

- Major Contribution

## **Principles and Virtues: A Foundation for Ethical Decisions, Policies, and Character**

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*Principle ethics can be described as a set of prima facie obligations one considers when confronted with an ethical dilemma. Virtue ethics focuses on character traits and nonobligatory ideals that facilitate the development of ethical individuals. Within the context of the assumption that the major responsibilities or primary goals of professionals are to be competent and to serve the common good, we suggest that integrating these complementary ethical perspectives provides a coherent structure for enhancing the ethical competence of psychologists and counselors and the level of public trust in the character and actions of these professions and their members. Virtue ethics, rooted in the narratives and aspirations of specific communities, can be particularly helpful to professionals in discerning appropriate ethical conduct in multicultural settings and interactions. We propose that future directions for research and instruction be expanded from quandary ethics to encompass issues of character.*

Formal conversations within the American Psychological Association (APA) about ethical behavior of psychologists can be traced to the decade preceding the formation of the Hobbs committee (Hobbs, 1948), which developed the first official code of ethics for the APA (APA, 1953; Sanford, 1952; Schmidt & Meara, 1984). Prior to that time, ethical behavior was maintained by tacit agreement or "taken-for-granted" understandings about standards of behavior for professionals in general and psychologists in particular. Since World War II, there have been enormous changes in the U.S. culture and in the professions that serve it. For example, the understanding of patients' rights has increased significantly; the pluralism of the culture and what that means for education, research, policy making, and human services have become more salient; and serious mistrust of professionals has escalated

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dramatically. To address such issues, conversations regarding ethics have intensified; the APA has revised its code of ethics a number of times (1959, 1963, 1965, 1972, 1977, 1981, 1990, 1992); and ideas and concepts from other disciplines have been applied to psychology. Kitchener (1984) adapted to psychology the Beauchamp and Childress (1979, 1983, 1989, 1994) conceptualization of principle ethics for decision making in medicine. Several groups have adapted policy statements or codes that pertain to specialized populations (e.g., APA, 1991; Feminist Therapy Institute, 1990; "Principles," 1979); and work from the psychology of morality (e.g., Rest, 1984) has been applied to training (Welfel & Kitchener, 1992) and other areas of professional ethics.

As laudable and helpful as these activities have been, there still seems to be a large void in formal conversations regarding ethics. The current APA code (1992), which was the result of a massive, careful consultative effort, has been sharply criticized for a number of problems, including being "too lawyerly" (Bersoff, 1994); not being as sensitive to minority issues as former codes (Payton, 1994); being more concerned about the profession than the public (Payton, 1994 Vasquez, 1994); and having mediocre expectations for teaching psychologists (Keith-Spiegel, 1994a). We propose that part of the void in conversations about ethics can be filled with a consideration of virtue ethics as a complementary phenomenon to principle ethics. We believe a conversation that includes a thorough understanding and integration of virtue ethics can result in better ethical decisions and policies and enhance the character of the profession. Such an integrative view of principle and virtue ethics can improve research and instruction of professional ethics and result in a code and practices that are more cognizant of cultural pluralism and thus more inclusive and appropriate for the publics served by psychology. A serious integration of virtue ethics into professional life may result in greater public trust of professionals.

By including virtue ethics in the conversation and relating virtue and principle ethics, we try to provide alternative ways of thinking about ethical issues. Our hope is to render a coherent account of a perspective with respect to ethical activities and responsibilities of professionals. One goal is to stimulate thought about these topics that might be helpful to others in reflecting on their own professional lives and the ethics of the profession. Another goal is to make an argument for the view that proper professional conduct is seldom either totally absolute or completely relative, and thus requires virtuous, competent individuals to exercise careful professional judgment. Finally, the article is a perspective on a confluence of contemporary ideas about professional psychology, ethics, and culture. The collective

ethical behavior of individual psychologists and the organization, evaluation, and integration of ethical ideals will ultimately define the character of the profession.

We plan to achieve these goals by presenting basic assumptions to provide a context for our perspective and by defining the terms we use. We make a few remarks about theory, then we review at length both principle ethics and virtue ethics. We suggest how this perspective can be relevant to multicultural milieus. Finally, future directions for research and instruction in ethics are considered.

## DEFINITIONS AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

"*Ethics* is a generic term for various ways of understanding and examining the moral life" (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994, p. 4). Morality is concerned with perspectives of right and proper conduct. In the United States, codes of ethics (such as those of the APA, 1992) are written by professions to provide rules or guidelines regarding appropriate behavior for professionals. The intention of these codes is to protect the public and the profession. They protect the public by being normative, that is, prescribing (at least in general, if not specifically) what professionals "ought" to do. For example, Standard 1.06, Basis for Scientific and Professional Judgments, of the current APA code (1992) enjoins psychologists to

rely on scientifically and professionally derived knowledge when making scientific or professional judgments or when engaging in scholarly or professional endeavors. (p. 1600)

Codes assist and protect the profession by putting forward a standard of behavior that guides professionals in their work and that, if followed, could provide a successful defense for a professional before an ethics review board or in a court of law.

In addition to the normative aspect, ethical codes often contain ideals or aspirations that are not considered obligatory but toward which professionals are encouraged to strive. Professionals are expected to consider these ideals in arriving at ethical decisions and in guiding their professional ethical behavior. These ideals are not strictly enforceable, but they may be considered by groups or boards who are judging ethical conduct. Such is the case for the current APA code. Although its Ethical Standards, divided into eight major topics, are considered enforceable, its Preamble and six General Principles are considered to be aspirations or ideals. From our perspective, these ideals are conceptually similar to virtues. Virtues are traits of character

that are assigned merit in some context. Ethical ideals or virtues have merit in relation to matters of right or proper conduct.

The current APA code is presumed by its authors to provide "a common set of values upon which psychologists build their professional and scientific work" (APA, 1992, p. 1599) and is designed to cover the principles and decision rules necessary for proper ethical conduct across a variety of situations. As excellent as a code may be, however, it cannot possibly contain everything one needs to know or cover every contingency one may possibly encounter (cf. Carter, 1991; Simon, 1991); and, as noted below (see *Characterizing Virtue Ethics*), this code is not without its critics. In addition, ethical codes and their interpretations change or are supplemented, depending on such things as evolving societal demands, advancing technology, altered professional perceptions, legal challenges, government rules, and public policies. For instance, a forerunner of the current code (APA, 1981) contained a specific set of directives regarding advertising. The U.S. Federal Trade Commission ruled that these directives constituted a restraint of trade, and, as a result of that ruling, these directives were immediately changed (APA, 1990). Other recent examples of change include the developing of supplemental standards sensitive to issues of power (e.g., Standard 4.07, *Sexual Intimacies with Former Therapy Patients*, APA, 1992), diversity (Fitzgerald & Nutt, 1986; APA, 1991; "Principles," 1979), and personal rights with respect to research participation (c.f. Burstein, 1980; *Code of Federal Regulation*, 1983).

The American Psychological Association and the Division of Counseling Psychology have been leaders among professional societies in considering and promoting issues of right and proper conduct for their members (see Fretz & Simon, 1992; Gelso & Fretz, 1992; Schmidt & Meara, 1984, for historical perspective on, and discussion of, these accomplishments). Despite this continued good work, professionals have come to realize that appropriate ethical understandings and behaviors require ongoing analysis and discussion since situations are complex and standards change.

Ethical theory, principles, rules, virtues, and other ethical concepts proceed from, or are based on, fundamental assumptions or "considered judgments" (Rawls, 1971). Beauchamp and Childress (1994) describe these judgments as "moral convictions in which we have the highest confidence and the lowest levels of bias" (p. 20). From these *a priori* assumptions or considered judgments, which are agreed upon or taken for granted, we begin a discussion or "conversation" linking ethical concepts, ideals of the moral life, and practical ethical decisions.

Individuals are free to disagree with the considered judgments of others and to start their treatment of ethics from a different set of assumptions. We

believe, however, that coherent conversations or discussions about ethics cannot proceed, nor can ethical decisions be made sensible, outside of a context of agreed upon assumptions or shared beliefs; some might prefer to view these assumptions as goals or ideals or values.

The assumptions or considered judgments on which we begin our discussion are that it is the responsibility of the profession and of each individual professional to see that psychologists are competent in their work, concerned about the common good, trustworthy, and neither deceptive nor exploitative in their professional relationships with others. By others we mean research participants, students, clients, the general public, or specific populations of the general public, such as racial/ethnic minorities. Being competent and being motivated to provide for the common good serve as the overall context or the explicit value statement or basis for our observations about professional ethics. It is with these assumptions that we enter the conversation.

