1

Background to Ethics

The purpose of the Code of Professional Conduct is to set standards of behaviour for psychologists with respect to clients, colleagues and the public in general. It is not designed to establish a monopoly, an income or a social status (as distinct from a professional status). Psychology is held in good regard partly because of the existence of a code of professional conduct. It is also obvious that technological inventions and development will always move ahead of codes of professional conduct and acts of the legislature to register psychologists. This leads to the framing of precepts in general rather than specific terms.

The purpose of ethics is to guide towards high professional standards. To ensure that such standards are met it is crucial that there be a mechanism in place to resolve problems that arise. There is more than one forum in which complaints may be heard, the first and most obvious being the relevant registration board. There are other forums at both state and federal levels. The case may depend upon who is the employer (e.g. management consultancy, education department, health department). Such departments have conciliation forums and tribunals for resolving disputes. If the matter concerns fees the small claims tribunals are relevant. If a dispute should arise it is highly prudent to try to resolve it before it escalates into a career-damaging issue. To this end expert advice on forums for dispute resolution would be well taken.

It is a significant omission that practitioners once qualified may, in many places, continue to practise for the rest of their lives without the requirement for continued professional development (CPD). That situation is now, quite rightly, under review. The training in CPD concerns not only the acquisition of knowledge, important though that is, but also the peer contact and testing of ideas, the fostering of collegiality, and of being made part of a larger entity than one's own small field. Most specifically, CPD ensures that frequent contact with colleagues should lead to discussions of ethical

issues, and provide the constant informal feedback that fosters the unconscious awareness of the importance of the ethical dimension. The current move to require professionals to demonstrate updating study (conferences, placements and the like) could well have an attached requirement to ensure that ethical insight is emphasised as much as is technical mastery.

Codes do not always make explicit the model upon which psychologists operate. The difficulty here is that they seem to operate under more than one model. Thus, clinical psychologists may operate under a medical model, whereas forensic psychologists may operate under a legal one. The use of the terms 'patient' and 'client' indicate such a difference. Issues of determinism, of personal autonomy and of where accountability lies, are all relevant. Organisational psychologists may or may not find these frames of reference appropriate.

Another question about a code is whether it should be prescriptive or proscriptive. A prescriptive code has much to commend it, but suggests that we know the ends we wish to achieve. The proscriptive code has the advantage that it simply bans certain forms of behaviour, leaving the professional free to adopt any other means perceived as fitting.

Codes may be expressed at a level that makes meeting such standards probably unachievable in their entirety. However, the lack of total achievability is not necessarily a weakness. The aspirational aspect of the code provides an incentive to try harder to satisfy key values.

An issue beyond the reach of the code on which advice is commonly sought is whether the aspirations apply to matters outside the profession. For example, does a falsification of a tax return or marital infidelity (but not with clients) become an issue on which we might make ethical judgements about a person's professional standing? One can imagine cases in which behaviour is so gross as to cast serious doubt upon a person's probity.

Where transgressions are proved, and are likely to bring the profession into disrepute, and where (in the words of a US judgement) they are 'wilful, flagrant and shameless', ethics committees are likely to take strong action.

The key values of a code of ethics are usually expressed at the beginning of the document. Transgressions invite sanctions or remedy according to more than one rationale: these various rationales include individual retribution, individual deterrence, general deterrence, denunciation, the protection of the community and rehabilitation. The rehabilitative function in ethics is quite as important as are the sanctions. Penalties might range

from a warning or small fine, through suspension or deregistration, to a formal criminal charge. A criminal-legal model of transgression leading to punishment should not predominate. While there are clearly cases requiring such an approach, equally there are others in which remedy and restitution are more appropriate.

An identification of ethical dilemmas of BPS and APA members is given in Lindsay & Colley (1995). That reference is nearly 15 years old, yet it is improbable that there would be much change in that time frame. There it was recorded that, for both BPS and APA members, issues of confidentiality were of most frequent report. Thereafter the problems varied. For BPS members research problems ranked second; for APA members dual relationships ranked second. Readers are recommended to that article as a means of sensitising to the issues which might arise, and the ethical problems which beset practitioners. It will be obvious that the ethical dilemmas in one branch of practice (say, organisational psychology) will not be the same as those of another (say, counselling psychology). Common to all branches are the key ethical canons that underlie all professional work (for a useful references see Banyard & Flanagan, 2005).

The area involving non-humans deserves special mention. Those practitioners with a special interest in the use of animals are recommended to a discussion of that topic in *The Psychologist* of May 1991, which is a special issue. There is also a useful discussion of the subject in Midgley (1993), and in Thomas and Blackman (1991).

