

Introduction

Why Professional Ethics?

One of the first questions you are likely to have is why the topic of professional ethics is important. You may have the idea that there must be something to it, since a whole course (and a book of this size) can be devoted to it, but you are probably unsure of what the big fuss is really all about.

The starting point in the effort to understand the importance of professional ethics might begin with the concept of roles. A single individual normally plays a variety of different roles, all at the same time. You may be a student, but you also may be a friend, a brother or sister, a son or daughter, a roommate, a member of a club, a citizen of a nation, or any number of things. With each role come certain ethical obligations. As a student, you have an obligation not to cheat, and as a friend, you have an obligation to help your friend in his or her time of need. If you are a roommate, you might owe your roommate the courtesy of keeping the common areas clean. As a citizen of a nation, you are obligated to follow the laws issued by the government. Some ethical obligations, such as the very basic duty to refrain from harming other people, probably even stem from your fundamental role as a member of the human community. The idea is that whenever there is talk about ethics and your ethical obligations, there is a connection that is being suggested (even if only implicitly) between those obligations and the roles from which they stem.

The topic of professional ethics concerns the obligations held by individuals in their particular roles as professionals. A distinction here may be helpful. As a *householder*, a person may possess obligations stemming from her position as mother, friend, community member, and other roles not related to her job as a lawyer. Thus, as a householder, she may possess obligations owed to her children, spouse, friends, and fellow members of the community in which she lives. The term *householder* can be thought of along the lines of private citizen, and as designating the various roles (such as those mentioned) that a person may have in her capacity as citizen. As a *professional*, on the other hand, a person takes on ethical responsibilities that go beyond the normal range of responsibilities she possesses. She may be a mother and thus owe certain things to her children, but in her role as lawyer she possesses a set of ethical duties she would not otherwise have. She may, in her role as lawyer, have a duty to her client to maintain confidentiality; she may have a duty to her boss to submit a deposition by a certain deadline; she may have a duty to her secretary to provide reasonable pay or time off; she may even

have certain obligations owed to society generally, such as the duty to uphold the dignity of the legal profession or to refrain from acting in ways that would be detrimental to the legal system as a whole.

Many of these examples of professional obligations may seem straightforward, but there are also many examples that are not at all clear. A lawyer's obligation to be honest and forthright may conflict with her obligation to provide her client with the best possible defense. (If misleading the jury or otherwise "bending" the truth would help her client, there will be disagreement over whether doing so is ethically acceptable.) A journalist's obligation to provide important information to the public may conflict with his obligation to respect the privacy of public officials. An engineer's obligation to meet certain specification requirements within a budget, such as designing a more efficient yet inexpensive automobile transmission, may conflict with his duty to look out for the safety of the public. (The transmission may come with certain safety risks if money-saving shortcuts are taken.) These sorts of questions give rise to additional, more general inquiries that are of crucial importance. *What*, exactly, are the obligations of lawyers, and to whom are they owed? What is ethically required of teachers? Doctors? Journalists? Even if the answers to these are established, situations will arise in which a person will face *conflicting obligations in his role as professional* and will have to make decisions about which ones to follow and which to neglect.

Because the circumstances surrounding any given issue will often be varied and complex, professionals must be able to critically and logically analyze those circumstances if they are to make ethically sound decisions. However, engaging in an in-depth analysis of every situation that arises would be time-consuming and tedious, and ultimately inefficient and ineffective. One way to make the process more efficient is to rely on ethical rules that provide guidance in different contexts, even if they are only rules of thumb (meaning they can have exceptions or be overridden by more pressing rules). Indeed, professions already have certain formal rules in place that must be followed.

First, professionals are obligated to obey laws that govern their societies. In the United States, the Sherman Anti-Trust Act prohibits businesses from getting together and fixing prices. It is thought to be an ethically sound rule, since allowing businesses to do this would inhibit competition and have the effect of exploiting consumers in various ways. This particular law therefore functions to protect the interests of consumers, who, because they need certain products and possess less knowledge of the products than the professionals selling them, are vulnerable to exploitation. Other laws serve to promote ethical behavior and outcomes in various ways.