In a cultural milieu in which pluralism is valued, many would argue that ethics are relative and that there are few absolute standards of moral behavior. When one accepts the premise of ethical or cultural relativism, one often argues as well that no culture or group has a right to impose its standards upon another. One might even question how much authority a profession has in specifying standards and expectations for its members. Between the extremes of absolutism (in which there is only one correct answer for every moral problem) and relativism is a kind of ethical objectivism (Pojman, 1990), which evaluates the right or wrong of an action, principle, or virtue based on whether it promotes or diminishes some other goal or objective. Thus rules or principles are neither absolute nor completely relative but are rather *prima facie* obligations that can be overridden or ignored in view of other circumstances. For example, issues of confidentiality are sometimes sacrificed in cases of clear and present danger to a client or others. An analogous case for ethical objectivism can be made for virtues; the character traits that promote agreed upon goals or objectives are to be encouraged and those that detract from them, discouraged. What is considered virtuous is determined within a context, the context here being that the primary goals of professionals are to be competent and to contribute to the common good. The nuances and subtleties of virtues and tasks involved in achieving these goals and in understanding their meaning in different settings become increasingly complex as psychologists interact with individuals and cultures that often differ substantially from their own (see Multiculturalism below). Some of these cultures or milieus can be quite different from the individualistic, competitive, Westernized environment that has spawned U.S. psychology as we know it. For example, the virtue of respectfulness encompasses much more than respect for autonomy, which is a very individualistic and somewhat

narrow interpretation of a much broader concept (see Choosing and Defining Virtues below). The perspective from which we hope to broaden the conversation regarding professional ethics is ethical objectivism, a middle ground between complete relativism and complete absolutism. The perspective is based on the assumption that a profession can develop agreed upon standards that bind its members, and that without such agreement, it is difficult to provide professional expertise and service or earn the public trust.

As with theories of personality and theories of counseling, there is no ethical theory that can account for all the hypothesized phenomena or agreed upon constructs. Nor is there any "classical" or contemporary ethical theory that is completely satisfactory in helping professionals respond to their ethical obligations without exercising their own professional judgment or discernment. Ethicists do not consider their discipline an empirical science; and so, typically, theory testing is not conducted according to the Western canons of the scientific method. As Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note: "Ethics is not a demonstrative science, but a set of practices and types of judgments rooted in experience, wisdom and prudence" (p. 94). So, theory testing in ethics is different from the empirical, theoretical testing we are accustomed to in the science and practice of counseling psychology. In Rychlak's (1968) terms, most of the testing of ethical theory to date is in the dialectical, rather than the demonstrative, tradition. (For exceptions, see theories developed by psychologists related to moral reasoning, e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg, 1984; Kohlberg, Levine, & Hewer, 1983; Rest, 1983, 1984, 1986.)

Ethical theories differ in their beginning assumptions or basic premises. A major distinction among theories has to do with whether one takes a deontological perspective or a teleological one. For a deontologist, certain activities (such as truth telling) are intrinsically right, regardless of the consequences. On the other hand, a teleological perspective holds that the criterion for morality lies outside the action itself, in some nonmoral value that results from the action. Two examples of a teleological perspective are utilitarianism and liberal individualism. The major difference between utilitarianism and liberal individualism is whether ethical coherence should emanate from a perspective of the common good or a perspective of individual rights. In utilitarianism, the ethical ideal is to achieve the greatest good for the greatest number; with liberal individualism, respect for the rights and the autonomy of the individual is paramount. Principle ethicists often frame dilemmas or choices in deontological or teleological terms, or perhaps a hybrid of these perspectives. The unit of measure can be an issue as well. For example, if one is an act utilitarian, one weighs each potential action as to whether it leads to the greatest good for the greatest number of people. If one

is a rule utilitarian, however, one asks the broader question of the cumulative effect of repeated, specific actions in the context of an integrated set of rules or principles (Meara & Schmidt, 1991).

What one does in a specific situation depends on which perspective one holds or how one chooses to balance different perspectives, given the specific circumstances. For example, often ethical conflict arises between the rights of the individual and the greater good of a community, group, or even the society in general. Take the opinions in the *Tarasoff v. Regents of the University of California* case (1976), in which the majority opinion ruled that although the therapist had a legal obligation to his client, he also had a legal obligation to exercise reasonable care to protect his client's intended victim. The dissenting judge ruled that the integrity of the profession (that of keeping confidences) took precedence over the need to protect a specific individual. In other words, rightly or wrongly, the dissenting judge ruled that in the long run the good of the community was better served by its being able to have confidence in a therapist to respect a client's autonomy, remain faithful to the therapeutic relationship, and maintain confidentiality than by requiring the therapist to intervene in such a way as to break the client's trust.

The two judges who rendered the majority opinion and the one judge who rendered the minority opinion were interested in respecting an individual and providing for the common good but had very different views about how to achieve these ideals. Both sides regarded the autonomy of an individual as less important than the common good; but for the majority it was the client's autonomy that was seen to be of lesser importance, and for the minority judge it was the autonomy of the intended victim that was seen to be of lesser importance.

Although understanding something about the basis of these decisions and the theoretical assumptions that informed them does not provide a precise guide as to what to do when a client threatens homicide (apart from obeying the law in the jurisdiction where the threat occurs), such understanding does give the professional more information to work with when confronted with this and similar dilemmas. In addition, such understanding makes it easier for us to specify and balance principles of beneficence and respect for autonomy (defined below) and provides a framework to help develop the virtues of respectfulness and benevolence (also defined below).

As noted above, differences among theories include the degree to which rules are absolute as opposed to being more context specific and the degree of abstractness preferred in struggling with ethical issues or approaching ethical dilemmas. Deontological theories (after Kant) present obligations as more absolute and abstract. For instance, this view holds that one's obligation is always the same whenever the same circumstances occur and regardless

of one's emotional attachment or special relationships with the other parties involved. Obligations are based upon reason coupled with proper motivation and, in a sense, can be decided outside of context. In other words, decisions are based on what are taken to be universal maxims—the obligations are present no matter what. This kind of thinking regarding one's obligation is best represented in psychology by the work of Kohlberg (1984; Kohlberg et al., 1983). Kohlberg's work is based on the assumption that moral behavior emanates from the construct of justice. By contrast, the work of Gilligan (1982) focuses more upon responsibilities within context, often within the context of special relationships.

Whatever the merits or empirical support of the Kohlberg versus Gilligan theoretical arguments, professionals are faced with the practical problem of needing to balance being fair in general with specific fiduciary responsibilities that emanate from their special relationships with clients, students, and research participants. Recognition of this latter responsibility was Kitchener's (1984) rationale for elevating fidelity from a rule to a principle (see Principle Ethics, Decisions, and Policies below).

Theoretical perspectives make significant contributions to thinking regarding ethical policy and individual ethical decisions; yet, in daily acts of ethical conduct or policy establishment (e.g., developing codes of ethics or other professional guidelines), theory does not always provide specific guides for action. For example, whether one is an act or rule utilitarian, it is difficult to discern what is the greatest good for the greatest number. Or if one favors obligation-based theory, how does one, for example, reconcile conflicting obligations of justice and promise keeping outside of understanding the context that houses the conflict.

Since theoretical stances, however clear, coherent, or comprehensive, often do not pass the test of practicality, other levels of reasoning and methodological procedures (such as specification or balancing) for working within these levels have been introduced into the conversation of applied or practical ethics in both biomedicine (cf., for example, Beauchamp & Childress, 1994) and psychology (cf., for example, Kitchener, 1984; Meara & Schmidt, 1991). These levels are termed *principles* and *rules*, and one might view them as quasi theoretical and quasi practical in that they provide bridges between the theory and practice and, thus, the means of moving back and forth between the concrete and the abstract. In addition to their practical grounding, principles possess some generalizability as well, because they are conceptualized as *prima facie* obligations. Although they are not to be followed in every case, they must be weighed or considered in every case. As Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note, even when a particular principle or series of principles is not the deciding factor, it still counts. The method-

ology for working with principles (described below) provides a theoretical or intellectual coherence that keeps moral norms flexible but not completely relative to societal whim or an unscrupulous community (Miller, 1991).

Some abstract theoretical stances may fall short in articulating the importance of the personal characteristics and ideals of those involved in ethical policies of professions. Because professional psychological communities and the individuals they serve have become increasingly multicultural, the time seems opportune to add virtue ethics to deliberate, systematic, and thoughtful considerations of appropriate professional morality. Virtue ethics is rooted in community and relies on a community's wisdom and its moral sense. Communities set forth ideals for their members and revere (in story, song, practices, or institutions) those individuals or organizations whose character provides exemplars or models of those ideals. Such virtuous individuals or groups are trusted to exercise proper judgments and demonstrate appropriate behaviors (expert or moral) for the welfare of specific persons or the community at large. The addition of virtue ethics to ethical conversations can result in more sensitive ethical conduct. In particular, knowledge as to whether particular virtues or ideals are defined by an individual or community as significant provides another means of engaging fruitfully in reciprocal cross-cultural interchanges.

We believe (and develop these ideas below) that constructs from principle ethics derived from common morality, virtue ethics based on community wisdom, practice, or tradition, and the integration of these approaches can enhance practical ethical decision making and policy setting. We also believe that such considerations can enhance the character of professionals and the public trust of professions.