The Importance of Ethics

At the outset of their careers most professionals may make minor mistakes, most of which are preventable, while those not preventable are often recoverable. The one mistake causing more problems than any other is that of ethical breaches. Readers of this work are, therefore, strongly recommended to gain a clear understanding of their appropriate code of conduct. Where a career has been damaged by an ethical breach, in almost every case known to the present writer, that breach was largely preventable. Errors of technical judgement seem to be more readily forgiven by contemporaries (and by posterity) than are those errors involving value judgements. One might argue that one test is more appropriate than another; that one intervention strategy is indicated in the overall circumstances. What is more difficult to argue is that it is all right

to breach (say) confidentiality or accountability. One of the collisions of values is to be found in the case of confidentiality and dangerousness (in the case of doctor/patient relationship, see Shane, 1985).

The Benefits of Ethics

Ethics may be seen as a luxury affordable only by the well-established (will you ask your first client to come back for more consultations largely because this will be revenue producing?). Someone starting a new practice, and with a severe cash liquidity problem, might find it acceptable to adopt some dubious stratagems in order to survive economically. Only when well-established might one have the luxury of foregoing an immediate return, and of taking the long-term ethical view. Needless to say, this superficially attractive argument is not well founded.

Professionals who operate with substantial goodwill (and offer guarantees for their services) derive incalculable benefit over those who do not observe such practice. It takes many years to build up a good reputation, and is of enormous benefit to those who continue to do so (goodwill is a marketable commodity and forms part of the assessable value in selling a business). Although individual transactions may be lost, clients will continue to use a reputable practice because they know that if the service is in any way inadequate, simply approaching the practice will produce a remedy. The basic issue here is whether or not one wishes to foster a continuing relationship: an ethical stance is one that behaves as if one has a long-term relationship in mind.

Terminology

The use of language can be degrading, simply by using the wrong term. The use of such terms as 'mentally retarded' may be castigated. One can readily see that a carelessly used expression may be hurtful, perhaps the implied ascription of blame, or of adverse judgement is the deciding factor. One wonders what to make of an expression such as 'intellectually underprivileged' or 'emotionally challenged'.

The fashions of linguistic rectitude are changing ones. It would be most helpful to have a guide which determines whether or not an expression is regrettable. Perhaps the criteria of being non-judgemental, of the absence of blame, and the intent of use are some of the standards by which the future use of terms might be judged. Linguistic rectitude is alive and well, and needs constant attention.

Psychology as 'Obvious'

One of the charges commonly levelled against psychology is that of its seeming obviousness. As one wag put it 'psychology is the obvious expressed in terms of the incomprehensible'. An effective rebuttal of that proposition is given by Stafford (2007). Among other things he makes the points that: some 'obvious' conclusions are just not true (for example, one-third of people report hallucinations, something we associate with mental illness or substance abuse); someone saying that 'I could have told you that' – to which the reply might be 'well, why didn't you'; the public are quite willing to endorse contradictory statements 'too many cooks spoil the broth – all the more the merrier', for example. In research much work turns out to be worthless, but one never knows which bits until the findings are in and analysed. Stafford's main point is that it is not possible to judge in advance: the 'collaborative sifting of findings, methods and theories …' is the only way to go.

Seeming Exceptions

Exceptional conditions tell us to look in places other than normative ethics. For example, breaking a window to attract attention in dire circumstances is not morally wrong – as the destruction of property might be in other circumstances. For good professional reasons, not immediately revealing your professional insights into a client organisation's problems might be justified even though we believe in the canons of honesty and openness. What is of particular relevance here is the issue of personal versus collective responsibility. There are places (and times) wherein collective responsibility is super-ordinate to personal responsibility. In such cases we must consider

where our primary allegiance lies – to the group entity or to the person (assuming that they are rational and adult). In dealing with breaches, and using a form of creative solution one needs to be wary of being self-congratulatory. It is tempting to see a neat solution as being just right, and of rationalising the decision as being so, rather than subjecting the proposed solution to reasoned justification.

Related Disciplines

The two professions likely to act as a guide to defining the client are medicine and law. In medicine the term 'patient' is more often used (although the term 'client' is becoming more common). The *Butterworth Medical Dictionary* defines a patient as 'One who is sick and requires treatment'; and the *Oxford Companion to Medicine* has a patient as 'one under the care of a medical attendant'.

In law the 'client' is defined in various ways, but in a manner that has a certain consistency. Jowitt's *Dictionary of English Law* (Jowitt & Walsh, 1977) defined a client as 'A person who seeks the advice of a lawyer or commits his cause to the management of one, in prosecuting or defending an action in a court of justice'. It also says that a client is a principal or one who, on behalf of another, retains or employs or pays a lawyer – presumably this is for advice as well as action.

