it is possible that far-sighted leaders can sometimes take decisions that are good for the society as a whole, though their benefits are not apparent to its members, this is unlikely to be often the case over moral issues. Therefore, if some individuals in a society are to take a decision about a moral issue, such as the justifiability of *in vitro* fertilization, or are confronted with a proposal to reify a perceived moral change by a change in the law, they must ask whether the proposed change is likely to be accepted, as well as whether it infringes the Golden Rule. Proposals for changes too discrepant either from what people do or from what people believe that they ought to do are unlikely to be acceptable. Public opinion must be taken into account in discussions involving such issues.

That means that decisions on moral matters (in a broad sense) must be relative to the present culture. While the prosocial/reciprocity principle is ubiquitous and likely to be primary in any dilemma, a precept that would fit in one culture at one time might not fit in another or at another time. Just because societies change, judgements about the validity or desirability of change in a moral precept must refer to a particular time in a particular culture. They cannot be absolute judgements, but must be assessed with reference to the current situation and perhaps only by comparison with moral codes that individuals brought up in that culture can envisage.

Even within a society, many moral disputes arise from differences in the world-views of those involved. No society can function without some degree of coherence between the world-views of its members, but, just because individuals differ from the start and grow up in disparate circumstances,

differences in world-views are likely always to be with us – indeed, it would be a dreary and static world if that were not the case. It is therefore important that individuals should appreciate that others may differ in the relative weights that they give to moral precepts. Thus everyone may agree with the Golden Rule of Do-as-you-would-be-done-by, or some modification of it, and also on the importance of self-fulfilment and autonomy. But, when these two principles conflict, how the principles are applied and the relative priorities assigned to each may be crucial. Thus, both the pan-cultural principles and the moral code in the self-system, and appreciation for the diversity of moral precepts that others may hold, are essential. Understanding that a conflict is more one between world-views than one over the particular matter at issue may help in its resolution – especially if socialization and education have led to the incorporation of tolerance for different world-views. There is a difficult question of balance here. We all need a cognitive and moral framework with which to view and evaluate the world, but we must recognize that our own framework is not necessarily or always 'better' than another.

Another point may be seen as rather cynical. In conflicts within the individual, there may be no way to determine whether duty to self or other will, or even 'should', have precedence (p. 101). On the one hand, some will argue that the preservation of personal integrity should be the primary consideration, on the grounds that if all were able to preserve their integrity, the world would be a 'better' place. On the other, most people would say that any desirable world requires harmonious relationships between individuals, and it is at least rare for harmonious relationships not to require some sacrifice of personal wishes – though in close relationships personal wishes come to include the welfare of the partner. In practice, whether duty to self or other comes to have precedence will depend on the self-concept of the individual, in which the moral code of the culture has been incorporated; the maintenance of congruency will have an important but not necessarily overriding influence. How the moral code is applied to the situation, and its potency, will depend on how the individual sees the situation, and that in turn will depend on his constitution and previous experience. The nature of socialization and education are therefore crucial influences on the moral decisions taken by the individuals in a society.

Finally, differences between individuals must be taken into account. While the principle of Do-as-you-would-be-done-by is (probably) ubiquitous, how people would *like* to be treated differs between cultures. Indeed it differs even between individuals, so perhaps even the Golden Rule should be rephrased as Do-to-others-as-you-think-they-would-like-to-be-done-by. An individual may prefer to be treated as a man or as a woman, as a friend or as a superior/inferior, as a peasant or as a landlord. The fact of individual differences, however, raises a whole lot of difficult questions. If there are basic psychological differences between men and women, should men and

women be treated differently? Should their behaviour be judged differently? And if we take this down to the level of individuals, how tolerant should we be? Perhaps an antisocial individual is doing the best he can, given his psychological make-up, but that does not make his behaviour acceptable. What is 'right' must be distinguished from what is 'understandable'. Clearly there are difficult lines to be drawn here. And even this modified Golden Rule must be tailored to the interests of society: one cannot treat the psychopathic killer as he would like to be treated, with disregard to the societal consequences.

Problems will always remain. For instance, given that humans tend to look askance at strangers, can racial prejudice ever be eliminated? If not, at least education can be made to help individuals to appreciate the positive sides of diversity. And is labelling humility as a virtue conducive to the well-being of the society, or only of certain individuals within that society? If the value of humility was extolled by those in power wishing to safeguard their positions, it may be good for some but not all. Submission may on occasion have been pragmatic advice for a persecuted minority – and presumably the Christian admonition to 'turn the other cheek' is an extension of the value placed on humility – but it cannot be generally applicable: if it were, bandits would be unrestricted. And what sorts of assertiveness should be encouraged? The present approach suggests that as a first step, while acknowledging the basic nature of the prosociality/reciprocity principle, we first by-pass these 'should' questions and ask initially how and why individuals have reached the solutions that they have reached, and only then consider whether those solutions are in line with the pan-cultural principles and the appropriate balance between them.

In conclusion, what is natural is not necessarily right, but I have argued that the biological/psychological approach advocated here can be of use in understanding the bases of moral precepts and in solving moral dilemmas. I have not claimed that, at any rate at the moment, it alone can necessarily solve them. But it does seem that, when cultures clash, the emphasis on universal human psychological characteristics suggested by a biological/psychological approach provides the best starting point. And, within a society, this approach indicates that moral problems arise not only from the complexity of human nature but also from conflicts between the moral precepts, conventions and perceived rights and duties of individuals, and from the diverse ways in which these are interpreted by individuals according to the context and their world-views. The hope is that understanding how, in a qualitatively historical sense, basic propensities and principles have been translated into moral precepts may help one to evaluate the latter and the conflicts between them. This approach may also help those influential in societies to meet the moral challenges raised by the growth of science in our rapidly changing societies – and even to steer those changes in beneficial directions.

NOTES

Preface

1 The question of why religious systems are so ubiquitous was discussed in a previous publication (Hinde, 1999). The moral code was discussed briefly there as one component of nearly all religious systems. That discussion is continued here.
2 E.g. Rublack, 1999.
3 Holloway, 1999.
4 Dalai Lama, 1999.
5 Hinde, 1999.
6 Davies, 1994.
7 Dawkins, 1976.
8 Some would say here its own sort of 'truth', others that scientific 'truth' is always just the other side of the hill.
9 Wilson, 1978; Alexander, 1979, 1987; Irons, 1991, 1996; Boyd and Richerson, 1991; Richerson and Boyd, 1998, 1999; and others.