Second, specific professions and industries often specify their own rules, beyond the general requirements of the law, and direct the individuals in those professions and industries to act accordingly. Sometimes these are written in a formal way, as is the case with codes of ethics. For example, the *Code for Nurses* requires nurses to demonstrate respect for the patient's dignity regardless of social or economic status. The *Code of Ethics for Engineers* specifies obligations to avoid deceptive conduct and to serve the public interest at all times. The ethical rules of specific professions may also be unwritten, existing as an implicit standard of practice. An example in journalism is not reporting the name of an alleged rape victim, even though there is no explicit law that prohibits it. Industry-level rules must be consistent with (not in conflict with) the more general laws; they serve to highlight behaviors specific to the industry that may or be not be desirable.

Third, individual organizations have their own policies, guidelines, and even codes of ethics designed to be even more attentive to the particular sorts of issues encountered by

those organizations. At this level, the aim is to focus on rules that are even more directly relevant for the specific organization; again, those rules must be consistent with the more general laws and industry-level rules.

With these sorts of formal rules already in place, you may ask why it is necessary for professionals to have the ability to critically analyze ethical situations. After all, if the rules are there, then it just seems a matter of following them. It is extremely important to realize, however, that acting ethically in the professions is not so simple. Adopting a simplistic approach will not be helpful and is likely to be damaging. Even with certain rules in place, the ability to rationally analyze situations is crucial.

There are two main reasons for making this claim. First, rules must be interpreted if they are to be followed, and in any particular case, the same rule can be interpreted by different people in very different ways. To demonstrate this, consider the role of the Supreme Court in the United States. Its purpose is to interpret the laws contained in the Constitution—the general rules concerning individual protections against government regulation. The First Amendment to the Constitution is a rule providing for freedom of speech, but the rule itself does not make it clear whether flag burning, for example, is allowable. The issue is debatable and requires interpretation of that rule. This is why rules themselves are never enough; the precise meaning of any given rule and the way it applies to any particular set of circumstances can be discovered only through critical analysis. An example from the professions is the Hippocratic Oath, taken by medical doctors upon entering the profession. The oath-taker promises, among other things, not to give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it and not to provide women with abortive remedies. What, exactly, this implies for the controversial practices of physician-assisted suicide and abortion, though, is not as clear as it may seem. Thus, professionals need more than just formal lists of rules; they need to be able to interpret the rules and apply them to specific issues that arise. This, in turn, requires the ability to think clearly and logically.

The second reason this ability is important pertains to whether the rules themselves are ethical in the first place. Upon reflection, it should be clear that rules can be unethical. Just because a particular rule is codified as a company policy or even as an industry standard does not mean it is right. Some companies, for example, have policies forbidding their employees from dating each other. Is such a rule ethically acceptable, or does it violate the privacy rights of the employees? What about policies requiring monitored drug testing? When asked about the ethics of company or industry rules or practices, students are sometimes tempted to look to the law. The temptation is to think that if the law allows it then it must be ethical and if the law forbids it then it must be unethical. However, relying solely on the law as the standard for determining what is ethical would be misguided. While it would be wrong to directly violate the law, numerous practices allowed by the law may not be ethically acceptable. For example, the law used to allow companies to pay employees appallingly meager wages and to hire children as workers. Even before minimum wage and child labor laws were enacted, ethically educated companies could perhaps have seen the wrongfulness of these practices and acted accordingly. Cases involving employee privacy, such as the dating situation mentioned earlier, present more contemporary issues: even if the law does not prohibit various sorts of privacy invasions, companies proceeding with those invasions may still be acting unethically. The overriding concern is not only that the law could be ethically misguided but also that it is so general that it may not be precise enough for specific professions or companies; having more precise rules, appropriate for the narrower circumstances of individual professions or companies, is therefore thought to be a good idea.

The importance of professionals having the ability to identify ethical and unethical rules (which, again, requires the ability to think clearly and critically) stems from a current trend. Professional organizations are becoming more democratic. In the development of individual policies and codes of conduct, for example, it is becoming more common for employees at all levels to make contributions. A similar phenomenon applies to adjustments made in policies, codes, and practices; opportunities to provide input regarding a questionable policy and ideas for revising it are increasing. This strategy is more inclusive than a "top-down" approach that is less democratic, with the company rules (including its code of ethics) being dictated from above by managers, law partners, newspaper editors, or other leaders in the professional organization. This trend against the top-down approach may well be desirable, but its success relies heavily on the assumption that employees at all levels have the ability to think about what makes some potential rules ethical and what makes others unethical. An ethically educated workforce is therefore of great importance. Even in organizations that remain less democratic, the policies and codes of conduct that are "handed down" by the professionals in charge (the managers, editors, and so on) will be more ethically sound if all the professionals are ethically educated.