Among practising lawyers the working definition of a client is someone who instructs the lawyer. This has important practical implications so that, for example, the client/instructor is the one who enjoys privileged communication with the lawyer. The lawyer has a duty to inform and advise; and a duty to obey the client's instructions except where there is an overriding legal obligation, such as the duty not to mislead the court. For a fuller discussion of these points see Disney *et al.* (1986). Lawyers may have individual, multiple or corporate clients; they may be employed by an organisation, and thereby also have a duty to their employer. In this respect they have similar problems to practising psychologists.

Psychology suffers in a way that other professions do not in that there is one word 'psychology' for both the scientific discipline and for the practice. In medicine, for example, the basic disciplines are anatomy, physiology, biochemistry and so forth. In psychology the descriptor 'psychology' can apply to a mathematical psychologist or a comparative psychology researcher

as well as to a professional psychologist (such as a forensic or a clinical psychologist). That confusion in the public mind has been a significant difficulty in providing an appropriate public identity for psychologists. Despite decades of attempts to implement new terminology, no change of the word 'psychologist' has succeeded. The most successful tactic to date seems to be to add a prefix (e.g. practising psychologist, academic psychologist, or organisational psychologist).

Which professional model is the best guide for psychologists? The concept of 'notifiable disease' from medicine, for example, may fit the 'Tarasoff type' situation, but is less relevant to the case of the corporate client. A legal practitioner model may be a better fit for such situations, but in that instance the legal practitioner is an officer of the court – not an independent professional – which the psychologist may be. The models afforded by these cognate disciplines provide some valuable information, but no easy solution.

There are codes of ethics for all professions, and when one considers the common issues, that is not surprising. To the professions we might add public servants (or civil servants, as they are sometimes called in the UK). Among the issues common to the professions and the public services are loyalty to superiors, following the orders of super-ordinates where instructions are at variance with a professional code, and what to do about the impaired practitioner. This bears upon the issue of a psychologist having a non-psychologist supervisor, dealt with elsewhere in this text.

Defining a Profession

Professions may be defined in various ways. Among the definitions is that of the necessity for a tertiary education. Two other cardinal characteristics make a profession: the first is a basic body of abstract knowledge that gives recognition of an exclusive competence to practise; the other is an ideal of service, which includes a code of ethics. Such a code is supported by the professional community. A code of ethics (or a code of professional conduct) covers relationships with clients, with colleagues and others, with peer professionals, and with the public. This entails a particular set of responsibilities. The code of professional conduct should have, as its primary objective, the protection of the client: the protection of the members is secondary.

Among the issues here is that of defining the qualified provider. With this goes the defining of what should be clear, at least to practitioners, and ideally to their clients. As a guide the following are proposed:

1   A description of the types of services offered:
    a.   services: evaluation (e.g. psychological testing);
    b.   therapy (e.g. treatment for depression);
    c.   guidance (e.g. vocational direction);
    d.   instruction (e.g. supervision of those in training);
    e.   research (e.g. developing new assessment techniques); and
    f.   programme development (e.g. setting up training regimes).
2   Among the other items that bear upon this issue are the:
    a.   enumeration of the specific functions and staff to be maintained at or above given minimally accepted levels;
    b.   definition of the relationships with other professional or administrative staff with whom a professional interacts; and
    c.   spelling out of safeguards for protecting the human and civil rights of the recipient of psychological services.

Those points need to be supplemented with clear mechanisms for implementing these precepts.

The Firmness of Codes

Codes as human inventions

It might be argued that there is no such thing as an ethical absolute. Codes are derivations of the human mind, and an imposition on the universe, and they share the different values that the proponents attach to them. The need for such rules stems from a failure of goodwill. If everyone loved their neighbour as themselves, and behaved from the loftiest of motives codes would scarcely be necessary.

We try to capture justice by formalising it into legal codes. Legislators have performed this service in the form of protective legislation such as truth in advertising, enforcement of contracts, safety legislation, and equal opportunity laws.

There is a concept called natural justice which asserts rules and procedures to be followed in adjudicating disputes. The main principles are to act fairly and without bias. Each party should have the opportunity of stating and defending his or her case, and of challenging the evidence of the other side. It is clear that to act fairly and in good faith, the right to be heard, the right to confront accusers, not to be a judge in one's own cause, and precise notice of accusations, are some of the essential elements. Curiously, it is called natural justice although it is not natural: it is an invented concept.

There may be little justice in nature; it is a human device: that is why we have departments of justice. If there were natural justice we would not need to invent a judicial system. Similarly, there are no natural ethics, and that is why we invent them. Headhunting was 'natural' in Borneo, but we neither admire it nor think it natural. To paraphrase Malcolm Muggeridge, no-one who has examined his own nature for half an hour can seriously believe in human perfection.