1 What does morality include?

1 Gustafson, 1996.
2 Holloway, 1999, p. 14.
3 See Davidson and Youniss, 1991.
4 Hare, 1968.
5 For definition see Chapter 3.
6 Cf. Wren, 1993.
7 Montada 1993.
8 Rawls, 1971.
9 Williams, 1972.
10 Strawson, 1961.
11 Wallace and Walker, 1970.
12 M. Warnock, 1998.
13 Public morality is of special relevance to legislators, who must endeavour to calculate who will benefit and who will lose from any change in the law, so far as that is possible (Warnock, 1998).
14 Poole, 1991.
15 Gilligan, 1982; for review, see Porter, 1999.
16 Smetana, 1995b.
17 Turiel, 1983, 1998.
18 Blair, 1997; Helwig, Tisak and Turiel, 1990; Nucci and Lee, 1993; Turiel, 1983.

19 E.g. Dunn, Cutting and Demetriou, 2000; Turiel, 1998.
20 Auhagen, 2000.
21 Adler, 1931/1992.
22 Although most ethnographic studies contain data about what people should and should not do, recent studies of morality as such seem to be rare. The index of Ingold's (1994) *Companion Encyclopedia of Anthropology* contains no entry for morality, and that for ethics seems to be based on a typographical error. See however Edel and Edel, 1959; Howell, 1997.
23 Jacobson-Widding, 1997.
24 C. Humphrey, 1997.
25 Edel and Edel, 1959
26 Midgley, 1983.
27 Howell, 1997, p. 4.
28 Jacobson-Widding, 1997, p. 49
29 Archetti, 1997, p. 100.
30 James, 1988, pp. 144–6.

2 The approach

1 For a discussion of the nature of religious systems from a perspective similar to that used here, see Hinde, 1999.
2 Howell, 1997, p. 10.
3 E.g. Alexander, 1979; Boyd and Richerson, 1991; Irons, 1991, 1996.
4 The extent to which this involves simplification is emphasized on pp. 27–8.
5 E.g. Dentan, 2000.
6 'Nature' and 'Culture' are, of course, abstract concepts and are not to be seen as reified in this or similar contexts.
7 Boehm, 1989, p. 922.
8 Contrast Murdock, 1945.
9 Although biologists thought they had put that issue to bed in the middle of the last century, it still rears its head off the pillow from time to time. Thus Güth and Güth (2000) ask whether 'morality has genetically evolved or is phenotypically learned' (p. 43).
10 Oyama, 1985.
11 Nesse, 2000, p. 229
12 Malinowski, 1944/1960.
13 Neisser, 1976
14 Garcia and Koelling, 1966; Hinde and Stevenson-Hinde, 1973; Lorenz, 1937; Seligman and Hager, 1972; see also Flinn, 1997.
15 Thorpe, 1961; Marler, 1991.
16 The emphasis here is on human language. Such chimpanzees can learn a mode of communication.
17 Candland, 1993.
18 Geertz, 1970.
19 Because this is an issue not central to the aim of this book, which is to establish the mutual relevance of biology/psychology to other social sciences in the understanding of morality, there is no need to pursue this problem here. By the criteria of 'good design' used by Tooby and Cosmides (1992), they could certainly be classed as adaptive. However, caution is necessary because the ontogeny of universal human characteristics is still insufficiently understood.
20 Foley, 1996.
21 Cronk, 1991; de Vries, 1984.

22 Inclusive fitness refers to the reproductive success of the individual and that of close relatives, devalued by their degree of relatedness.
23 For discussion of how these terms are used, see Chapter 3.
24 I have tried to avoid the word 'altruism', because its meaning in evolutionary psychology does not correspond with its everyday usage, and because of the danger of confusion between evolutionary altruism and psychological altruism (see Smuts, 1999).
25 Goody, 1991; Haas, 1990.
26 Sober and Wilson, 1998, 2000.
27 Kagan, 1989.
28 Bauman (1989), in an attempt to understand the Holocaust, has pointed out that socialization can enhance selfish as well as prosocial behaviour.
29 Frank, 1988.
30 Count, 1973; Geertz, 1970.
31 Flack and de Waal, 2000.
32 Kummer, 2000; Moore, 2000.
33 'Culture' is a slippery concept, and many definitions have been offered. I have used it to refer to those ways in which human groups differ that are communicated between individuals. Culture is best viewed as existing in the minds of individuals and as in a continuous process of creation, maintenance and dissolution through the activities of individuals in their social interactions. Thus culture both influences and is influenced by individuals. The behaviour of individuals may or may not correspond with how they perceive themselves to behave, or with how the culture prescribes that they should behave (Hinde, 1987).
34 E.g. Wilson, 1975.
35 Discussion of the dialectical relations to be found between the successive levels of biological complexity is to be found in Hinde (1991, 1997).

3 Notes for a conceptual tool-kit

1 Moore, 1903, p. 6.
2 Finlayson, 1997.
3 Assertive and prosocial predispositions can be seen as intervening variables in a psychological sense.
4 In biology, an altruistic act is one that enhances the probability of successful reproduction for one or more other non-related individuals while reducing that of the actor and his close relatives.
5 Pervin, 1996.

4 Continuity and change: consistencies and inconsistencies across contexts and cultures

1 Colby and Damon, 1995; Walker *et al.*, 1995.
2 Edel, 1955; Weber, 1930.
3 Triandis, 1991. See p. 38 for further discussion.
4 Dion and Dion, 1996.
5 Triandis, 1991. It has been suggested that the difference arose from the emphasis on individual autonomy in herding and fishing in Greek society, and that on cooperation in rice cultivation in China (Nesse, 2000).
6 Miller and Bersoff, 1995.
7 'Social capital' refers to the resources that become available to individuals through family relationships, community social organizations, etc. See, e.g.,

Coleman, 1990. The usage of this concept is still under review; see, e.g., Portes, 1998.
8 Schluter, 1994; Davies, 1994.
9 Szreter, 2000.
10 Teiser, 1996.
11 Bambrough, 1979a.