## **PRINCIPLE ETHICS, DECISIONS, AND POLICIES**

### **Characterizing Principle Ethics**

Principle ethics can be viewed as a level of moral justification and described as a method of reflection on moral issues with the goals of (a) solving a particular dilemma or set of dilemmas and (b) establishing a framework to guide future ethical thinking and behavior. The version of principle ethics discussed here is based on the work of Beauchamp and Childress (1979, 1983, 1989, 1994), which has been developed and applied by Kitchener (1984) and others (cf. Canon, 1992; Goodyear, Crego, & Johnston, 1992; Kitchener, 1992; Meara & Schmidt, 1991; Patton & Meara,

1992; Vasquez, 1992; Welfel, 1992) for use in counseling and other areas of psychology. Principle ethics from the Beauchamp and Childress perspective is rooted in common sense morality and has as its structure a set of *prima facie* obligations. When making a particular ethical judgment (e.g., whether deception is justified in a specific psychological experiment) or when deciding a comprehensive policy (e.g., whether research participation is required of those enrolled in introductory psychology), one specifies which principles or obligations apply. If one or more principles are in conflict (such as when deception compromises the principle of respect for autonomy but the potential benefit produced by the experiment could outweigh full disclosure to the participants), it is the professional's responsibility to balance the principles in deciding how to resolve the specific conflict. Thus the methodology of principle ethics includes both specification and balancing of principles, whether one is making a particular judgment or setting policy. Consulting colleagues as well as ethical codes, laws, or traditional procedures is often helpful in this process, because even well-intentioned, well-trained professionals disagree on the importance of certain obligations, depending on their training and employment. For example, Kimmel (1991) conducted a study in which he explored the relationship between background characteristics of psychologists and their evaluation of the ethicality of 18 hypothetical research studies that differed in how costs and benefits were balanced. Gender, length of time since degree, area of psychology, and employment setting were predictive of the ethicality ratings. Men, those who held their degrees longer, those trained in a more basic area of psychology rather than a more applied one, and those whose employment was more research than service related tended to find the studies more ethically acceptable. Kimmel suggests that those who tended to be more approving were more attuned to research benefits, and those who tended to be more disapproving or conservative were more concerned about research costs. Kitchener (1984) introduced the Beauchamp and Childress (1994) conceptualization to the counseling and psychological literature to assist professionals with difficult decisions and policy making in all areas of their work.

The Beauchamp and Childress (1994) conceptualization and the Kitchener (1984) adaptation are based on a hierarchical model of ethical justification for decision making. In its simplest form, ethical justification provides a rationale for preferring one moral decision or action over another. The model of ethical justification begins at its lowest level with common sense and the facts of everyday situations, extends to intuition and, finally, to a tripartite critical-evaluative level consisting in ascending order of abstraction from rules to principles to theory. Some of the distinctions in the three levels

are arbitrary but useful for purposes of ethical analysis and justification of decisions. For instance, as elaborated in the discussions of fidelity and veracity below, it often is not clear where a rule ends and a principle begins. The notion behind the model is that as a situation or dilemma becomes more complex or the nuances of the conflicts that comprise the dilemma become more difficult to discern, one has recourse to a higher level or broader perspective on the issue by applying principles or theoretical reasoning behind the rules rather than simply following the rules themselves. For example, in reading Standard 6.15, Deception in Research, in the current APA code (1992) a researcher is still faced with deciding for every single study if the value from the experiment and the expected effectiveness of possible alternate procedures justify the deception. In short, the rule or standard must be interpreted, and criteria for such interpretation are needed. Beauchamp and Childress and, subsequently, Kitchener and others have argued that the most useful level for such interpretations is the critical-evaluative level of moral principles. (For more detailed description of ethical justification and this particular model, see Beauchamp & Childress, 1994, pp. 13-28, and Kitchener, 1984, pp. 44-46.)

In pluralist cultures and professions, a principled level of analysis has several advantages. Principles find their roots in common sense everyday morality. They are therefore closer to everyday life than abstract "decontextualized" theoretical (albeit informative) reasoning of philosophers. As Kitchener (1984) notes, principles also provide psychologists and other professionals a common vocabulary and a set of *prima facie* obligations that can bring coherence to considerations of decision making across various professional tasks such as research and counseling. The principle ethics approach summarized here does not posit one overarching comprehensive principle, such as justice. Further, of the several principles proposed, none is paramount, nor is their arrangement hierarchical. Kitchener also believes that principle, ethics raises our level of ethical responsibility beyond not violating certain rules, such as those found in the APA code (1992). We would add that a thorough grounding in principle ethics opens the way for another very important perspective on ethics: virtue ethics, discussed below. Although theory can inform us and enrich our ethical background, no theory yet devised is sufficient to provide rationale for ethical behavior in every situation. In fact, some argue (see Casey, 1991; Pincoffs, 1971) that theory is a latecomer to ethical reasoning whose helpfulness is limited. Principle ethics then is an intermediate level of moral justification between intuition and formal theory.

Well-chosen principles, however, do not provide a one-to-one correspondence to action, but they do provide a practically based and intuitively sensible set of concepts that are relatively easy to use. Ease of use is important,

especially for novices. As one has experience with specifying and balancing principles, one becomes very sophisticated in their usage and can apply them effectively to increasingly complex issues. Professionals and students who want to excel in practical ethical decision making and policy building and improve their abilities to deal with ambiguous situations can practice by working back and forth among levels of abstraction (e.g., theories, principles, and specific situations), using what they have learned from each level and its relationship to the other levels to "tease out" the subtleties of a situation and the consequences of various courses of action.

### **Choosing and Defining Principles**

In his well-known history of psychology, E. G. Boring (1950) noted the difficulty of making lists of psychological constructs. He was discussing instincts and explaining that they fell out of scientific favor because psychologists came to realize that anyone can develop a list of instincts but it becomes difficult to demonstrate that one list is more accurate than another. Because professional ethics cannot claim to be a demonstrative science, we are somewhat concerned about the same problem; however, we attempt to address it in our research agenda contained in the Future Directions section below. As we present our list of ethical principles and later virtues, however, we hope not to follow the pattern set with lists of instincts. Any list of this sort has an arbitrary quality to it, and one could present a convincing rationale for adding or subtracting a particular entry. In the case of principles, we have four—respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice—suggested by Beauchamp and Childress (1979, 1983, 1989, 1994) and one—fidelity—added by Kitchener (1984) as relatively well-established standards in the United States for biomedicine and counseling psychology, respectively. For reasons we describe below, we have added veracity to this list. As Kitchener did with fidelity, we propose elevating veracity from a rule in the Beauchamp and Childress conceptualization to a principle. Our discussion of the other five moral principles is not extensive, because information about them is readily available elsewhere (cf. for example, Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Canon, 1992; Goodyear et al., 1992; Kitchener, 1984, 1992; Meara & Schmidt, 1991; Patton & Meara, 1992; Vasquez, 1992; Welfel, 1992). Principle ethics has been developed from a Western individualistic tradition. A discussion of the disadvantages in applying principle ethics to cultures different from those that share this heritage is not treated here in this brief review of specific principles but is explored later in the Virtue Ethics and Multiculturalism sections below.

**RESPECT FOR AUTONOMY**

Respect for autonomy entails acknowledging the right of another to choose and act in accordance with his or her wishes or beliefs and behaving in such a way that enables, rather than hinders, a person's exercise of this right. This principle is very important in Western cultures, and its application has expanded dramatically over the last 50 years. Societal and professional perspectives have changed from a more paternalistic view of the professional, whose word was not to be questioned, to a participatory collaboration between client or patient and professional. A primary example of this change in psychology can be seen in the development of theories for psychotherapy. In 75 years or so, we have come from classical Freudian analysis, with an image of the analyst in complete control (Freud, 1916/1961), to an approach that stresses trust in the client's capabilities to solve problems and to achieve self-actualization, given the nurturing environment of therapy (Rogers, 1957). More contemporary developments include feminist counseling and psychotherapy (Brooks & Forrest, 1994; Worrell & Remer, 1992), which stress collaborating with and empowering clients and teaching them to recognize, if not change, structures and policies that oppress or disadvantage them (also see Koocher's [1994] discussion of informed consent).

Psychological research is another arena in which procedures have been altered by changes in views about individual rights. Thirty years ago, undergraduates were often required to participate as subjects in several hours of research as part of their introductory psychology course obligations. Typically, no other options, such as writing a paper, for earning credit existed and failure to participate could, in some circumstances, result in a lower final grade or, in extreme cases, a failure. In addition, little debriefing occurred regarding the purposes of the experiment, nor were there many attempts to make the experience educational by informing participants about the nature of their contribution to the work.

In both research and therapy, the professional was assumed to be the expert, to know what ought to be done, and to be absolutely trustworthy to act in the best interests of the client, student, or research participant. Many factors have caused trust in professionals to erode, but a significant one is a major change in the importance that individual rights and respect for autonomy have assumed in the United States in the last 25 years. The United States has always been an individualistic, achievement-oriented culture (Schmidt, 1977). It is also a society in which individual rights are to be abridged with caution. Society, not the individual, is expected to generate the predominant restraint in impulse control (Pepinsky, 1994) or in the exercise of personal rights.

## NONMALEFICENCE

The principle of nonmaleficence obligates one not to harm others intentionally. This principle has a long-established tradition in the medical profession. Some philosophers combine the principle of beneficence (discussed below) and the principle of nonmaleficence into one obligation (Frankena, 1973). However, we follow the Beauchamp and Childress (1994) conceptualization adapted by Kitchener (1984) and treat the obligation not to harm others as separate from the responsibility to promote their welfare.