Codes of fixed quality

Codes of ethics need to be of fixed quality. It would not do to have a series of codes of variable leniency. One might imagine a commercial organisation having several divisions. It would be most inappropriate to have one division guided by one set of standards while another division is guided by a different and less stringent set of ethical guides. Such an exercise would smack of the cynical use of ethics as expedience. It would be preferable to have the entire organisation imbued with the aspiration to the most developed set of standards. However, we do need to recognise that there are principles which affect (say) clinical psychology which may not be relevant to (say) organisational psychology. In these instances there are overarching principles, and subordinate guiding ones applicable to particular specialties. That is quite acceptable. What is not acceptable is the notion of contrived standards.

Place- and time-bound codes

An important question is whether or not ethical principles should be bound by time or circumstance. To say that a case is particular or exceptional obliges us to examine the scope of moral principles. In other words, can one make an ethical decision without reference to the social context?

As a contemporary example, let us imagine local council-owned swimming baths. Under equal opportunity legislation bathing may not be segregated; but if it is not segregated women from a less liberal culture may feel harassed and unable to use the baths. One appropriate response is, of course, to prevent sexual harassment by devising some preventive means (employing guards, for example). Suppose, further, the case involved a minority group whose cultural background forbade women from bathing at the same time as men: should the general principle be modified for a minority culture when the legislation is clearly intended to apply to all? Are the principles of the minority culture to be upheld? Do the principles of the minority culture, which may have been appropriate in the original circumstances, now apply with equal force? Are these principles to be cancelled by living in a new social environment?

If a psychologist has a client from a minority culture, to what extent should the psychologist attempt to modify the cultural expectations of the client? What are the over-riding principles which are super-ordinate to culture?

Out of the cultural context there are within-culture problems. Instances are: working in an organisation where an organisational reference point may not be consistent with the professional code; places which have a committed but minority point of view (such as single sex homosexual clubs); or hierarchical organisations where the psychologist may be bound to a reporting supervisor who is not a psychologist (the military, for example).

The issue here is to decide which values are to be placed above those of circumstance: in other words, to make deontological decisions on key canons.

Ethical principles are for the long term rather than the short term. At the coarsest level we might hold that ethical behaviour is good for the business of the profession. Those new to private practice may be hard pressed to meet their financial commitments, and need to make a profit now to survive. Occupation of the high moral ground makes us feel good, but we need to ask whether or not it enhances the prospect of economic survival.

Ethical behaviour is not concerned with the immediate benefit but with long-term perspectives. People have long memories for kindnesses – and also for mean-spirited behaviour. Those who behave well are remembered for an astonishingly long time. Those who behave badly find in later times that the sky becomes dark with the wings of chickens coming home to roost. It is well understood in professional work that the prospect of an ongoing relationship is a wonderful stimulus to seemly behaviour. It would be fairly easy, as con-men well know, to make profits on a short-term gain because these people are unlikely to see their victims again. Ethical behaviour is for the long haul.

The newcomer to private practice will not survive on a marginal ethical code. Planning to run a practice requires a consideration of ethics just as much as it requires a consideration of financial planning. Both are necessary but not sufficient conditions. Morality and ethics are based on principles which are not time or place bound. Bloch and Chodoff (1991) emphasised that point by including the ways in which (psychiatric) ethics was used for political purposes in Germany in the Nazi era, in Japan, and in the Soviet Union. Therein lies a salutary lesson.

Right action and right thought

Many codes are called 'Codes of Conduct', that is, dealing with what one ought to do. The notion of thought-police directing what one should think is abhorrent. In an ideal world the impulse for ethical behaviour would stem from lofty motives, finding constant and consistent expression in everyday professional life.

Let us suppose that we have a choice between an organisation that behaved consistently in a way of which we approve (but for motives which we either do not understand or do not applaud), and an organisation with clear and excellent intention but with consistently disapproved behavioural outcomes. Which would we prefer? The issue here is the contrast of disposition and performance, of intent versus action: the congruence of actions and ethical beliefs.

What is of importance to psychologists is the way in which the behaviour–intention dichotomy might be approached from an empirical point of view. Milgram (1977) discussed this issue in the case of the urban bystander, wherein bystanders fail to come to the aid of a fellow citizen in distress. His analysis shows how a superficial conclusion might so easily be drawn. Milgram's seminal obedience studies say something about the cross-national nature of the power of conformity. Indeed, his early studies were designed to demonstrate how Americans would be most likely to decline to behave in a manner we deplored – that of Nazis prior to, and during, the Second World War. Psychologists and psychiatrists confidently predicted that a very low number of participants would conform to the request to behave unethically. The I-was-only-following-orders phenomenon is, however, alive and embarrassingly well in many cultures – a point well documented by Zimbardo in *The Lucifer Effect* (2007).

Some theorists of ethics, Utilitarians prominently, measure ethical worth by the results of actions, while others, such as Kantians, use the measure of

intention. These latter theorists hold that the intention of the moral agent is to act in accordance with a universifiable rule. Many have supposed there to be a clear distinction between types of moral theory (see also below).