5 Morality and the self-system

1 Blasi, 1993; Davidson and Youniss, 1991.
2 For a recent review of the much discussed concept of the self, see Baumeister (1999).
3 Morris, 1987.
4 Heelas, 1981. See also Spiro, 1993a.
5 See, e.g., Lienhardt, 1985.
6 While this is a suggestion as to what the conscience is, it is important to note that it may be experienced very differently in different cultures. Thus it seems that the Dinka, who experience the self as less autonomous, see the conscience as an external power directed by the injured party. Lienhardt, 1961, cited in Heelas, 1981.
7 And, as discussed already, the extent to which she does or does not live up to her internalized precepts, her example or influence may in the long run affect the future of the roles in the society to which she belongs.
8 In case there should be any misunderstanding, we are concerned here with the motivations behind actions, not with the role of rationality in the consideration of the nature of moral judgement. See, e.g., Bambrough, 1979b.
9 While it may seem strange to include idiosyncratic norms and values, they form part of a continuum and must share many of the same psychological processes with norms more widely shared, though the nature of the sanctions may involve internal emotions ('guilt') and no external pressures.
10 Summarized by Haste, 1993.
11 The several aspects of self-knowledge have been classified differently according to the author's interests. See, e.g., Neisser, 1988. It is useful to see them in part as scripts and narratives acquired in the past and influencing behaviour (Bruner, 1986).
12 Nucci and Lee 1993.
13 Pitt-Rivers, 1973.
14 Baumeister, 1999 differentiates between self-knowledge, the self as involved in interpersonal being, and the self's executive function. The assumption of 'free-will' made here is discussed in Chapter 13.
15 Sedikides, 1993.
16 Swann *et al.*, 1990.
17 Shrauger, 1975.
18 See also Carrithers, 1985; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; and pp. 128–31.
19 Fortes, 1987.
20 Jacobson-Widding, 1997. The relation between guilt and shame from a slightly different perspective is discussed on p. 87.
21 Geertz, 1975, pp. 49–51.
22 E.g. Tajfel and Turner, 1986.
23 Turner, 1976.
24 See also Shweder and Bourne, 1984, who review other examples and provide further data.

25 Shrauger and Schoeneman, 1979.
26 Backman, 1988.
27 Steele, 1988
28 Bowlby 1969/1982.
29 Bretherton and Munholland, 1999, p. 95.
30 Bowlby, 1969/1982; Bretherton, 1995; Bretherton and Munholland, 1999.
31 Bowlby, 1969/1982; Bretherton, 1995. It has been suggested that the capacity to form such models owes its evolutionary origin to their advantages in facilitating insightful behaviour and expectations about future events in the social world.
32 E.g. Schank and Abelson, 1977. This theoretical approach is being extended and hardened by developmental psychiatrists (e.g. Stern, 1995). Furthermore, it has been related to Schank's modification of script theory, which postulates multiple interconnected hierarchies of interconnected cognitive schemata which determine how new events are decoded and processed and how information is parsed and ordered (Bretherton, Ridgeway and Cassidy, 1990).
33 Nisan, 1993.
34 Keller and Edelstein, 1993, p. 310.
35 Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997.

6 Acquisition of a 'moral sense' and moral codes

1 Damon, 1996; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Hoffman, 2000; Kagan, 2000; Killen and Hart, 1995; Nucci and Lee, 1993; Turiel, 1998. For a psychoanalytically oriented account, see Wolf, 1993.
2 Keller and Edelstein, 1993.
3 Colby and Damon, 1995; see also Youniss and Yates, 1999.
4 Blasi, 1993.
5 Rheingold and Hay, 1980.
6 Kagan, 1989; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998. It should be added that this is not intended to minimize the importance of experiential factors in development. Cultures vary widely in their emphasis on prosocial behaviours.
7 Empathy is defined as an affective response that stems from the apprehension or comprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and is identical or very similar to what the other person is feeling or would be expected to feel (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998).
8 Hoffman, 2000.
9 Kagan, 2000.
10 Dunn, 1988.
11 Bowlby, 1969/82.
12 Hoffman, 1981. This emphasis on a predispositions to show prosocial behaviours is in harmony with the literature on predispositions to learn (Seligman and Hager, 1972; Hinde and Stevenson-Hinde, 1973). It involves a somewhat different emphasis from the view that children develop through experience an essentially rational moral autonomy which opposes their egocentric tendencies (Piaget, 1932).
13 Review, Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998.
14 Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Goody, 1991.
15 Killen and Nucci, 1995.
16 Baron-Cohen, 1997; Baron-Cohen, Leslie and Frith, 1985.
17 Eisenberg and Strayer, 1987; Hoffman, 2000.
18 Keller and Edelstein, 1993.
19 Harris, 1989.

20 Dunn and Munn, 1987.
21 Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Hoffman, 1984.
22 Byrne and Whiten, 1988; de Waal, 1996; Hare, Call and Tomasello, 2001.
23 Kochanska, 1994. In any case, cognition and emotion are closely interconnected; brain damage that most affects morality affects the relations between cognitive and affective systems (Damasio, 1994).
24 Hoffman, 1981, 2000. Behaviour that could only phenomenologically be described as empathic has been recorded in chimpanzees and other great apes by de Waal (1996), who suggests that indications of morality in these species are means for integrating social groups.
25 Eisenberg, 1986.
26 Kagan, 1984.
27 Arsenio and Lover, 1995.
28 Kagan, 1989.
29 E.g. Dunn, Brown and Maguire, 1995; Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998.
30 Grusec and Goodnow, 1994a/b.
31 Damon, 1977. Development of a conscience requires both awareness of what one is doing and comparison with a standard.
32 Ainsworth *et al.*, 1978; Barnett, 1987; Bowlby, 1969 and 1982.
33 Nucci and Lee, 1993.
34 Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby and Martin, 1983; Hoffman, 2000; see also Kochanska, 1997, cited below.
35 Smetana, 1981. See also Grusec and Goodnow, 1994a/b.
36 Vygotsky, 1981.
37 Killen and Nucci, 1995; Nucci, 1996; Smetana, 1995a.
38 Grusec and Goodnow, 1994a/b.
39 Kochanska, 1993, 1997.
40 Damon, 1977.
41 Smetana, 1995a/b.
42 Kagan emphasizes the variability in what is regarded as virtue. For instance, he contrasts Puritan New England, where frugality was prized and wealth hidden, with the contemporary USA, where 'wealth has become an unconflicted sign of virtue, [and] one feels obliged to display it' (1998, p. 154).
43 Kagan, 1998, p. 152.
44 Damon, 1996.
45 Dunn, 1999; Dunn *et al.*, 1995.
46 Youniss, 1980.
47 'Perspective-taking' refers to the ability to perceive the situation as another perceives it.
48 Piaget, 1932/1965.
49 Berger and Luckman, 1966.
50 Killen and Nucci, 1995.
51 Turiel 1998; Youniss, 1980.
52 Kohlberg, 1984.
53 Nunner-Winkler, 1993.
54 Gilligan, 1982.
55 Review, MacDonald, 1988.
56 Dunn and Munn, 1985.
57 Hay, Castle, Stimson and Davies, 1995.
58 Dunn, Cutting and Demetriou, 2000.
59 Nucci, cited Killen and Hart, 1995.
60 Nucci and Lee, 1993.
61 Caspi and Elder, 1988; Patterson and Dishion, 1988.