A major factor in causing harm can be incompetence; thus nonmaleficence is directly related to how competent the professional is in his or her work. Few professionals intend to harm others (Keith-Spiegel, 1977; Welfel & Lipsitz, 1984), but if they are not knowledgeable or skillful, harm can occur, harm for which they are responsible. This responsibility increases as professionals interact with those whose race, ethnicity, or other characteristics are different from their own. For example, researchers can be nonmaleficent if they study other cultures and, in the process of collecting data, disrupt the group cohesion or customs of those cultures. Educators bear some responsibility for not harming the future clients of the students they train. If they are training students for professional life (whether it be research, practice, teaching, or administration), they themselves should be as knowledgeable as possible about what the students will need to know to perform competently once they finish their training. A recent challenge is whether the site of professional training is liable along with the professional who is engaged in the activity when unethical behavior occurs (Custer, 1994). Many malpractice suits in which the plaintiffs allege maleficence (harm was done to them when they were clients or patients) focus on competence, although some center on exploitation or abuse of power.

## BENEFICENCE

Beneficence can be defined as taking positive steps to help others, including the prevention and the removal of harm. In establishing distinctions between nonmaleficence and beneficence, Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note that the former typically involves not doing something and that such prohibition must be obeyed impartially. Beneficence, on the other hand, is characterized by an obligation to act—but not impartially, because the relationship one has with another weighs heavily in discerning one's obligation. Beneficence can be subdivided into obligatory and ideal. For example, psychologists might agree that debriefing research subjects or providing constructive comments on student projects in a manner that is not only

accurate but educational would fulfill one's obligation to be beneficent in the role of researcher or instructor. However, if one went to extraordinary efforts in these domains, for example, providing readings and extra meetings with subjects or students to enhance the educational benefits of the experience, the professional has clearly gone beyond what is obligatory and has entered the realm of the ideal (see the virtue of benevolence discussed below). There is a potential danger here, however, as such principles as beneficence or justice taken to extremes can become harmful (cf. Shweder, 1994).

Establishing the line between the obligatory and the ideal is very difficult to do. For example, some might argue that as ordinary citizens our obligation stops with "doing no harm." Most definitions of what it means to be a professional, however (cf., for instance, Schmidt & Meara, 1984), include provision of a service that benefits the society. The APA ethical principles reflect this difficulty of deciding where obligatory beneficence ends and ideal or virtuous beneficence or benevolence begins. As stated in the Preamble, the current APA "Ethical Principles" (1992) "has as its primary goal the *welfare* and protection of individuals and groups with whom psychologists work" (p. 1599, italics added). On the other hand, as we have noted, the Preamble and the General Principles are not seen as strictly enforceable but rather are set forth as *aspirational* [*sic*] in achieving the highest ideals of psychology and yet may be considered by ethical bodies in reviewing one's conduct.

We have suggested that one of the major responsibilities of psychologists is to serve the common good; beneficence, therefore, becomes an important principle, particularly in making policy. As the professions become more specialized and bureaucratic, citizens often become frustrated with a series of rules, forms, and policies that from their perspective usually restrict, delay, or depersonalize the services they are seeking or receiving. Many seeking service are required to sign complicated consent forms, which they may not have read carefully or from a lay perspective may be unintelligible. Professionals bear a responsibility to see that these documents are in the best interest of those they serve. Although it is appropriate and customary that such documents protect the interests of professionals or the institutions where they work, the responsibility to promote the good of clients remains. In recent years, professions seem to have sensed a greater need to explain clients' rights, along with professionals' obligations of nonmaleficence and beneficence, to clients in a formal fashion (cf. Committee on Women in Psychology, 1989). Such formal statements can help raise ethical standards, because if a particular professional is not beneficent, at least clients have access to information about what kind of behavior they should expect. This information might not be available from a particular professional with whom they deal.

## JUSTICE

Professionals in psychology and counseling are primarily concerned with distributive justice rather than retribution or restitution after someone has committed unjust acts. In its simplest form, distributive justice means equitable distribution of burdens and benefits. This simple statement belies a very complex issue, because there are various rules one must specify and balance in deciding for a specific context or in an individual case what is in fact equitable. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) review several meanings of equitable that could be applied to a particular situation. For example, does equitable mean literally an equal share, or distribution of burdens and benefits according to one or some combination of the following: need, effort, contribution, or some other form of merit? At the core of some debates between liberals and conservatives in the United States is the issue of which material goods and services should be distributed according to need, and which according to ability to pay for them in a free market. Much of the health care debate of the 1990s can be captured in terms of defining what is meant by an equitable distribution of burdens and benefits. Discussions related to multiculturalism often turn on the same question as well as on the question of restitution for past injustice.

If psychologists are going to offer services *pro bono* or offer reduced fee schedules, fair criteria have to be devised. As an example of the kind of thinking involved in devising such criteria, Kitchener (1984) raises the issue of need versus merit in the distribution of psychological services. In the view of some, *pro bono* services offered on the basis of need can conflict with the merit of other professionals' right to a "just" or even high wage, based on market forces. Managed health care could result in not only a loss of autonomy but a significant decrease in income for many psychologists who are health service providers, particularly those who have been in independent practice (APA Practice Directorate, 1994).

Issues of justice have been central as well in psychology's increased sensitivity to diversity, because justice demands equality. However one defines equality, there is clear agreement in the psychological community that inequality based on gender, ethnic/racial or socioeconomic status is unethical. Respect for one's civil rights, as well as competent and fair treatment of those different from the professional psychologist, are matters of simple justice, which psychologists are obligated to honor whether making policy or a specific ethical decision (see, for example, Standards 1.08, Human Differences; 1.10, Nondiscrimination; 1.11, Sexual Harassment; and 1.12, Other Harassment).

## FIDELITY

Fidelity means fulfilling one's responsibilities of trust in a relationship. Because psychologists are the more powerful participants in professional relationships with clients, students, or research participants, they have a particular responsibility or trust to assure that abuses (e.g., unethical dual relationships) do not occur. In the Beauchamp and Childress (1994) scheme, fidelity is not a principle but rather an important rule derived from the principle of respect for autonomy, justice, and the ethical ideal of utility. Kitchener (after Ramsey [1970], who argues that fidelity is essential to all helping professions) elevates the concept to a fundamental principle and maintains that the principle of fidelity is particularly critical to psychology. The crux of her argument is that, because the relationships psychologists establish are at their core a voluntary bond between people, certain promises are implied (if not always explicit) and the relationship is based on loyalty and trust. More is expected than in a contractual, business relationship (Beauchamp & Childress); the relationship is considered fiduciary, and the professional has special responsibilities to look out for the welfare of the client. One also can argue, as Kitchener (1984) does, that a part of fidelity is truth telling. We agree that truth telling is a component of fidelity, but we also maintain, after Beauchamp and Childress, that it can be viewed as a separate construct. In terms of the counseling or therapeutic relationship, fidelity assumes a pivotal ethical importance; but it is also important in other professional relationships that counseling psychologists develop as part of their work (e.g., researcher-participant or professor-student).

## VERACITY

Veracity means truthfulness. Most would agree that it is important for professionals to be, and to be seen as, truthful. Bok (1989) argues that trust in veracity is a foundation of human community. We would add that for competent professionals to be able to function to the best of their abilities, the profession must enjoy the trust of the community. As Bok notes:

I can have different kinds of trust: that you will treat me fairly, that you will have my interest at heart, that you will do me no harm. But if I do not trust your word, can I have genuine trust in the first three? (p. 31)

Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note that until very recently, obligations of veracity have been missing from codes of ethics governing the behavior of physicians. What was to be disclosed to a patient was left to the physician's professional judgment; but they also note that in its 1980 revision of *The Principles of Medical Ethics*, the American Medical Association recom-

mends that physicians “deal honestly with patients and colleagues” (Beauchamp & Childress, p. 307). They go on to argue that professionals have an obligation to be truthful in their professional relationships; but veracity, like fidelity, is considered a rule, not a principle, a rule based in large part on the respect owed to others and on fidelity and utility. Kitchener (1984), too, stresses the importance of veracity and claims it as part of her discussion of fidelity. For example, she notes that fidelity is based, in part at least, on respect for autonomy, as she includes lying as an example of a breach of that respect and thus a violation of fidelity. She views lying as having serious ultimate consequences for the profession. If lying and deceit are considered the norm, clients, students, research participants, and others would feel no obligation to be honest with the professional and a critical ingredient of professional relationships is destroyed. In addition, the general public suspects the motives of those who lie, which ultimately destroys the credibility of a profession. Bok (1989) is particularly concerned about the effects of deception in social science research on the experimenters, the students they train, the research participants, and the profession, which comes to be known as one that cannot be trusted.

The importance of veracity in professional life seems not much questioned in Western contemporary practice. The issue then becomes what is to be gained by making it of equal importance to the other principles. Veracity, whether construed as a rule of lesser importance or a principle of equal importance, does have to be balanced with the other principles—respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, and fidelity. We believe, however, that it should receive equal importance with the others in ethical decisions and policy making for several reasons. First, trust in the professions is at a low ebb. Often, what individual professionals say is simply not believed because the professional is seen to have an “extra” investment in the relationship. For example, researchers need subjects; counselors need clients. Lack of credibility makes the public and clients skeptical about whether the professional is motivated to act in their best interests or to consider the common good. In the inevitable conflicts of interest that arise, the importance of being truthful with oneself as well as with clients, students, or research participants cannot be overemphasized. The profession of psychology will ultimately be diminished if the legislative committees whom we lobby for favorable public policy, human subjects research review panels, and others upon whom we depend for consent and support come to believe we are more interested in ourselves than in our various professional responsibilities. Emphasizing veracity can be a good reminder for professionals whose daily workload leaves little time for thorough reflection on these matters. Empha-

sizing veracity also provides a visible symbol for those who seek our services or are asked to cooperate in our enterprises.