Another view is that because most people achieve what they intend when they perform an action, these aspects may be seen to be the obverse and converse sides of the same coin. If this were not true then almost all actions would be bewilderingly comic or tragic to agent and spectator alike. All this despite the well-attested observation that from time to time our good intentions bring regrettable consequences; just as ill intentions sometimes bring morally good results. That such a distinction is of practical consequence is obvious, and also results in drawing our attention to the need to try to bring action and intent into harmony.

Rational versus emotional bases

How this issue is to be resolved is one of the major questions in ethics. Ethics must have a rational as well as an emotional basis: some ethical values may be captured by our intellect while others may not. Reason can tell us how to arrive at conclusions from other statements. It can also tell us the consequences of certain courses of action, but it cannot tell us which values we should adopt. Reason may or may not give us the premises, it is on more certain ground in giving us conclusions from agreed premises.

Reasoning is the ordering of information and logical processes in order to come to a conclusion: rationalisation, on the other hand, is the invention of 'reasons' for conclusions. Rationalisation is to make seemingly rational conclusions for which the means of arriving there are non-rational (or are likely to be so). The emotional basis of arriving at conclusions may be rational in that the emotion gives force and weight to factors which determine that conclusion (e.g. the torture of children is always wrong). Intuitive insights may also be rational in that the processes by which they are reached may be short cut or not easily known. It does not mean that they are necessarily irrational – it may be that they are harder to justify.

Expedience (or mercy) may sometimes seem more acceptable than principle. We might, for instance, excuse the widow who steals to feed her children. Straitened circumstances could be mitigating, but would we make the same judgement in a professional decision? Would a client indicted for murder deserve special consideration if they came from a socially dysfunctional background? The application of the canon 'without fear or favour' is not as

easy on the conscience as it might seem. Our admiration of personal and family loyalty might not extend so readily to organisational loyalty. From these difficulties it emerges that the trusted means of using agreed principles and logic has much to commend it.

Ethics is internal as well as behavioural

Ethical behaviour which flows from good intent and generosity of spirit is so much more appealing than a calculating ethical style (though that is a fairly good start). The argument that ethics derived from a super-ordinate code is more enduring. Behaviour that does not derive from higher order principles is likely to be both sterile and short-lived. As Wilcox (1991) so aptly said, it is no good, for example, testing the excellence of the police by looking at how many people they arrest: 'on this score, they could simply round up anyone who happens to be standing around with his hands in his pockets looking faintly shifty …'. To say that the police are excellent we need to be certain that they have arrested the right people and that the methods they use in conducting their investigations are ethically sustainable.

We might say that there are some questionable bases for ethical systems: one basis is that the rule should be founded upon God's ordinances. The difficulty here is that God's ordinances are interpreted differently by different people. Because of such inconsistencies the perceived ordinance may be no guide at all.

Morality based upon conscience is not a workable foundation since consciences appear to be inconsistent between people and even in the same person over time. Even if all consciences were in agreement, it would not rule out some possibility that they could be collectively mistaken.

Trans-culture and rationality

There are two issues that deserve especial reinforcement. One is that for a code to be effective it must accommodate both trans-national and trans-cultural issues. Values from cultures other than our own challenge us to justify our ethical stance. The increasing internationalisation of the profession makes it imperative to develop a code of conduct that accommodates diverse cultural ways. One might ask if it is possible to write a code that is as acceptable in Nairobi as it is in Sarajevo? Would it be enough to achieve the more modest

aim of having a code that is as acceptable in Vancouver as in Birmingham? Would such a code be as binding on those lower on the professional totem pole (i.e. junior psychologists) as it is on the most senior? The development of a non-parochial code is both a challenge and an opportunity.

The second caution is the need to ensure attention to arguments rather than the arguer. It is clear that the force of conviction one brings to a belief or an argument bears no relationship whatever to the veracity of that claim. Hitler, Mussolini. Mugabe, Than Shwe, and Pol Pot were and are not afflicted with the doubts that assail common mortals: the medieval Inquisitors were totally convinced of the propriety of their actions – but that is no excuse for the depravities they committed.

Here, perhaps, the difficulty is that they treated themselves too seriously, a tendency that most of us share, but which can be modified. As has been so aptly remarked, in professional work one ought to treat what one does with the utmost seriousness, but should take oneself rather less seriously. In all things, it is the sense of balance, of equitability, and of goodwill that should prevail.

Formal and informal codes

We have formal codes to capture extended human experience. These formal codes give a statement of principle that is meant to act as a guide to ethical actions. It is not uncommon, however, to have people consider the formal system as a means of producing action for some reason other than the seemingly stated one.