62 Van IJzendoorn and Bakermans-Kranenburg, 1997.
63 C. Humphrey, 1997. It should be noted that morality is used here in a broad sense, as discussed on p. 10.

7 Sources of moral precepts: relations with kin

1 As mentioned in Chapter 2, for heuristic reasons, precepts will be discussed initially as if they were derived from principles: the matter is discussed further on pp. 93–4.
2 Dawkins, 1976; Trivers, 1974.
3 Hamilton, 1964.
4 Hamilton, 1964; Trivers, 1974.
5 See pp. 17–18.
6 Trivers, 1974.
7 Blurton Jones, 1986.
8 Hrdy, 1999; Laland *et al.*, 1995.
9 Bray, 1997.
10 It has been suggested that the estimates of male preponderance may be somewhat exaggerated, because some later births are concealed from the authorities and do not appear in the statistics.
11 McLeod and Yates (1981).
12 Scheper-Hughes, 1992.
13 Rublack, 1999.
14 Daly and Wilson, 1988, 1996.
15 Hetherington, Henderson and Reiss, 1999.
16 Daly and Wilson, 1988, 1996. A Swedish study, involving a considerably smaller sample, did not confirm that infanticide was more likely in families containing a step-parent (Temrin *et al.*, 2000). A variety of explanations are possible: for instance, the frequency of unwanted births is much higher in Canada than in Sweden. Burgess and Drais (1999) suggest that social and economic conditions may affect the maltreatment of children. Cronin (personal communication) points out that there are problems with the statistical methods used and with the classification of step- and adoptive parents.
17 Buss, 1999.
18 Anderson, Kaplan and Lancaster, 1999.
19 Silk, 1980.
20 Carsten, 1997.
21 Bray, 1997; Strathern, 1992.
22 Bodenhorn, 2000.
23 Bray 1997.
24 Goody, 1982, 1997, 1999.
25 Silk, 1990.
26 More generally, it depends on similarity between donor and recipient (Sober and Wilson, 1998, 2000).
27 Betzig *et al.*, 1988; Essock-Vitale and McGuire, 1985; Irons, 1991
28 Daly and Wilson, 1988.
29 O'Neill and Petrinovich, 1998.
30 Many animal species are also more likely to behave prosocially to kin rather than to non-kin, and this raises an interesting point about how 'kinship': is stored in the brain. Humans have categories of sibling, aunt, cousin, and so on, but that is unlikely to be the case in animals. We shall consider later another possible mechanism as operating in both humans and other species – namely that kin are recognized as such because they became familiar in early life (see p. 126).

31 Nelecting influences on gene expression.
32 Stevenson-Hinde (pers. comm.) suggests that there may be a biological issue here: the children of an individual share genes with those of his/her brother- or sister-in-law.

8 Sources of moral precepts: relations with non-relatives

1 This sort of explanation is also considered by Boehm (1999). Unfortunately he introduces an unnecessary complication by arguing that, if assistance to kin and to non-kin are due to the same genes, this implies that the same genes are doing two different jobs, one enhancing the inclusive fitness of the individual and the other useful to the group, and he compares this to pleiotropy. The basis of this argument seems to be that genes are defined in terms of their relation to selection, rather than in terms of (in this case) the behaviour to which they are relevant. If it really helps to discuss this matter in terms of postulated genes (which many would doubt) the more economical suggestion would seem to be that the genes simply enhance prosocial behaviour to kin, and this has multiple consequences.
2 Review, Hinde, 1997.
3 Thibaut and Kelley, 1959; Kelley, 1979.
4 A related explanation depends on a difference between exchanges of material goods and exchanges in close personal relationships. If A gives B money, A has less; but if A shows friendliness, affection or love to B, A has more – or at least feels himself to have more (Foa and Foa, 1974). Why should that be so? Perhaps a partial explanation of the difference is as follows. Exchanging material goods does not in itself enhance one's feeling of being meritorious if both parties feel that they have had a fair deal, but displaying affection for another enhances one's self-esteem in a special way. In our culture, at least, people who display genuine affection tend to be liked, and one feels that the enhanced self-esteem is justified if it is accompanied by the approval of others. As we saw in discussing the self-system, people like to think well of themselves (p. 38). Thus, displaying affection is rewarding and can lead to a willingness to display more (Hinde, Finkenauer and Auhagen, 2000).

   The Dalai Lama (1999) distinguishes between ethical acts, where one refrains from causing harm to others' experience or hope of happiness, and spiritual acts, involving love, compassion, forgiveness, humility, and so on, which presume some level of concern for others' well-being. Spiritual acts, he claims, give our lives meaning and bring the doer happiness.
5 Walster, Walster and Berscheid, 1978.
6 Prins, Buunk and van Yperen, 1993.
7 Walster *et al.*, 1978.
8 Foa and Foa, 1974.
9 See also Frank, 1988; Heal, 1991.
10 See Kerrigan 1996 for literary examples.
11 Alexander, 1987.
12 Blackmore, 1999.
13 Gintis, 2000; Batson, 2000.
14 Küng and Kuschel, 1993. Gensler (1998) regards the Golden Rule as derivative from the principle that one is conscientious (i.e., one keeps one's actions and desires in harmony with one's moral beliefs), and impartiality (one makes similar judgements about similar actions). This is another example of the chicken-and-egg problem discussed on p. 26, but the occurrence of moral indignation (p. 86) makes it seem likely that the principle of reciprocity is primary. It is difficult to

imagine reciprocity as derived from moral indignation, but the converse is plausible.