Second, we have to realize that our view of what is important changes. One could argue that the six principles we have discussed here have always been important, either implicitly or explicitly, in making ethical decisions and setting policy. However, as our understanding of what is in the best interests of clients or the profession evolves, our understanding of which principles to specify, emphasize, and balance in which situations changes. In the last 50 years, respect for the autonomy of the client or the patient, from which veracity and fidelity are primarily derived, has assumed greater importance in professional relationships. Legal protection for those whom the professional serves is greater and, as a result, many clients, students, and research participants believe it is their right, and they therefore expect, to have as much information as possible about their role in the relationship. Professional respect for the autonomy of others is particularly important in serving the underserved. Often, these populations contain many ethnic/racial minorities or persons of low socioeconomic status, who sometimes have not been as fully informed by professionals as those in more advantageous circumstances (cf. Brandt, 1978).

Another reason for including veracity as a principle is that some research in psychology relies on deception. However important the work may be that justifies deception in particular studies, some critics (cf., for example, Baumrind, 1985; Bok, 1989; Kelman, 1967) argue that many researchers do not seem as invested in the search for alternatives to deception as in the effort to find a convincing cover story so that the subjects will not know (or at least report they did not know) the "true" nature of the experiment. Kitchener's (1984) point seems telling here. If professionals are seen to deceive, why should subjects feel obligated to be truthful? This puts the veracity or validity of results in question. In short, we believe that by stressing the salience of veracity as a principle worthy of equal consideration in ethical problem solving rather than simply as a derivative of another principle, we might improve public trust of the profession, professionals' respect for the autonomy of the underserved, and the credibility of psychological research to nonpsychologists.

Veracity covers several issues and procedures that are important to psychologists. Certainly, it is an important basis for consent, because without some information, one of the criteria for valid consent is missing. Perhaps one can never be fully informed about a treatment or a research study, but many aspects of Standard 6, Teaching, Training Supervision, Research, and Publishing (APA, 1992), speak to this point. For example, Standard 6.10 enjoins psychologists to clarify the nature of the research agreement and

responsibilities, and Standard 6.11 enjoins them to use reasonably understandable language and inform participants of factors that might influence willingness to participate. Safeguards and procedures for researchers to follow, such as colleague consultation and adherence to review board policies, are stressed in situations wherein consent may not be required (see Standard 6.12, Dispensing with Informed Consent) or when deception must be used. For instance, Standard 6.15, Deception in Research, makes it clear that psychologists are not free to deceive a potential research participant about aspects of the project that might affect willingness to participate. With recent conflicts among scientists (e.g., about ownership of intellectual property or order of authorship on publications), some of which (not always legitimately) escalate into charges of misconduct (cf. Mishkin, 1994) and, in light of contemporary controversy with respect to child abuse (cf. Ceci & Bruck, 1993; Courtois, 1992; Loftus, 1993, 1994), the public has reason to be alerted to the need to scrutinize carefully the veracity of scientific results.

The success of psychotherapy also depends on veracity. Clients ultimately depend on their therapists to tell them the truth, however unpleasant that might be. Even though it is always a matter of "tact, timing, and dosage," confrontation is a skill that takes courage and veracity. Clients often need to know such things as how much they are contributing to their own difficulties, how someone they love may be manipulating them, how therapy is helping them, or whether there may be less expensive alternatives. Students are entitled to the truth about what a course contains, how current the information is, what is fact, and what is theory. Finally, veracity is important to the training of competent professionals in both the advising of research and the supervision of practice.

### **Summary of Principle Ethics**

Principle ethics presents a set of equally compelling *prima facie* obligations one considers in evaluating choices and deciding on courses of action. No principle is considered paramount, but is considered with all of the others in light of a particular situation. The introduction of principle ethics to the counseling psychology literature by Kitchener (1984) has served the discipline well by providing a useful framework for teaching ethics, solving dilemmas, and developing policy. Jordan and Meara (1990) suggest that the model assumes that the context for ethical analysis is the dilemma and that the purpose of ethical analysis is the solution of the dilemma in a rational and equitable manner. This focus on dilemmas or quandaries has, as Kitchener hoped, raised ethical discourse in psychology and counseling to a higher critical-evaluative level. Much of the work, however, focuses on the benefits

(cf., for example, Canon, 1992; Goodyear et al., 1992; Kitchener, 1984, 1992; Meara & Schmidt, 1991; Patton & Meara, 1992; Vasquez, 1992; Welfel, 1992) but not on the shortcomings of principle ethics (for an exception, see Drane, 1982). Jordan and Meara (1990) maintain, as well, that

the focus on dilemmas and their solution has resulted in a decided emphasis on the application of ethical principles and a related de-emphasis of other potentially relevant criteria. (p. 107)

We believe virtue ethics is one of the other "potentially relevant criteria" for the development of an ethical professional life. Virtue ethics can be seen as a complementary approach to principle ethics and a significant, if not essential, component in the ethical character of a helping profession such as counseling or psychology.

### **VIRTUE ETHICS, PROFESSIONAL CHARACTER, AND THE CHARACTER OF A PROFESSION**

Virtue ethics rests on the assumption that professional ethics encompasses more than just moral actions. Proponents of virtue ethics believe that motivation, emotion, character, ideals, and moral habits situated within the traditions and practices of a culture or other group present a more complete account of the moral life than actions based on prescribed rules or principles of practice that can be detached from individuals, their aspirations, and their communities. Virtue ethics calls upon individuals to aspire toward ideals and to develop virtues or traits of character that enable them to achieve these ideals. The concept of a virtue or trait of character denotes a quality or qualities of a person that have merit or worth in some context, and these qualities are often related to matters of right conduct (i.e., morality). Beauchamp and Childress (1994) state simply that "a virtue is a trait of character that is socially valued, and a *moral virtue* is a trait that is morally valued" (p. 63). However, they make clear that something of social merit may not have moral worth and that the converse is true, as well. In an earlier edition of their book, Beauchamp and Childress (1983) defined virtue as "a habit, disposition or trait that a person may possess or aspire to possess. A moral virtue is an acquired habit or disposition to do what is morally right or praiseworthy" (p. 261).

We propose virtue or character ethics as a complement to principle ethics, which can help psychologists and counselors achieve the ideals of being competent and serving the common good and, in the process, retain more autonomy in their professions. We believe that professional autonomy (i.e.,

being self-regulating with respect to research, education, codes of conduct, professional sanctions, and the like) that allows for professional judgment is essential to a high level of competence and service.

### Characterizing Virtue Ethics

A major distinction between principle ethics and virtue ethics is that the former may be captured by the word *obligation*; and the latter by the word *ideal*. As we have seen, principle ethics has as its structure a set of prima facie obligations; virtue ethics, in contrast, sets forth a set of ideals to which professionals aspire. The distinction between obligatory and ideal has received increasing attention. For example, in biomedical ethics, sophisticated technology has blurred the distinctions between ordinary and extraordinary care, and it is becoming common to talk about obligatory and optional care. As noted above, the current APA code (1992) makes much the same distinction with the ideal or aspirational [*sic*] aspects in the Preamble and General Principles and the enforceable or obligatory aspects in the Standards section. Ethics codes, then, reflect more than the rules or principles of a profession; they also reflect its standards, ideals, and character or, in Keith-Spiegel's (1994a) words, "the moral expectations of a profession" (p. 363).

Disciplines other than psychology and the popular press have begun to reflect on the importance of virtue or ideals in professional life or in the citizenry. For example, a recent issue of the yearbook of the American Society for Political and Legal Philosophy (Chapman & Galston, 1992) is titled simply *Virtue* and contains 24 essays of differing perspectives on the topic. Philosophers (e.g., Casey, 1991, MacIntyre, 1981, 1984, 1992; May, 1984; Pincoffs, 1971) are calling for a shift in the focus of contemporary ethical thinking from quandary ethics to virtue ethics. Such a shift is seen by these authors as a return or revival of a tradition that dominated from the time of Aristotle until the Kantian influence. Mayo (1993) suggests that modern ethics is a footnote to a Kantian deontological perspective rather than to a Platonic, Aristotelian, or virtue ethics perspective. The emphasis has been on duty, rules, principles, and laws rather than on the human character. Ideals are also present in the work of Audi (1994) and others (e.g., Cahn, 1990) whose scholarship concentrates upon the ethics of academic life. Finally, the commercial success of *The Book of Virtues* (Bennett, 1993) demonstrates a popular, albeit some would argue superficial, interest in the concept of virtue.