That difficulty of distinguishing formal from informal codes is well illustrated by Williams (1971). He referred to the unpublished work of McNaughton-Smith who suggested that society operates on two codes: Code One equates to the formal laws, statutes and regulations; Code Two equates to our informal but general social understanding. When someone breaks our informal rules (Code Two) we think of legal sanctions that might be applied (Code One). ('What are we going to arrest him for, sergeant?' 'I don't know, but I'll think of something.') Another illustration is the parallel threats of 'working to rule'. McNaughton-Smith asks what are rules for if not for following?

Imagine that one worked for an organisation with strict rules governing the minutiae of professional life, but being required to work with a clientele which required a flexible approach with respect to time and interventions. The frustrations of the professionals would be unlikely to

promote organisational loyalty, nor to promote best outcomes. Sinclair (1996) has drawn attention to that issue within organisations. There is an 'understood' frame of reference and a codified one; and these are not always congruent. As Sinclair noted, in the workplace there are professional codes and organisational codes, which are not always congruent. In such cases she poses the question of where the primary loyalty lies. With the advent of professional deregulation, attendant upon the economic rationalism, loyalties are bound to shift.

The present writer recalls an instance of carrying out psychological research which involved taking EEG readings underwater. The electrodes had to be glued on. This had a detrimental effect on the hair of the subjects, and was particularly upsetting to the ladies in the sample. The university was indented for hairdresser fees, which application was refused by the financial controller. The bill was resubmitted with a different item number and tagged as 'rehabilitation treatment for experimental animals' – and the request was approved. Engineering departments do not indent for a fridge for the staff room; they request a reverse cycle heat exchanger. The general point here is that we all know what we are trying to achieve – but sometimes need to be creative to achieve those agreed aims.

Reversal theory

At the heart of reversal theory is the idea that our experience is shaped by a set of alternative ways of seeing the world, each based on a fundamental value or motive. Specifically, four pairs of such opposite states have been identified. We switch – or 'reverse' – fairly frequently between these opposite 'motivational states' or 'styles' in the course of everyday life and under a variety of circumstances.

These pairs can be characterized briefly in the following way, with the technical term for each member of the pair placed in parenthesis following the more everyday term, where it differs from it: The serious (telic) state, focused on important goals, and planning ahead, versus the playful (paratelic) state, focused on immediate enjoyment, and acting spontaneously. The conforming (conformist) state, focused on obligations and the maintenance of rules and routines, versus the challenging (negativistic) style, a challenging state which is focused on personal freedom.

The mastery state, focused on power, control and dominance, versus the sympathy state, focused on kindness, caring and harmony. The self-oriented

(autic) state, focused on one's own needs, versus the other-oriented (alloic) state, focused on the needs of others.

These combine with each other in various ways at different times to give rise to the full range of human emotions and behaviours. Personality is to be understood in terms of patterns of qualities and values that change, and that characterise people over time, rather than as fixed positions on dimensions.

The Evolutionary Nature of Ethics

An essential attribute of ethics is its symbiotic nature. It recognises our interdependence and asserts a frame of reference which seeks solutions that are equitable as between groups and organisations. There are symbiotic arrangements of law, accountancy, advertising and design firms, human relations consultancies, financial services, banks, and government departments. Ethics is, in other words, an emergent phenomenon. The furtherance of high quality living, an improvement of the human condition, and the development of all professions depend upon a code of professional conduct. Taking a parallel from the work of Lloyd on business ethics (1990) he noted that:

> By human standards the company has an excessively feral energy. It seethes with suppressed violence. As a vehicle for enterprise and production we accept it as a necessary evil, but the company, unfettered and rampant, is a familiar villain in the dystopian visions of the future depicted in our literature.

Further:

> the company is a primitive non-moral species, motivated in the first place by a will to survive and, in the second place, by greed. Companies are monsters created by quite decent human Frankensteins which we need to control.

In Lloyd's words we try to contain our '"enfant terrible" by company law, anti-trust agencies, standards organisations, food and drug licensing authorities, regulatory bodies and pollution control agencies'.

Two of the basic propositions of Lloyd's book are that companies collectively constitute a sentient, intelligent, non-human species at a relatively early stage in its evolution; and that recent changes in the chemistry of the corporate medium favour the emergence of strategies, internal as well as external,

that are 'nicer' than traditional strategies. On the positive side, companies have done much more that we admire and that makes our lives of better quality than has almost any other human enterprise. The company has:

> created order out of chaos, wealth out of rubble and work out of idleness. By and large, where companies have had the nourishment they need to prosper, our lives have been better for theirs … The corporate species has been a stalwart champion of progress. It has been cruel, predatory and, on occasions, vicious but it has never been cowardly or indolent. On the contrary its boldness and vigour have inspired us to great achievements. With the help of companies, people have tamed the elements and moulded our habitat. (p.xiii)

The professions ought to be able to make so bold a claim – and some claim may be made. It is the social utility of ethics that becomes one of the major justifications for its inclusion as a significant part of professional training. Caring professions set themselves as such (in presumed contrast to 'uncaring' professions, the wealth creators). It may not be as simple as that: the pejorative connotations are not so clear cut. Some 'caring' professions do not have so unblemished a record; and some commercial companies do have a record which the caring professions would be proud to own.