The Nature of Ethical Inquiry

Professional ethics is thus largely about the ability to think, and this ability derives from the usefulness of rules, such as company policies, codes of conduct, and professional codes of ethics. First, because rules are necessarily general, their correct application to any specific instance that might arise in the professions requires careful thought. Second, because there is substantial room within the bounds of the law to develop codes and policies, developing rules that are ethically justified also requires careful thought. Similarly, when existing rules are thought to be unjustified, professionals must be able to adjust them accordingly.

But according to what? The suggestion that they be adjusted "accordingly" assumes that there must be some standard against which rules can be tested for ethical acceptability. That standard, again, cannot simply be the law. Some might think the standard is prudence, especially in the context of professional ethics. Doing something that is prudent is understood as doing something out of self-interest. For instance, it would be prudent for you to do well in school; doing well is in your best interests, since a strong academic record will help you when applying for jobs or for graduate school. Goofing off and not doing well academically is not prudent. It seems strange, however, to say that goofing off is unethical, since our intuition is that the term *unethical* designates something more significant. This is one clue that prudence is not the standard against which actions and rules should be judged ethically. Another clue comes from the context of professional ethics itself. An engineering firm might think it prudent (in its best interests) to continue selling a somewhat dangerous product rather than recall it or take it off the market. This would perhaps be the conclusion if a cost-benefit analysis indicated that the cost of a few lawsuits would be less than the cost of initiating the recall and losing the sales. While the prudent strategy would thus be to continue selling the product, thereby endangering even more people, our intuition is probably that this is not an ethical thing to do. Thus, it seems that what is ethical cannot be assessed in terms of what is prudent.

Others might think that the standard for determining ethical rightness is something like common opinion or the prevailing view in society. After all, if most people believe

that something is wrong then it seems it must be wrong. However, it also seems possible that some actions deemed “wrong” by most people may *not* be unethical. Most people would think that public belching and nose-picking are wrong and should not be practiced. Instead of being in the realm of ethics, though, this seems to be in the realm of etiquette, the difference being that matters of etiquette pertain merely to what is considered polite or impolite. Etiquette is concerned with politeness and acting in ways that society deems proper, whereas matters of ethics go beyond the politeness of an action and concern the nature of the action itself. One problem, then, with the “common opinion” view is that it risks blurring the distinction between ethics and etiquette. Another problem is that even when a widely held opinion does seem to fall within the realm of ethics, the opinion could still be misguided—that most people might just be mistaken about the point in question. If, for example, a vast majority of people in a society believe that physician-assisted suicide is unethical, does that necessarily mean that it really is unethical? If a vast majority of people in a society believe that there is nothing wrong with denying women equal opportunities in the workplace, does that necessarily mean there really is nothing wrong with doing so? Upon reflection, we will probably be inclined to conclude that what really is ethical need not correspond with what the common opinion happens to be.

So neither prudence nor common opinion can be referred to confidently when assessing whether an action, rule, or practice is ethical. One reason students sometimes think otherwise concerns the language that is used in these contexts—specifically, the language of “ought” (or should) and “ought not” (or should not). A high school graduate considering whether to continue his education at the college level is sometimes advised by parents and others that he ought to do so. In this example, “ought” serves as a way of conveying the idea that according to his parents it would be prudent of him to attend college—that it would be in his own best interests to do so. Parents also tell their children that they ought not to chew with their mouths open. The confusion arises because the same language is used in the realm of ethics; we ought to refrain from lying, cheating, stealing, torturing others, and so on. Thus, some things we ought to do (such as refraining from lying or stealing) are ethical in nature, while other things we ought to do (such as staying in school and chewing food with closed mouths) are not matters of ethics but of something else, such as prudence or etiquette. It is understandable that some confusion would arise over these matters.

Perhaps all that can be said about adjusting rules and policies “accordingly” is that they be assessed against the standard of ethical truth. This sounds extremely vague, but given the problems encountered with other potential standards, ethical truth may be the best we can do. Like scientific truths, ethical truths in this sense would (if they exist) be *objective*, meaning they would be true regardless of what any individual or group of individuals happens to believe. In science, it is widely held that the truth or falsity of claims is independent of any beliefs, feelings, or thoughts that people might have. The idea is that there really is a fact of the matter in scientific inquiry and, furthermore, that we can (all of us) be mistaken about scientific claims. It would follow that a statement such as “The earth is flat” would be false even if everyone believed it was true; in such an instance, everyone would just be mistaken.