15 Strawson, 1974.
16 Smart, 1996; Yang, 1957.
17 E.g. Malinowski, 1922; Mauss, 1950/1954.
18 Mauss, 1950/1954, p. 3
19 Though see Heal, 1991; Sober and Wilson, 1998.
20 Wilkinson, 1988.
21 Cheney and Seyfarth, 1990.
22 De Waal, 1996. See also discussion of cooperative behaviour by Harcourt and de Waal, 1992.
23 Pusey and Packer, 1997.
24 Alexander, 1987; Boyd and Richerson, 1991; Frank, 1988; Irons, 1991; Ridley, 1996; Symons, 1979; Wright, 1994.
25 See especially Irons, 1996; Frank, 1988.
26 Such models, contrasting cooperators with non-cooperators as though there were two types of being, are useful tools for heuristic purposes, but it hardly needs to be said that real life is not like that. Each individual has predispositions for both selfishly assertive and prosocial behaviour, and which one predominates depends on the situation. Just as children with what is called a 'difficult' temperament (presumably associated with assertiveness and not conducive to social harmony in most societies) are apparently more likely to survive in famine conditions in Africa (de Vries, 1984), so different mixtures of assertive and prosocial behaviour will be appropriate in different circumstances.
27 Axelrod and Hamilton, 1984; Hauert and Schuster, 1997.
28 Nowak, May and Sigmund, 1995.
29 Nowak and Sigmund, 1988; Dunbar, 1996.
30 Boyd, 1992.
31 Skyrms (2000) argues that dynamical models of cultural evolution and social learning hold more promise of success than models based on rational choice.
32 Cronin, 1991; Dawkins, 1982; Lack, 1966; Williams, 1966.
33 Boyd and Richerson, 1991; Sober and Wilson, 1998; Wilson and Kniffen, 1999. It should be said that presentations of group selection and multi-level selection theory have not been without criticism. See, e.g., Reeve, 2000; Smuts, 1999. This does not invalidate the basic issues.
34 In evolutionary studies, actions that increase the probability of successful reproduction of non-related individuals and decrease that of the actor are often referred to as involving 'strong altruism'. Similar actions that do not decrease the reproductive potential of the actor are referred to as 'weak altruism'. The evolution of strong altruism requires greater than random variation between groups (Sober and Wilson, 2000).
35 Boyd and Richerson, 1991, 1992; Soltis, Boyd and Richerson, 1995; Wilson and Kniffin, 1999.
36 Hamilton, 1975.
37 Boyd and Richerson, 1991, 1992; Richerson and Boyd, 1998.
38 Alexander, 1987.
39 Boehm, 1999. This author prefers the hypothesis that the egalitarian nature of prehistoric hunter-gatherer groups (see p. 136) suppressed the display of selfishly assertive behaviour, reduced phenotypic variation within groups and enhanced it between groups, making group selection possible.
40 Some will say that such behaviour is not altruism because of the expectation of recompense. However it is strictly necessary to distinguish such behaviour from the broader category of prosocial behaviour, because it would not require a

special selectionist explanation if the costs to the initiator were not greater than the immediate benefits.

41 N. Humphrey, 1997.
42 Hinde, Finkenauer and Auhagen, 2001.
43 Review, Hinde, 1997.
44 Noam, 1993.
45 Asch, 1956.
46 In a stimulating book, Blackmore (1999; see Dawkins, 1976) has suggested a possible proximate mechanism for the general ability to imitate, including the imitation of prosocial behaviour. Her argument is part of a wide-ranging theory of 'mimetic' transmission, 'memes' being a term for any information that can be passed between individuals by imitation. I have not used meme theory here because it would require extended discussion without altering the conclusions. Also, it puts the emphasis on the memes as replicators, when replication depends at least equally on the brain's receptivity.
47 Henrich and Boyd, 1998.
48 Boehm, 1999.
49 Roccas, Horenczyk and Schwartz, 2000.
50 Trivers, 1985.
51 Cosmides and Tooby, 1992.
52 Evans and Over, 1996.
53 Sperber, Cara and Girotto, 1995.
54 Cosmides and Tooby, 1992; Cummins, 1996, 1999. The work of Cosmides and Tooby involved control experiments that rule out many other possible explanations. Nevertheless, there has been considerable resistance to the view that we are equipped with Darwinian algorithms for solving specific types of problems, and therefore it cannot be said that the issue is closed (Evans and Over, 1996).
55 Mealey *et al.*, 1996.
56 Boyd and Richerson, 1991, 1992; Clayton and Lerner, 1991.
57 This is, of course, open to exploitation by authorities who bribe informers.
58 Frank, 1988; Irons, 1996; Keller and Edelstein, 1993; Montada, 1993.
59 Contributions to Harré and Parrott, 2000.
60 Ekman and Friesen, 1975.
61 Trivers, 1985; Ekman and Friesen, 1975.
62 Tangney, 1995.
63 Tangney *et al.*, in prep.
64 Bauman, 1989, writing about the Holocaust, has suggested that 'the *liberating feeling of shame* may help to recover the moral significance of the awesome historical experience and thus help to exorcise the awful spectre of the Holocaust, which to this day haunts human conscience and makes us neglect vigilance for the sake of living in peace with the past' (p. 205).
65 Frank, 1988; Trivers, 1985.
66 Of course, many people perform selfless acts without calling attention to themselves. This can be understood as due to the virtue of humility (see. p. 98). For such individuals the reward of seeing themselves act with humility may outweigh that to be gained from public recognition of their generosity.
67 Hinde, 1997.
68 Zak and Knack, 2001.
69 At a conference on its nature trust was defined as 'a particular level of the subjective probability with which an agent assesses that another agent or group of agents will perform a particular action, both *before* he can monitor such action (or independently of his ability ever to be able to monitor it) *and* in a context in which it affects *his own* action'.