Using the biological metaphor, the gene is not the basic unit of inheritance for organisations. Lloyd has proposed that strategic themes are the building blocks of corporate evolution. Corporate life evolves by the natural selection of those which engage in the differential use of strategic themes. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool via sperm and eggs, so stremes (strategic themes) are propagated in the streme pool by the propensity to emulate winning strategies (p.142). An example of an advantageous streme is that competitive advantage is a matter of producing new products quickly rather than existing products cheaply (p.147).

Those organisations able to overcome 'future shock' are the ones most likely to prosper. An example of a winning streme is that of using a 'hollow corporation'. Such a corporation is entrepreneurial in that it has the business idea but contracts out the work. This allows for speed of response, reduces its need for infrastructure and capital, and makes it easier to contract with suppliers of goods and services who have a congenial ethical standpoint. The Axelrod analysis of winning strategies (see below) is, quite rightly, written of admiringly by Lloyd. Among recent changes in corporate functioning are the ways in which information is being substituted for capital, equipment and money, and the recurrent theme that people matter (a point emphasised by Lloyd).

This general point has parallels in the professions. Organisations with different orientations nevertheless have more in common than not. Professional bodies able to adapt and evolve, while maintaining their main strategic focus, will gain similar advantages to those enjoyed by commercial enterprises.

Sociobiology

There is a field of enquiry called sociobiology. It may be defined as the study of the biological nature and foundations of social behaviour. This important recent development is still in a state of controversy. The fact that both the scope and nature of sociobiology is under critical review does not diminish the importance of the concept.

Human sociobiology covers a diverse array of topics such as aggression, optimal social group sizes, sex, parenting, kin selection, etc. Among the features which sociobiology attempts to explain is that of altruism. The Darwinian emphasis upon competition should be complemented by a consideration of the virtues of co-operation. There may be a biological basis for complementary altruism – just as there is a basis for biological symbiosis. Our origins as tribal entities may find expression in the way in which we structure our social institutions. The small tribe had functional significance. The optimum size of the tribe depends upon whether or not the group is hunter-gatherer or agricultural. Notwithstanding, the group size is considerably less than that of most modern corporations. The fact that human beings band together in groups of about ten has its origins in optimal group size for survival. Perhaps for this reason the structure of organisations reflects our social origins.

A basic point about sociobiology is its extension of Darwinism to explain the evolution of the consequences of group selection, as distinct from individual selection. That problem is addressed by the Wilsons (2007) who held that the earlier view of sociobiology is in disarray because of a reluctance to re-visit the pivotal events of the 1960s. That reluctance has resulted in a failure to consider the wider frameworks of explanation. What is important, they held, among other things, is that the issue of multilevel group selection be given due attention.

The use of work teams in Volvo in Sweden, the departmentalising of organisations, the parallel but independent functioning of the various entities under the 3M banner, and the optimal size of controlling bodies (so amusingly

portrayed in *Parkinson's Law* [Parkinson, 1965]) might all be expressions of our sociobiological origins. One of the original expositions of sociobiology held that ethics is derived from biology, and as a consequence of this the notion of handing over ethics to scientists was advocated. A refutation of that idea was published by Singer in 1985. As he asserted, sociobiology 'enables us to see ethics as a mode of human reasoning which develops in a group context, building on more limited biologically based forms of altruism'. While sociobiology may aid our understanding of ethics it is not a sufficient explanation of them.

This field of endeavour is constantly updated, one of the most recent and readable accounts being Ridley (1996). That author posed the question of the origins of virtue, and compared and contrasted the Rousseauvian Noble Savage with the Hobbesian view of the war of all against all.

Ridley examined the origins of virtue, and the proposition that conflict stems from the Dawkins notion of the 'selfish gene'. What is particularly pertinent to Ridley's analysis is that trust and co-operation need not stem from neurological programming, but winning strategies are adopted because we see, even if not consciously, the personal and social benefits derived from their adoption. Ridley's evidence ranges from the insect world to anthropology. The 'winning strategies' he outlines give us cause for hope that ethics will be seen to be part of that larger picture. Readers are very warmly recommended to that book.

It is worth noting the substantial overlap between psychology and sociology. For example, one might question whether or not there is a distinction between psychopathy and sociopathy. There are some distinctions, but they have a common substrate. In a similar fashion there is the parallel between psychobiology and sociobiology. It is a topic of relatively recent interest, and one that vies for attention not only in psychology and sociology, but also in anthropology.