The current APA code (1992), its predecessors, and other documents related to the ethics, standards, and purposes of the association advocate high but not unattainable ideals and community sensitivities. As Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note, ideals or character traits must be achievable by most

people if virtue ethics is to be meaningful in the daily lives of professionals. The ideals and virtues set forth as standards or goals for professionals (e.g., prudence or respectfulness) are expectations held by the public, and professionals are rightly criticized if they do not demonstrate them. For example, Darou, Hum, and Kurtness (1993) explain that a native population in northern Quebec, the Crees, ejected numerous psychological researchers from their community, primarily because the researchers were not respectful of the culture, its authority structure, or expectations with respect to research. Researchers were urged to show caution and patience and to ensure that their research had some value to the community. Darou et al. report that one conclusion Brislin (1980) reached in reviewing data from a variety of cultures was that above all else, researchers need to be honest in their cross-cultural relationships. These standards (ideals or virtues) of being careful, respectful, honest, and ensuring some good for the community in which one conducts the research do not seem to be unattainable ideals. In fact, one can learn them (cf. Ratanakul, 1994), and such virtuous habits and behaviors seem much easier to employ in both familiar and unfamiliar settings than a set of cumbersome or complicated rules. Western researchers displaying such virtues would probably have had more fruitful interpersonal and scientific encounters with the Crees than those described by Darou and his colleagues.

Pursuit of professional virtue may represent a nonobligatory ideal; however, we would argue that a pattern of neglect with respect to virtue or the ideal is not in the best interest of either the professional or the profession. A professional who does not display such traits as respect and prudence can erode the public's trust in and willingness to cooperate with professionals, and in the long term can hurt professional relationships, the profession itself, and its ability to provide service. Any profession qua profession must maintain the trust of the general public; this is accomplished by a consistent record of competence by professionals whose actions are largely motivated by (and are seen to be substantively motivated by) something other than following rules, fulfilling minimal obligations, self-aggrandizement, or self-interest.

The pattern of ideal or virtuous behavior throughout the career of the professional is of interest, not the dissection of any particular action. Since human nature and psychological science are less than perfect, mistakes will be made. As Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note, when one who has a reputation for being a virtuous person makes a technical error or an error in moral judgment, he or she will not be blamed or held as accountable as one who does not have such a reputation. This state of affairs illustrates that one must not only *be* virtuous but must be *seen* to be virtuous or "above reproach."

There has been recent, thoughtful criticism within the profession itself with respect to psychology's ideals and their not being as high as they might be. This criticism comes from highly respected psychologists (cf., for example, Bersoff, 1994; Keith-Spiegel, 1994a, 1994b; Payton, 1994; Vasquez, 1994), many of whom have served on the APA Ethics Committee and written extensively in the area. The criticisms focus on the authors' beliefs that the current code (APA, 1992) is not idealistic enough. For example, Bersoff considers the code too "lawyerly," not reflective enough of the moral integrity of the profession and its commitment to human welfare and recommends that future revisions be more attentive to "fundamental moral principles." Payton (in a carefully documented account of successive APA codes) enunciates concern with what she sees in the new code as a weakening of the profession's commitment to the dignity and worth of others and to the protection of human rights. She goes on to comment about how such a weakened commitment does not bode well for minority populations. Payton (1994) and Vasquez (1994) raise the question of whether the current code is more concerned about protection of professional psychologists than the welfare of those they serve. Keith-Spiegel (1994a) criticizes the APA 1992 code with respect to the expectations for psychologists who are teachers. She believes that the code lacks passion and commitment with regard to freedom of inquiry and expression and "holds teaching psychologists to an unacceptably low level" (p. 368). Koocher (1994) suggests that subsequent revisions need "greater input from advocates of public interest and social responsibility" (p. 361). Our purpose here is not to critique or compare APA ethics codes but to suggest that virtue ethics can be relevant in evaluations and revisions of this and other ethical codes.

A second distinctive feature of virtue ethics is that the focus is on the agent or actor rather than on the action or the decision (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Jordan & Meara, 1990; MacIntyre, 1984, 1992; Pincoffs, 1971; Punzo, 1993, in press; Punzo & Meara, 1993). Although Punzo (in press) maintains that one cannot totally separate the action from the agent, he explains that when analyzing moral or ethical behavior from a virtue ethics perspective, the focus is on the actor or agent rather than on a particular action or decision. As Jordan and Meara (1990) put it, virtue ethics focuses on individuals' character development, which provides the basis for their professional judgments and actions. Beauchamp and Childress (1989) make this same point when they state that

In addition to judgments about right acts and moral ideals, we make judgments about the moral goodness and badness of persons and about the praise and blame they merit. We judge their traits of character, including their virtues and vices. We thus evaluate the moral worth of agents no less than their actions. (p. 374)

Such focus gives many pause because, in the U.S. majority culture, the bias is in favor of an individualism that stresses respect for autonomy and lack of interference with or from others. To evaluate an agent or professional as virtuous seems like passing judgments on colleagues, students, or clients, which may be unwarranted and which, in any event, we would not see ourselves as qualified to make. We do, however, make judgments all the time with respect to the intellectual, professional, political, and personal qualities of our colleagues and students. For example, we make judgments about whether students pass an examination, pass it with distinction, or fail it, whether to recommend a manuscript for publication, how strongly to recommend someone for a job, which diagnosis to assign a client, or when termination with a client is appropriate. We also make decisions regarding who is a person of integrity or who is to be trusted. These judgments often represent ideals toward which we (and we hope other professionals) strive. The profession could be more explicit about the criteria involved in making these judgments and in defining the desired qualities of character for professionals.

We divide our comments about virtuous agents into two sections. The first discusses abilities or characteristics of a virtuous agent apart from particular virtues. The second (see *Choosing and Defining Virtues* below) proposes virtues deemed relevant to the goals we have put forth for psychologists and counselors, namely, being competent and providing for the common good. Neither our discussion of the characteristics of a virtuous agent nor the virtues we propose is absolute. We offer these discussions as a guide to understanding how virtue ethics and virtuous agents may be relevant to professional psychology.

### **Characteristics of Virtuous Agents**

Several cognitive, social, and emotional attributes or abilities of actors influence the development of a virtuous character. We rely on several sources (Beauchamp & Childress, 1994; Jordan & Meara, 1990; MacIntyre, 1981; May, 1984) and, most notably, Punzo (1993, in press; Punzo & Meara, 1993) in developing our view of the characteristics or abilities needed to become a virtuous agent. We want to make clear that these are abilities and skills that can be learned and that one need not necessarily be highly educated to learn or develop them.

With these thoughts as background, we would describe the virtuous agent as one who (a) is motivated to do what is good, (b) possesses vision and discernment, (c) realizes the role of affect or emotion in assessing or judging proper conduct, (d) has a high degree of self-understanding and awareness,

and, perhaps most importantly, (e) is connected with and understands the mores of his or her community and the importance of community in moral decision making, policy setting and character development and is alert to the legitimacy of client diversity in these respects.

Virtuous agents are motivated to do what is right and have developed traits or dispositions or motivations to act in accordance with high ethical standards or ideals. We label this as the motivation to excellence, to do one's very best—in this case, to do what is morally good (see also Punzo, in press). Principle ethics is about rights and obligations and understanding what rules to apply in situations or dilemmas of choice. Principles can inform one about what is morally good, and thus principle and virtue ethics are related. In considering only principles or rules, however, the agent can do the right thing while acting from obligation or fear of reprisal. In contrast, virtuous agents are positively motivated to do what is right because they judge it to be right, not simply because they feel obligated or they fear the consequences. As Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note: "The friend who acts only from obligation lacks the virtue of friendliness . . . . Absent this virtue, the relationship lacks moral merit" (p. 65). They further maintain that most ethical theories come to the conclusion that the most important aspect of a person's moral life is the motivation and strength to do what is right. Most professionals are so motivated and the Preamble of the current APA code (1992) reminds psychologists of the importance of motivation, as it states that the development of ethical standards in a psychologist's work-related conduct requires a "personal commitment to a lifelong effort to act ethically" (p. 1599).

Another characteristic of a virtuous agent is discernment. Discernment has been defined by Punzo as "the ability to perceive the ethically relevant features of a given situation." (V. A. Punzo, personal communication, March 30, 1995). Beauchamp and Childress (1994) describe and elaborate on the concept of discernment in much the same manner as Punzo. They believe that discernment involves sensitivity, judgment, and understanding and eventuates in decisive action. For instance, they say that a discerning agent not only knows which principles might apply to a situation but how to apply them. They suggest that discernment can be demonstrated through a creative response to a situation or by understanding not only what principles or ideals are called for in a situation but how (or for what reasons) they are relevant.

Possessing vision or discernment includes a tolerance for ambiguity, perspective taking, and an understanding of the links between current behaviors and their future consequences. These three concepts are not much different from attitudes and skills we value in the scientist practitioner activities of counseling psychologists. We expect students to understand the nuances of therapy and the connections between theory and research. Such

understandings or connections are often not clear-cut and they require thought and interpretation. The same ambiguities exist in ethics, as well. Ethical decisions occur under conditions of uncertainty and so require practice to develop the abilities to discern the subtleties and nuances of a problem. Perspective taking and an understanding of the links between behavior and consequences are extremely important in all of the professional activities of counseling psychologists, including ethical judgments. Ethical discernment, then, is a prerequisite to developing high ideals and expert decision-making skills in the moral domain. In addition, a discerning person quickly realizes what conduct is in line with his or her aspirations or ideals.

Cognition and "objectivity" in ethical decision making and conduct can be overemphasized, however. Often, individuals making important decisions are urged to be rational or at least not to be emotional. In principle ethics, with the emphasis on solving the immediate dilemma, the problem can be divorced from its context and from the individuals involved in or affected by it. Once divorced from persons, special circumstances, and relationships, it is easy to discount the information emotion provides. Such discounting not only can hinder optimal decision making but also can blunt the development of ethical sensitivities and perspective taking.