In contrast to objective truths, *subjective* truths do depend on the beliefs or feelings of particular individuals. Whether your claim that “Broccoli tastes delicious” is true or false depends on how you feel about the taste of broccoli, and for this reason its truth or falsity would be subjective. The observation that it is subjective is based on three related observations. First, it would be very strange for someone to claim that you were

mistaken about your assessment of the taste of broccoli. We can imagine a critic arguing the point, attempting to persuade you that you really do not like broccoli even though you think you do, but such a criticism seems rather misplaced. Second, the truth of your claim that "Broccoli tastes delicious" comes directly from your beliefs and feelings; your believing that it tastes delicious is what makes it true that it tastes delicious. Third, it follows that further specification must be made to the claim that "Broccoli tastes delicious"—we have to say that this is true *for you*. It may be true for some people and false for others, and this is why it is necessary to add for whom the claim is true (or false).

Subjective claims, then, have the following characteristics: they can be true for some people and false for others; their truth or falsity comes directly from individual beliefs or feelings; and accusing someone of being mistaken about her subjective claim would be odd. Objective claims do not share these characteristics, which is why scientific inquiry seems objective. Believing the earth is flat does not make it so; you cannot say that it is true for you that the earth is flat even if it is false for others; and (therefore) it would not be strange at all to suggest that you might be mistaken about the earth being flat.

If we are going to say that ethical assessments of actions, rules, and practices are to be made against the standard of ethical truth, it is important to be clear about whether we mean objective or subjective truth. While the right answer here may not be immediately obvious, it was noted earlier that an objective understanding of ethical truth seems most appropriate. Some reflection would perhaps strengthen this hypothesis, and an extreme example would make the point most directly. Adolf Hitler believed that creating a master race through the extermination of "less desirable" segments of society was appropriate. The clear intuition is that Hitler's policies of mass genocide were horribly unethical. If this claim about the ethics of Hitler's policies were subjective, however, then (following the standards for subjective claims) we would have to say that genocide was ethical for Hitler, and furthermore that his belief that the genocide was ethical *made* it ethical for him. This seems extremely implausible. It would follow that any individual's (or group's) beliefs—no matter how racist, sexist, or otherwise intolerant—would be true for that individual simply because he believes it. The more reasonable position is that ethical claims are objectively true or false.

In philosophical terms, it seems better to adopt a theory of *ethical objectivism* than *ethical relativism*. Ethical objectivism is the thesis that ethical truths are independent of individuals' beliefs or feelings. If ethical claims are indeed objectively true or false, then the thesis of ethical objectivism follows. Ethical relativism, on the other hand, is the thesis that ethical truths are not independent but are in some way dependent. Those truths may, as we have said, depend on (or be relative to) the beliefs or feelings of individuals; this is one version of relativism. Another version of relativism is that ethical truths depend on (or are relative to) the moral "code" of a society. For example, if a society believes that slavery is wrong, then it is indeed wrong—for that society. If a different society believes that slavery is morally acceptable, then it is indeed morally acceptable—for that society. The "code" may be captured in various ways—in the society's laws, customs, or traditions, for example—and the basic relativist idea is that there is no perspective from which the code of one society can be judged as any better or worse than another. Thus, according to relativism, it cannot be said that the society accepting the practice of slavery "really is" wrong. Again, because it seems that there can be a difference between what a society (or an individual) believes to be true and what really is true, ethical objectivism appears to be the preferable approach.

Moral Vision

This distinction between what is believed to be ethically true and what really is ethically true can be used to help us further understand the importance of studying professional ethics. To see this, consider the idea of “moral vision,” a concept described by the philosopher David McNaughton. Everyone, including people we take to be morally bad as well as morally good, has a moral vision. It is a way of seeing the world in terms of what an individual thinks, feels, or believes to be morally right, wrong, or permissible. Mother Teresa had a moral vision that was about assisting the poor and disadvantaged, and she acted on it by devoting her life to assisting others. Adolf Hitler had a moral vision that was about creating a master race, and he acted on it by carrying out the mass murder of groups he considered inferior. Again, a moral vision is a subjective concept, and so every individual (every subject) has one.