70 Bowlby, 1973.
71 Tizard and Hodges, 1978
72 Thompson, 1999.
73 Foa and Foa, 1974; Gambetta, 1988.
74 Eisenstadt, 1956.
75 Pitt-Rivers, 1973.
76 Auhagen, 1991. Many would argue that friendship is not incompatible with sexuality.
77 Woodburn, 1982.
78 Blurton Jones, 1984.
79 Kelly, 1995; Boehm, 1999.
80 Hill and Kaplan, 1993.
81 Hawkes, O'Connell and Blurton Jones, 2001.
82 Gurven *et al.*, 2000.
83 See Zahavi, 2000.
84 E.g. N. Humphrey, 1997.

9 Sources of moral precepts: status, rights

1 Chapais, 1991.
2 Elias, 1996.
3 Zahavi, 1975, 2000. See Brown, 2000; Frank, 1999.
4 See, e.g., discussion by Smith and Bliege Bird, 2000.
5 See discussion over food sharing in hunter-gatherers, p. 91–2.
6 Bandura, 1989, 1992.
7 Betzig, Borgerhoff Mulder and Turke, 1988; Szreter, 1996; Vining, 1986.
8 Milgram, 1974.
9 Baumann, 1989.
10 Rublack, 1999.
11 Cummins, 1999.
12 Bambrough, 1979a/b; Berlin, 1969.
13 Jacobson-Widding, 1997.
14 This is a somewhat controversial matter, since the meaning of the words used to refer to rights changed over the centuries (Tuck, 1979).
15 Warnock, 1998.
16 Hardin, 1968.
17 Slade, 1962.
18 Haney, Banks and Zimbardo, 1973.
19 Bandura, Underwood and Fromson, 1975.

10 Sources of moral precepts: sex- and gender-related issues

1 E.g. Chodorow, 1978; Dinnerstein, 1976.
2 Review, Dixson, 1998.
3 Astuti, 1998.
4 Strathern, 1981, 1988. See also Poole, 1981, and other contributions to Ortner and Whitehead, 1981.
5 For the assessment of masculinity and femininity, see Spence and Helmreich, 1978. In most studies individuals are classified as masculine (high on masculinity, low on femininity), feminine (the opposite), undifferentiated (low on both), or androgynous (high on both).
6 Eagley and Wood, 1999.

7 E.g. Strathern, 1997.
8 Rublack. 1999.
9 Crook and Crook, 1988.
10 Hill and Hurtado, 1996; Beckerman *et al.*, 1998.
11 Hsu, 1998.
12 There is no necessary implication here that religious specialists are more self-seeking than anyone else but, as we have seen, all individuals seek coherence in their world-views. Unverifiable beliefs can be maintained more readily if the holder perceives that they are shared by others, and thus religious specialists are prone to attempt to recruit converts.
13 Buss, 1995.
14 Ardener, 1993.
15 Schlegel, 1972.
16 Gingrich, 1997.
17 Melhuus, 1997.
18 Rublack, 1999.
19 Buss, 1999.
20 See, e.g., the Babylonian laws (Roth, 1995).
21 Gluckman, 1950; Dickeman, 1981. It has also been suggested that clitoral responsiveness formerly provided a means whereby a woman could discriminate between potential mates in terms of their effectiveness and sensitivity in copulation, and that clitoridectomy might deprive her of this evidence for choosing a mate (see Rowanchilde, 1996).
22 Obermeyer, 1999.
23 Obermeyer, 1999; Shweder, 2000.
24 Ko, 1994, 1997.
25 For exceptions, see Hill and Hurtado, 1996; Hsu, 1998.
26 Buss, 1999.
27 Gilligan, 1982. See more recent discussion in Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998; Turiel, 1998.
28 Kohlberg, 1984.
29 Walker, 1991.
30 Haste and Baddeley, 1991.
31 Eagly and Crowley, 1986. It has also been argued by Coney and Mackey (1997) that women's stratagems within their reference groups involve not caring but the manipulation of the other individuals to maximize their independence. The evidence brought forward is, however, quite inconclusive. It concerned gender differences in behaviour, rather than moral orientation, and we have seen that moral beliefs are not always realized in action. It was also statistical and in each case open to other explanations. For instance:

    (1) In a cross-country comparison, the proportion of women in higher education was positively correlated with the proportion of births to unwed mothers. The authors conclude that when women have a chance to raise a child independently, they do so, and that excluding a father from child-rearing is not compatible with Gilligan's emphasis on care and responsibility. However their evidence does not show that it was the educated women who were the single-parent mothers, and other conclusions are possible.
    (2) Women with children are more likely to petition for divorce than husbands. The authors claim that this indicates that the women therefore give their own independence higher priority than the children's welfare. But there are many reasons for divorce, and a woman may be better off without a (e.g.) violent husband, and yet not be seeking independence.

(3) Occasionally mothers simulate symptoms of disease in a healthy child. Thereby, it is said, she creates a victim of her child and herself receives enhanced sympathetic attention. In addition, sudden infant death syndrome is said to be due to action by the mother. However these cannot be said to be common phenomena, and provide an insecure base for generalizing about women's moral orientation.
(4) Women show previously repressed memories much more often than do men. It is claimed that this brings attention and sympathy to the woman. But, of course, many other explanations are possible: for instance, in modern societies more women than men may have cause to seek psychotherapy.
(5) Male suicide is more common than female, but female suicide attempts are more likely to fail than are those of males. This again is ascribed to attention-seeking, but it could be, for instance, that males, the more physically violent and less fearful sex, are simply more efficient or less fearful in their suicide attempts.

Anyway, with respect to (2), (4) and (5), nearly everyone would like more attention than he or she gets, and this may be especially true of women, but this says nothing about any gender difference in morality. Thus it would seem that these authors' attack on Gilligan's conclusion is not justified by the evidence they provide.