In line with the importance of emotion to the ethical life, Beauchamp and Childress (1994) believe compassion is an important virtue for health care professionals. As they see it, compassion includes a regard for the welfare of others, sensitivity to and sympathy for their sufferings or misfortune, and actions to reduce or alleviate their pain. Wilson (1993), in making his case for a universal moral sense, puts sociability as the root cause of the moral sense and sympathy as an important emotion or sentiment in everyday morality. Jordan and Meara (1990) maintain that principle ethics may overemphasize the relationships between cognitive analysis and behavioral responses and thus reduce ethical decision making to rule-governed, abstract thought puzzles. Such overemphasis on cognition may underestimate affective psychological dimensions such as pain, guilt, or rage, which are important variables in ethical life. Understanding the affect of another seems particularly important in cross-cultural encounters. Wilson states that many of our positive moral actions (e.g., sympathy or fairness) are based not so much on systematic deliberations as on reflexive emotional reactions. He goes on to say that "the feelings upon which people act are often superior to the arguments they employ" (p. 8). Emotion plays an integral role in developing moral virtue and engaging in virtuous action. For instance, our sense of outrage at injustice not only provides us with information that something needs to be done but also with a motivation to do it.

A fourth mark of a virtuous agent is self-awareness. One cannot develop a sense of community without the capacity for self-observation, that is, knowing one's own assumptions, convictions, and biases and how they are likely to affect one's professional and personal interactions with others. Such awareness is a prerequisite for effective cross-cultural understanding. In analyzing the adequacy of the current APA code (1992) with respect to ethical issues in multicultural assessment, Dana (1994) suggests "ongoing self-scrutiny and self-knowledge as a prerequisite for . . . [culturally sensitive and competent assessment] . . . practice as contained in the new code" (p. 353). Self-awareness also can be an important factor in keeping psychologists from getting involved in unethical dual relationships. For example, knowing in the abstract that feelings or reactions toward clients, students, or colleagues can become unprofessional is only an initial step in preventing the establishment of an unethical dual relationship before it occurs. One must also understand how one's own personal feelings or behaviors are likely to become unprofessional. The issue could be financial, sexual, sexist, racial, parental, or other, and the feelings could be attraction or dislike. Professionals can treat clients, students, or colleagues unethically based on the characteristics of the client, student, or colleague, characteristics of the professional, a particular set of pressures on the professional, or an interaction among these sets of phenomena. The importance of self-awareness and self-observation in ethical conduct is implicit in many of the Standards in the current APA code (1992): 1.08, Human Differences; 1.13, Personal Problems and Conflicts; or 1.17, Multiple Relationships. General Standard 1.13 reads, in part:

Psychologists recognize that their personal problems and conflicts may interfere with their effectiveness. Accordingly, they refrain from undertaking an activity when they know or *should* know that their personal problems are likely to lead to harm. (p. 1601, italics added)

A fifth and final characteristic in our list is that a virtuous agent is one who is interdependent with his or her community (or communities) and comprehends the communities' ideals, expectations, mores, and sensibilities. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) note that although principles can be based in common morality, they need not be, even though in their approach, which we and Kitchener (1984) have adopted, they are. As Jordan and Meara (1990) observe, virtues or character can be seen as community specific, and principles can be interpreted either as universal maxims (e.g., Kant's categorical imperative or Kohlberg's view of justice) or situation specific (e.g., weighing fidelity to or respect for the autonomy of a client with beneficence to members of a community in cases of potential danger). All of us

belong to many communities, and for psychologists, this includes a professional community.

Psychologists not only belong to a professional community but need to relate to the communities they serve and the community or communities that have shaped their own character and ideals. In the last 25 years or so, psychologists have become more attuned to the fact that we know much less than we need to know to conduct research, to educate students, to make policy, and to develop therapeutic relationships and treatment plans in a multicultural environment. As we have discussed, virtues or acting virtuously can be clearly defined only in the context of one's goals, values, or beliefs. It seems impossible to characterize virtue or develop a virtuous profession without looking at the construal of key variables that influence psychological behavior across situations. For example, Markus and Kitayama (1991), although recognizing within-group variation, explicate differences in construal of self, others, and the relationships of self to others between Western and Asian perspectives and the effect these differences exercise on such variables as motivation, cognition, and emotion. Asian perspectives (and, with some modification, we could add African American [cf. Sanders, 1994] and Latino [cf. Anjos, 1994]) are seen as interdependent, stressing relatedness and the larger community. Western perspectives stress independence, attendance to self, and development of uniqueness. Pepinsky (1994), in a detailed example of within-Western differences (with Norway and the United States as exemplars), examines two different perspectives on impulse management, an important construct in "making sense" out of the practices, virtues, and other aspects of a culture. She argues that one way to interpret "common sense" in the two milieus she studied is to evaluate how responsibility for impulse control and impulse expression is managed. She documents that in the United States, impulse expression is more often accorded to the individual with society being responsible for impulse control. In Norway, the converse is true: Individuals are usually seen as responsible for restraint, and impulses are expressed through the collective. In the first instance, the individual is seen as separate from society; in the second, the individual's goals or ambitions are accomplished through the society. Pepinsky (1994) asserts that the distinction can be illustrated by the following: "I want to do something *for* my society" (vs.) "I want to do something *in* or *through* my society" (p. 57).

Espousing values without awareness of context is usually unproductive and unethical, as these examples and the attempts at cross-cultural research with the Crees reported above (Darou et al., 1993) demonstrate. The goals or values of a profession must be integrated with the goals, assumptions, aspirations, and "commonsense" understandings of the communities that

support it and the communities it purports to serve. In addition, as Pepinsky (1994) observes, research that concentrates on "professional social values" masks significant variability in how the "same" values are defined in the practices and rules of everyday life. We would argue that this is true of ethical conversation as well, and that a reliance on codes or principles alone masks significant differences in how virtue or character (or rules themselves for that matter) are differentially defined or enacted in different communities. Community understanding, then, is a complex, continuous process.

To summarize: Distinctive features of virtue ethics are its focus on ideals rather than on obligations and on the character of the agent or (for our purposes here) the professional rather than the action itself. The five characteristics presented above provide the basis for the development of specific virtues, which, in turn, comprise the pattern of one's character. These five characteristics are also ones that are seen as desirable in fulfilling responsibilities of being a professional psychologist. We must keep in mind that decisions with respect to which specific virtues are desirable or what is considered to be proper conduct and appropriate motivation only become meaningful within the confines of a particular context (e.g., cultural or social milieu). Virtue, then, is defined or configured by the character of the professional as he or she interacts with the goals or ideals (or character) of the profession and the community-defined goals, ideals, and needs of the communities that the profession serves.

### **Choosing and Defining Virtues**

Two important questions must be considered prior to defining virtue and selecting virtues appropriate to the life of a professional psychologist. The first is to explore whether virtue is a meaningful construct; the second is to examine whether the concept of virtue is so relative to a specific group or time period as to be unimportant in professional life or irrelevant in a pluralistic society. We begin with the second question. As MacIntyre (1981, 1984) notes, even those who attest to the importance of virtue disagree about its definition and what virtues are critical to the moral life. For instance, Casey (1991) makes a case for what he terms the pagan virtues (such as the magnanimous or proud man) and notes how they come in conflict with traditional Christian virtues, such as humility. MacIntyre makes much the same point when he compares several perspectives on virtue. He points out that Homer equated virtue with excellence, particularly the types of excellence needed for battle (e.g., physical strength). Aristotle believed that "virtues are characteristics that enable individuals to live well in communities" (Pojman, 1990, p. 121). Therefore, the establishment of social (political,

in Aristotle's terms) institutions are necessary for one to develop virtues. MacIntyre also discusses the virtues of the New Testament (e.g., faith, hope, and love) with which Aristotle would have little acquaintance or agreement and an extensive list of virtues espoused by Benjamin Franklin, including cleanliness and industry, which can be achieved by obeying a maxim attached to each. MacIntyre then turns to literature and recounts a list of virtues that can be found in Jane Austen's novels, presumably reflective of her time, class, and gender. By MacIntyre's account, the *sine qua non* of virtue for Austen is constancy. Mayo (1993) believes that virtue has been neglected by philosophers in the Kantian or deontological tradition but that literature has reflected the importance of virtue in everyday life by focusing on virtues of significance to particular heroes or heroines.

Besides having different lists, those who discuss virtue have different theories or understandings about the concept. We return to MacIntyre's (1981) examples. For Homer, a virtue is a quality that enables one to fulfill a well-defined or prescribed social role; for Aristotle, virtue is the means that fulfills the end goals of human nature. The Christian or New Testament virtues have the same logical structure as Aristotle's (a quality whose exercise leads to an end goal or a good) but differ in that the goal is supernatural and it is the supernatural that completes the natural. Virtue from the viewpoint of Thomas Aquinas synthesizes the Aristotelian and the New Testament views. For Franklin, virtues are more utilitarian; they are instruments to external ends, that is, to happiness in this life and the next. This latter part differs from the New Testament version in that, for Franklin, the supernatural end is not integral to nature or the achievement of the human telos, nor does it replace or complete it. For Jane Austen, the virtue of constancy finds its expression in a certain kind of marriage.