The analogy with eyesight is fitting. One’s optical vision is about the way one happens to see the world, but it is not necessarily the way the world really is. Tools for assessing the accuracy of a person’s vision and for adjusting her vision accordingly (with eyeglasses or contact lenses) may be appropriate. Similarly, one’s *moral* vision is about the way one happens to “see” the world in terms of right and wrong; and similarly, one’s moral vision is not necessarily accurate. It may be based on what a person was taught as a child, ideas he acquired while growing up, the culture of his society, his religion, the standards of etiquette in his community, or (what is most likely) on any combination of these and other factors. The important point is that what he was taught as a child and what his culture happens to find acceptable could be ethically wrong. Of course, they could also be ethically correct, but whether this is so must be investigated. Put this way, ethics can be described as a matter of corrective vision—as a way of investigating whether one’s moral vision requires some focusing or adjusting.

This raises the question of how such an investigation is to take place. After all, the implication here is that ethical inquiry is like scientific inquiry, and is not like simple matters of taste; the idea is that ethical truths, like scientific truths, are “out there” waiting to be discovered. On this view, learning those facts and bringing our behavior in line with them (that is, correcting our moral vision) is what ethics is really all about. The question is how we are to go about discovering those ethical truths. Without the means to discover those truths, we are back where we started, with no standard against which to assess our moral vision. In science things are more clear. A given scientific hypothesis can be tested against observation, and an assessment of its ability to predict and explain natural phenomena can be made in an effort to decide whether the hypothesis is true. In ethics, no such means of testing are available, and this has led some people to reject ethical objectivism and adopt instead the relativist view that ethics (unlike science) *is* relative to the individual or the society, and that it all simply comes down to different views or opinions about right and wrong. Different moral visions, in other words, are just that—different—and there is no perspective from which one moral vision can be objectively judged to be better or worse than any other.

Drawing this conclusion, however, would be too hasty. First, an inability to *know* whether a certain claim is objectively true or false does not logically imply that it *is* not objectively true or false. We currently do not know whether intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, but this does not mean there is no objective truth about whether there is such life. Indeed, the very opposite seems to be the case: it is either true or false, objectively, that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the universe, and the fact of its truth or falsity is “out there” waiting to be discovered. Similarly, we do not know whether

physician-assisted suicide is objectively unethical, but it does not follow that there is no objective truth about it. Second, even if objective ethical truths were forever hidden from us, such that we could never know them with absolute certainty, it does not follow that we should cease all ethical inquiry and adopt an “anything goes” attitude; very good approximations can perhaps still be made, as long as the appropriate tools are utilized.

Moral Theories

The tools for accomplishing these tasks are commonly referred to as moral theories or ethical theories. A moral theory is a mechanism for assessing whether a particular action or rule is ethically justified. More precisely, a moral theory helps us to sharpen our moral vision; it helps us to determine whether an action or rule is ethically right (meaning it is required and *must* be performed or followed), wrong (meaning it *must not* be performed or followed), or permissible (meaning it *may* be, but need not be, performed or followed). Students sometimes confuse the concepts of “ethically right” and “ethically permissible,” but the distinction is important. Something that is ethically permissible provides much more leeway—it allows for a choice, whereas something that is ethically right leaves no room for choice. It is permissible for you to collect stamps; doing so is neither required nor prohibited, and so you have a choice, ethically, about whether this is an activity to pursue. It is (usually) right that you keep your promises; doing so is required, and so there is no choice, ethically, about this.

The purpose of an ethical theory, then, is to provide ultimate ethical justification in a way that conventions, customs, etiquette, and the like cannot do. An ethical theory serves to provide decisive reasons for the rightness, wrongfulness, or permissibility of an action or rule. Ethical theories, therefore, are of some importance, and some of the leading theories will be discussed in detail in Chapter 1. There are positive aspects of and potential drawbacks to each theory, but certain characteristics are thought to be intrinsic to any acceptable ethical theory.

First, an ethical theory should be *prescriptive*, meaning it should be action-guiding. We look to ethical theories in order to determine what sorts of behaviors or rules are acceptable, and those theories should therefore advise us regarding what ought to be done (what is right), what may be done (what is permissible), and what ought not to be done (what is wrong). A theory that occasionally fails to provide prescriptions of this sort will be somewhat problematic. Even when there seems to be a conflict between rules that are generally sound, the theory should provide guidance. The general obligation to keep one’s promises may at times conflict with the general obligation not to lie, and an ethical theory should be successful in helping one to decide which obligation is stronger and should be kept in a particular set of circumstances.