32 Gilligan and Attanucci, 1988; Haste and Baddeley, 1991
33 Fabes and Eisenberg, 1996, cited Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998.
34 Walker 1991.
35 The evidence here is extensive, and only a few representative studies are cited: see Hinde (1997) for references. See also King, 1993.
36 Antill, 1983.
37 Peplau, 2001.
38 Stevenson-Hinde and Shouldice, 1995.
39 Magnusson and Oláh, 1981.
40 Block and Robins, 1993, p. 919.
41 Van Lange, 2000,
42 Williams and Best, 1982.
43 Eccles, Wigfield and Schiefele, 1997; McClelland, 1961.
44 Hrdy, 1999; Moore, 1988.
45 E.g. Dixson, 1998; Low, 2000; Mealey, 2000.
46 Ortner, 1974.
47 Goody, 1997
48 Ardener, 1993.
49 Buss *et al.*, 1990.
50 Strathern, 1984.
51 James, 1993.
52 Westwood, in Hirschon, 1984
53 Miller, 1993; Moore, 1988.
54 Interestingly, a number of these are matrilineal. It has been argued that political power, at least in pre-industrial societies, brings greater reproductive success to men, but at most indirect reproductive gains to women, the biological advantage in their case being mediated by the greater health or wealth of their sons (Low, 2000).
55 Collins *et al.*, 1971.
56 Strathern, 1981; Hirschon, 1984.
57 Holy, 1985.
58 Carsten, 1997.

59 Spiro, 1993b.
60 Keeler, 1990.
61 Friedl, 1967.
62 The distinction implied here between social and household spheres is, of course, not equally applicable in all societies (Moore, 1988). Nor must there be any implication that domestic work is inferior to work in the social and economic spheres. But, even though the distinction between the social/political arenas and the household carries different emphases in different societies, it has some general validity for the great majority.
63 Moore, 1986.
64 Menon, 2000, p. 79
65 Pina-Cabral in Hirschon, 1984.
66 Hirschon, 1993.
67 Though this could also be interpreted as a means of sequestering the women.
68 Bray, 1997. See also McDermott, 1990.
69 Rublack, 1999.
70 See, for instance, Ortner's (1981) comments on gender relations in Polynesia.
71 Humphrey, 1993.
72 See, e.g. Strathern, 1981.
73 Hsu, 1998.
74 Goody, 1997.
75 Wright and Wright, 1995.
76 How far it is generally true that women control sex is not clear. Certainly there are reports from AIDS workers that men will not allow their wives to insist that they use condoms. See also Spiro, 1993.
77 Blumstein and Schwartz, 1983. See also Collins *et al.*, 1971.
78 Goody, 1997.
79 Murdock and Provost, 1973.
80 In our society bonding with one other is usual, but in the Aché the female is inseminated by a number of males, each of whom then contributes to the rearing of the infant (Hill and Hurtado, 1996). See also Hrdy, 1999.
81 Coleman, 2000
82 E.g. Hsu, 1998.
83 Buss, 1999.
84 Ortner and Whitehead, 1981.
85 Caplan, 1984.
86 See above and pp. 122–4, and review in Hinde, 1997. Of course, exceptions may exist. Ortner (1981, p. 390) has suggested that in Polynesia, where women have low status and freedom when married but gain freedom when divorced, and where women and their children are valued by their kin group, 'it is highly probable that women are less personally committed to their marriages than are their husbands'.
87 Ruble and Martin, 1998.
88 Buss, 1999.
89 Hawkes, 1993.
90 Short, 1979; Dixson, 1998.
91 E.g. Hinde, 1996.
92 Lévi-Strauss, 1963.
93 Ralls, Ballou and Templeton, 1988; Shepher, 1983.
94 Bittles and Neel, 1994; Hamilton, 1980. Review, Low, 2000.
95 Bittles, 1994;Grand and Bittles, 1997.
96 Bateson, 1982.
97 Sahlins, 1976; Leach, 1981.

98 Hsu, 1998; Fuller, 1976.
99 Bremner and van der Bosch, 1994; Goody, 2000.
100 Hopkins, 1980.
101 Goody, 1962, 2000.
102 Thornhill, 1991.
103 Bevc and Silverman, 2000; Kummer, 1980; Shepher, 1983; Westermarck, 1891; Wolf, 1995.

11 Sources of moral precepts: social and religious systems

1 Bauman, 1989.
2 Rabbie, 1991; Tajfel and Turner, 1986.
3 Hogg, 2000.
4 Richerson and Boyd, 1999.
5 Sykes, 1991.
6 'What do you suppose shall be said if there is a further call to arms for our men, and the enemy has to be reckoned with again? Are we likely to take the field or shall we value our lives more highly, seeing that the dead receive no honour? For myself, while I live, I should be wholly content if I had just a little from day to day; but I would wish my tomb to be seen honoured; that is a tribute that lasts generations.' Euripides (*c*. 423 BCE/1998) ll. 313–20.
7 E.g. Smart, 1996.
8 Rapport, 1997.
9 Archetti, 1997, p. 99.
10 Hinde, 1999.
11 Rublack, 1999.
12 Smart, 1996.
13 Orzech, 1996.
14 Loewe, 1994.
15 James, 1988.
16 Teiser, 1996.
17 Crook and Osmaston, 1994.
18 Betzig *et al.*, 1988.
19 The Moroccan emperor Moulay Ismail the Bloodthirsty is said to have acknowledged siring 888 children (Buss, 1999). Einon (1998) has argued that Ismail cannot really have fathered all the children that he claimed. Gould (2000) has presented a contrary view.

12 Speculations concerning the emergence of moral systems

1 Aiello and Dunbar, 1993.
2 Woodburn, 1982.
3 E.g. Boehm, 1993, 1999, 2000a.
4 James, 1988, p. 146.
5 Richerson and Boyd, 1999.
6 See e.g. Black, 2000; Boehm, 2000b; Kelly, 1995; Richerson and Boyd, 1999. See also Dunbar, 1996.
7 Gardner 2000.
8 Frank, 1988. See also Knauft, 1987.
9 Evans-Pritchard, 1940. See also Lewis, 1995.
10 Blundell, 1989. See also Exodus 21 xxiii–xxv.
11 George (translator), 1999.