Evolutionary Psychology

There are a continuing number of publications that discuss the role of evolution in psychology: some written by psychologist, and some not. The notion of taking evolutionary psychology seriously was canvassed by Dunbar (2008). His article, of that name, makes the point that the role of evolution in psychology contains misplaced debates. For which he gives several examples.

Of the various books on the subject one of the best regarded must be that of Pinker (2002). His book, aptly called *The Blank Slate*, is a re-examination of the proposition (inter alia) that heredity determines behaviour, and that genetic and familial variance are often confounded. Human nature, as Pinker so clearly shows, is just that – a highly complex matter: those who inveigh in a partisan fashion often do so from empirical evidence that is methodologically flawed.

Pinker asked the important question of why do people vary in their selfishness? One would expect that natural selection would select an advantageous trait, and thus make the species alike. One of the Darwinian postulates, however, is that there are biological variations within species. Without such variation evolution would have no selection capacity, and thus the tendency to variety is inbuilt.

One might ask, as does Pinker, why are there psychopaths? Concluding that psychopathy is not a biological mistake. Any ruthless dissection of the moral sense does not invalidate morality: indeed, as Hume so famously noted, morality cannot be grounded in reason 'Tis not contrary to reason to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger'. Indeed, the notion that there might be moral intelligence, as there is cognitive and emotional intelligence was canvassed recently (Francis & Armstrong, 2008). The issue of whether or not a moral tendency has an evolutionary or biological basis has been various canvassed, from Darwin to Wilson.

Ridley (1996) noted that 'Selfishness is almost the definition of vice. Murder, theft, rape and fraud are considered crimes of great importance because they are selfish or spiteful acts that are committed for the benefit of the actor and the detriment of the victim' (p.39). Putting the common good ahead of personal interests does have benefits. To use one of Ridley's metaphors, personal fate is tied to the interests of each member of the group. He put it in terms of a sterile ant's best hope of immortality being through vicarious reproduction: 'just as an aeroplane passenger's survival is through the survival of the pilot' (one is reminded of that seeming paradox, death is the first prerequisite of immortality).

This point of the use of altruism as the best tactical approach to Utopia provides an argument stemming from the value of symbiosis. Trust and honesty, altruism and goodwill are all internationally marketable commodities. There are social advantages in flocking, caring, altruism, and the division of labour. Natural selection appears to serve the might-is-right principle, but the notion that the good of others is an operating principle exercised Darwin. His proposed solutions were that altruism might benefit family

members (on the basis that they share the same family characteristics); the second principle is the notion that in the longer term altruistic behaviour towards non-kin would be reciprocated and beneficial; the third idea is that the natural selection of some groups or communities would be more beneficial than direct competition.

The Biological Basis of Ethics

The notion that ethical codes evolve is an appealing one. Few entities stay in their original form, or are incapable of modification. Theory and practice are in a state of constant flux, and that point is no less true of ethical codes.

One of the curiosa of biology is that of the human brain. Where most structures are modified into new structures (as the eye evolved from a light sensitive area of skin to the focusing colour-sensitive organ it is now), the brain has evolved in a different way. MacLean (1990) noted that the 'old' (reptilian) brain remains, and has an added 'mid-brain' (primitive mammal). In turn the 'mid-brain' remains and has an added higher order 'fore-brain'. Each of these structures retains its original function, but the function of one part is sometimes at odds with that of another. It may be that the warring impulses emanating from these different neural structures become what we perceive as conflicts, inconsistencies, and the difficulties of ethical judgements.

That the three brains retain much of their original function may, according to Koestler, be the origin of human aggression and inconsistency. To use his graphic illustration, a psychotherapist talking to a client is simultaneously addressing a crocodile, a horse, and a human being. More recently this point was discussed by Shaw (1996) who held that these structures provide 'the organism with the capacity for unique religious and moral behaviours'.

The idea that morality might have a biological basis is to be found in the edited work of Hurd (1996). In that work the issues of morality, religion, the human genome project, and various critiques are discussed. It is clear from that work that there is diversity of opinion on the relevance of the biological basis of morality. Among the issues is that of holding that humans are not unique in their capacity for moral behaviour, for altruism, and the 'biology of sin'.

It has become one of the truisms of the history of science that each major field of science experienced difficulties in proportion to the extent that it challenged humanity's concept of itself as the central reference point in the universe.

Thus astronomy challenges our spatial place in the cosmos, and the location of 'the heavens'; biology in general, and evolutionary theory in particular, challenges the received notions of our divine creation; psychology, a recent science, challenges the structure of the wellsprings of our behaviour. On this general approach, the closer we get to examining human nature the more resistance there is to new ideas about scientific explanations.

Because behaviour might have biological determinants is not to say that it is a doctrine of despair. Biological imperatives are not totally imperious. They can be partially offset by procedures, training, codes, and appropriate rewards.