Second, an ethical theory should be *universal* (or impartial), meaning it should apply to all who are in the same morally relevant circumstances. For example, if a theory indicates that Susan has a moral obligation to perform a certain action in a certain situation, then the theory should indicate that Michael has the same moral obligation when he is in that same situation. If the theory stipulates that one employee has a right to safety in the workplace, then it must stipulate that a second employee has the same right unless there exists some morally relevant difference between the two employees or their circumstances. That which counts as morally relevant will in part be a function of the moral theory that is used; the important point is that a moral theory cannot allow any such differences to be wholly arbitrary. At the heart of this requirement of universality (or impar-

tiality) is the core idea that all persons are moral equals, and differences in treatment can be justified only when there are morally relevant differences in circumstances. It is essentially a matter of logic: if X possesses certain rights or obligations and Y is similar to X in all the morally relevant ways, then it follows that Y should possess the same rights or obligations as X.

Third, an ethical theory should be *practical*. When working through different theories, it can sometimes be forgotten that the ultimate aim is to apply the theory to the real world in an effort to resolve ethical difficulties. It is important not to get so bogged down in discussions of theory that we do not even realize that the implications of a particular theory have become unmanageable. The important point here is that we are limited by our circumstances and by our own conditions. An ethical theory that instructs us to do what is physically impossible or even psychologically impossible is not a very practical ethical theory and so is not very good. The rules and guidelines that follow from it must be feasible.

As will become clear in Chapter 1, different moral theories focus on different things. Consider the various ways of assessing whether a certain action or rule is ethically right, wrong, or permissible. You may think that the important factor is the consequence that follows from enacting the action or rule, and indeed there is a theory that focuses on consequences; you may think that the important factor is the motivation behind the action or rule, and indeed there is a theory that focuses on motivation; you may think that the important factor is the character of the individual(s) initiating the action or rule, and indeed there is a theory that focuses on character. In all, five different moral theories will be discussed in Chapter 1, the aim being to acquaint you with different ways of reasoning in ethical contexts—with tools that can be used when deliberating about the ethics of an action, rule, or policy.

Professionals, Ethics, and Moral Theory

In sum, three points should be emphasized. First, it is important to recognize that what you “feel” is right may not in fact be the right thing to do. What you were taught, what your conscience tells you, the principles of your religion, even the principles of law—these can turn out to be mistaken, all of them. Moral theories, when used correctly, provide ways of dealing with issues that necessitate setting aside these sorts of things that can skew one’s moral vision. They provide ways of getting outside our own perspectives, at least as much as is possible, and they enable us to assess perspectives and viewpoints with which we initially disagree in order to assess whether that initial disagreement is justified. Regardless of what your reasoned conclusions about specific issues turn out to be, moral theory helps to provide more complete reasons for them.

Second, it will become clear while reading Chapter 1 that the theories can be complex and tedious to use, perhaps too tedious for professionals who, after all, have a great many things to remember and worry about. The important point here is that every detail of every theory need not, ultimately, be remembered. If the theories are learned well now, and if the articles in this book are read and analyzed through the lenses of moral theory, then real-life cases will be seen in a new light and the process of ethical analysis will be much less tedious in the future than it is in the beginning.

Third, it must be recognized that acting ethically in the professions is important. It is sometimes believed that professionals have a certain choice when faced with a difficult situation: one can either do what is best for one’s career or one’s company, or one can do what is ethical. This apparent dilemma, however, does not really exist. Over the long run,

acting ethically pays off, though this is not always clear. Developing the habit of doing the right thing benefits you personally, it benefits you professionally, and it benefits your company or organization. Professionals who internalize ethical ways of thinking become, over the long run, recognized by their bosses, employees, customers, and coworkers as people who can be trusted, and developing a sense of trust with these groups is crucial for professional success.

Of course, the fact that acting ethically “pays off” in these ways does not mean that this is *the* reason to act ethically; more philosophically, acting ethically is important not because it happens to bring about personal or professional benefits, but rather, for its own sake. Indeed, acting “ethically” in order to benefit yourself or your company is probably not acting *ethically*. Nonetheless, acting ethically and acting in the best interests of oneself and one’s company, far from being exclusive, are complementary. There is, therefore, every reason to act ethically, and this book is devoted to the search for ethical truth in the professions through the use of critical and logical analysis.