12 Kerrigan, 1996.
13 Black, 2000.
14 Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 151.
15 G.Lewis, 1995, p. 27.
16 Whereas revenge in the Homeric poems was often excessive, the classical Athenian system placed a positive value on restraint and the substitution of an appeal to popular opinion (Herman, 1998).
17 Boyd and Richerson, 1991; see p. 84.
18 Gurven *et al.*, 2000; see p. 76.
19 Richerson and Boyd, 2000.
20 It is important to bear in mind that separate consideration of egalitarian and hierarchically organized groups is only a heuristic device, and may or may not imply a sequential historical relation between them. Furthermore it will be assumed that an adequately sophisticated cognitive system has already been evolved. (An influential theory of the evolution of the human brain suggests that brain development was selected for through its consequences on social intelligence (Humphrey, 1976). The development of the brain in early *Homo* seems to have involved the prefrontal cortex, important in the planning and integration of behavioural sequences and favouring linguistic abilities.)
21 Roth, 1995. See also Driver and Miles, 1952.
22 Richerson and Boyd, 1999.
23 Richerson and Boyd 1998, 1999, have referred to such mechanisms as 'work-arounds'.
24 WLUML, 1999.
25 Boyd and Richerson, 1992.
26 Goody, 2000.
27 Tierney, 1982.
28 E.g. Rublack, 1999.
29 I am extending here the interpretation of Bottéro, 1992.
30 Adams, 1876.
31 Remnants of this can be seen in the conventions of duelling, which remained a potent force in Germany and some other countries until the early twentieth century. Elias, 1996.
32 Saltman, 1985. See also Megarry and Wade, 2000.
33 Saltman, 1985, p. 228.
34 Hart, 1961.
35 A moral code upheld by religious authority whose power is ascribed to a transcendental authority, and with threat of sanctions in this or another life, is not precisely similar to either of these, but seems to be closer to a formal legal system, in that it is based on formalized recognition of (divine) power. Even where religious systems are no longer so powerful as they used to be, as in the industrial West, the moral code has been derived from religious foundations, and many of those who subscribe to it and pass it on are, or have been, influenced by a system of religious beliefs.
36 Milsom, 1981.
37 Fallers, 1969.
38 Megarry and Wade, 2000.
39 Brown, 2000.

13 Sources of conflict

1 See, e.g., Berlin, 1997.
2 Russell, 1929/1988, pp. 10–11.

3 Darley and Latané, 1970.
4 Nisan, 1993.
5 E.g. Pugwash, 1994.
6 Segerstråle, 2000.
7 Gambetta, 1993.
8 Milgram, 1974.
9 Bauman, 1989.
10 Latenée and Darley, 1970.
11 Edel, 1955.
12 Bauman, 1989.
13 Bandura, 1991.
14 Colby and Damon, 1995. Amongst philosophers, there is little agreement between utilitarians – who seek a general moral principle and place priority on the general welfare, to which rights to personal freedoms must be subjugated – and those who hold that individuals have inviolable rights that may not be overridden by the good of the majority. A more complex intermediate position is that a social system must be freely acceptable in principle to all its members (Rawls, 1971).
15 Bevc and Silverman, 2000.
16 Killen and Hart, 1995.
17 Smetana, 1995b.
18 Shweder and Bourne, 1984.
19 Helwig, 1995; McClosky and Brill, 1983; Nisan, 1993.
20 Helwig, 1995.
21 *The Independent*, 9 September 2000
22 Warnock, 1998.
23 Nisan, 1993.
24 Goffman, 1961.
25 Fortes, 1987.
26 Ewing, 2000; Sager, 2000.
27 Shweder *et al.*, 1987.
28 Turiel, 1998, p. 911.
29 Benedict, 1934.
30 Wainryb, 1993.
31 Trivers, 1974.
32 Damon, 1980. See also Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998.
33 Lerner, 1974.
34 Lupfer, Weeks, Doan and Houston, 2000.
35 Hunter, 1991, cited Pearce and Littlejohn, 1997; see Lakoff, 1996.
36 Sarat, 2000.
37 Pearce and Littlejohn, pp. 12–14.
38 In an important volume, Lakoff (1966) has attempted to integrate the diversity of moral world-views to be found in North America as variants of two types – 'Strict Father' and 'Nurturant Parent' morality. He suggests that Conservative and Liberal discourse derive from unconscious metaphors involving models of family morality. The 'Strict Father' morality emphasizes self-discipline and responsibility, the 'Nurturant Parent' holds values more akin to the feminist philosophers' (pp. 6–7). In this way he is able to account for differences in moral judgements between individuals holding the same moral principles, and apparent discrepancies in the judgements of individuals.
39 Gustafson, 1996.
40 Bennett and Duke, 1995.
41 Johnson, 1999.

42 Beauchamp, 1994. See also Gillon, 1994.
43 The traffic in body parts is posing increasing ethical problems in many parts of the world. See Berlinguer, 1999; Scheper-Hughes, 2000.
44 Warnock, 1998.
45 The religious traditions offer differing answers. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church holds that life begins at conception, the Jewish tradition at eight weeks. Holloway, 1999.
46 In an important paper Bandura (1999) lists a number of ways in which immoral actions are justified, including euphemistic labelling (e.g. bombing attacks become 'surgical strikes'); advantageous comparison with less moral actions; displacement or diffusion of responsibility onto superiors or colleagues; distortion of the consequences of the action; dehumanization of the target of the action; and attribution of blame onto others, the victim or circumstances.

14 Emphasis on biological bases is not biological determinism

1 In fact, biological determinism usually implies that human nature is fixed, but not human behaviour (Cronin, personal communication). However objections of the type discussed in this chapter are still made.
2 E.g. Dennett, 1984.
3 Warnock, 1998.
4 *Ibid.*, 1998, pp. 96–7.
5 *Ibid.*, p. 99.
6 *Ibid.*, 1998, p. 100.
7 Review by Blakemore, 1998.
8 Warnock, 1998, p. 102.
9 Midgley, 1983.

15 Conclusion

1 See also Hinde, 1999.
2 Hinde, 1999.
3 Whether or not such cases are understandable in biological terms is an open issue.
4 Bauman, 1989.
5 In the same way as religious experience is coloured by the beliefs held: Christians rarely if ever encounter Buddha, or Buddhists Christ. Discussion in Hinde, 1999.
6 Boyer, 1994.

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