Virtues are discussed in non-Western traditions as well. Ratanakul (1994), a Theravada Buddhist, explains that this tradition, although sympathetic to some aspects of principle ethics, "[in] its teaching of *nibbana*, the supreme goal of human existence, Theravada Buddhism stresses purity of heart and other related virtues" (p. 121).

Various cultures and traditions foster virtue, and there are several different conceptions of the term. These include virtue as a quality that enables one to perform a social role, achieve an intrinsic human end or state of being, or is instrumental in achieving something external to itself (e.g., success or competence). In each case, a virtue presupposes other phenomena. In the cases above, these phenomena are social roles, intrinsic attributes of human nature, or an external good or value. Not surprisingly, the list of virtues or valued traits is different across these various contexts and distinctly different historical periods.

The problems of relativity are not confined to history or disciplines different from those before us here—ethics and psychology. For example, although biomedical ethics has focused on principle ethics, recent concerns indicate that other approaches, including virtue ethics, should be included (DuBose, Hamel, & O'Connell, 1994). Drane (1994), in advocating a character or virtue approach to biomedical ethics, acknowledges that character and virtue speak to the inner being or states of persons and, as such, they are not as easy to analyze as discrete actions. In addition, they do not make the same claims to universality as the principle of justice, which, according to some theories at least, binds everyone regardless of background. Drane goes on to develop a list of virtues and vices for physicians based on the premise that healing is practiced in every culture and the central component of that healing is the doctor/patient relationship. His list of virtues (caring, prudence, humility, and hope) differs somewhat but is compatible with those physician virtues enumerated by Beauchamp and Childress (1994) (compassion, integrity, truthfulness, and discernment). Beauchamp and Childress note that one's model of physicians or other health care workers alters the list of virtues. For example, nurses have changed their role from one of passivity to one of patient advocacy, but goals related to healing remain the same. Drane's list of vices presupposes faulty motivation for entering the medical profession—for example, almost exclusive interest in wealth or self-aggrandizement.

An important feature of all these differences is that each of these definitions or examples of virtues becomes meaningful or intelligible within a context. The contexts involve such phenomena as social roles, perspectives on essential attributes of being human, and goals of leading a good life or being a good person or providing for others, such as promoting human welfare or societal good as part of one's professional responsibilities. Although several contexts exist, the number is not infinite. Even though there can be disagreements about what is good ("shades" of virtue, so to speak), less disagreement exists about the differences between virtue and vice within each context. For example, courage and cowardice can usually be distinguished in war, compassion and arrogance in treating the terminally ill, or respect and exploitation in recruiting participants for research. Thus the concept of virtue, even though not absolute, is not totally relative either. In addition, as pluralistic as the values of professional psychologists may be, there is considerable agreement with respect to psychology's commitment to high professional standards and the welfare of those served.

We return now to our initial question: How meaningful is the concept of virtue. MacIntyre (1981) argues that three phenomena, which he believes are common to all cultures, demonstrate that virtue is a meaningful and intelligible construct across cultures and time. These three characteristics are

(a) practices, (b) the narrative order of a single human life, and (c) moral traditions. (For a thorough account of these ideas, the reader is referred to MacIntyre, especially chaps 14 through 17.) Briefly, "a practice is any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that activity are realised [*sic*] in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to [it]" (p. 175). For example, in MacIntyre's view, architecture is a practice; bricklaying is not. Practices imply relationships among those who participate in them, including those who preceded contemporary practitioners and refined the practice to its present state. Practices are distinguished from institutions: Medicine and teaching are practices; hospitals and universities are institutions. Institutions are often concerned with goods external to practice, such as status, power, and money, and the practice itself is concerned with the internal goods of excellence and achievement.

MacIntyre's second phenomenon, the narrative order of a single human life, simply refers to the fact that one's personal narrative unifies one's life and provides it with a central core wherein virtues, sentiments, and other dispositions can reside. Lastly, he states that all communities have moral traditions. For his evidence, he reminds us that all communities have stories, and these stories, their plots, and their heroes speak to, or articulate, the community's virtues. For example, Homer prizes courage for the practice of the warrior; he tells us stories of the significance of courage by telling us about the events and the deeds that make up the lives of such warriors as Agamemnon or Achilles.

Virtues are found not only in the literature of a culture but in individual lives and commentary as well. For example, Sanders (1994), in her criticism of principle ethics, argues for not merely understanding an African American perspective with respect to ethics but also for (after Williams [1971]) participation of African Americans in policy setting and inclusion of "a set of social structures and norms in black life that are worthy of acquisition by blacks and whites" (Williams, pp. 104-105, cited in Sanders, p. 157). In reviewing the discussion of Flack and Pellegrino (1989) (as cited in Sanders, 1994) with respect to a unique African American perspective on bioethics, she lists several attributes of such a perspective, each of which she sees in sharp contrast to Anglo-American views on morality and ethics. She (after Flack & Pellegrino) asserts that an African American perspective has more emphasis on "community, religion, the ethics of virtue, and personal life experiences" (p. 149).

We frame our perspective of virtue and list of virtues appropriate to counseling psychologists on the following presuppositions. Psychology (in MacIntyre's terms) is a "practice" or, perhaps more accurately, a discipline

that houses a set of “practices” (e.g., research, teaching, specific applications, or combinations thereof). Psychologists who are such “practitioners” (again, broadly defined in MacIntyre’s sense of the term) have a personal narrative, including a moral one, which needs to be integrated with their practitioner or professional role and the moral tradition (i.e., goods or goals or professional character) of the practice and the communities the practice serves. At a minimum, we have claimed that the goods or goals or character of the profession are to be competent and to serve the common good. In addition, competence and the common good must be sensitive to multiculturalism and other pluralistic aspects of society. To achieve these goals, professionals or practitioners must move beyond principle ethics to develop and exercise the predispositions of virtuous agents (reviewed above) and the virtues (suggested below) appropriate to their roles. Such development interacts with the practitioners’ own personal narratives, the specific tasks they undertake, and the character of the practice. Because these processes are ongoing, we need to keep in mind that they change the character of the practitioner and the practice.

To review, the concept of a moral virtue denotes a quality or qualities of a person, which have merit or worth in the context of matters related to right or ideal conduct. Punzo and Meara (1993) distinguish between self-regarding and other-regarding virtues. Self-regarding virtues, such as prudence and integrity, primarily benefit the agent who possesses them. They define his or her character and could be viewed as marks of inner character strength. In explaining how others classify virtue, Frankena (1973) refers to these self-regarding virtues as *trait-egoism*, or “dispositions that are most conducive to one’s own good or welfare” (p. 64). In a manner of speaking, self-regarding virtues enable other-regarding virtues, such as respectfulness and benevolence.

The other-regarding virtues are oriented toward producing moral good for others or providing for the good of the community in general, rather than the good of the individual who possesses or exercises them. Frankena (1973) refers to these virtues that promote the general good as *trait-utilitarian*. We might draw comparisons of the self-regarding virtues and competence with the other-regarding virtues and providing for the common good. Although the two types of virtues interact to depict the character of the person, and the two goals interact to form the character of the profession of psychology, the distinction seems helpful in understanding virtue ethics and its applicability to the ethics of psychology. Competence or personal excellence (in any domain—moral, intellectual, or social) benefits the one who has it yet forms the basis for performance. Such performance could include (depending on the domain) helping others, advancing the field, or exercising other-regarding virtues in producing moral goods.

The task before us now is to further the ethical conversation in psychology and counseling by selecting virtues that are appropriate for psychologists and counselors and provide a rationale for those we select. The question becomes which virtues can result in better ethical decisions and policies and in the continuing improvement of the ethics (or character) of the profession. To provide the rationale for selecting the virtues, we looked to (a) virtues that are viewed as basic in both the self-regarding and other-regarding domains (cf. Frankena, 1973; Pojman, 1990; Punzo & Meara, 1993), (b) goals and tasks of psychologists in contemporary society, which we have outlined and discussed throughout the paper, (c) ideals and aspirations embodied in the Preamble and Principles sections of the current APA code (1992), and (d) virtues that seemed to be adapted to, and amenable to, adaptation by multicultural perspectives. In addition, we wanted a list that was succinct and easily understood. Such a list, we think, can spark the ethical conversation and provide a basis for additions and modifications as individuals reflect upon and develop their own professional character. Based on these criteria, the virtues we offer are the self-regarding virtues of prudence and integrity and the other-regarding virtues of respectfulness and benevolence.

## **Prudence**

We suggest that the cornerstone virtue for professional psychologists is the self-regarding virtue of prudence. Such a suggestion is based on the thinking of Aristotle, although other philosophers would disagree. Aristotle believed that all other virtues imply and employ *phronesis*, or practical wisdom or prudence (Casey, 1991). Prudence is a multifaceted construct that is probably easier to demonstrate than to define. Most of us can name someone we know who is prudent. When pressed as to what we mean, most would describe a prudent person as one who is planful, appropriately cautious, who has foresight, and who has or exercises good judgment. We often speak of prudence with respect to specific domains; for example, "she is prudent in managing her money" or "he was prudent in his encouraging his children to seek higher education." Prudence implies a goal or guiding philosophy; for example, Haslam and Baron (1994) give an integrated view of behavior with prudence as the centerpiece. About their account, they say that "it emphasizes the practical, goal directed, strategic dimensions of behavior and is amenable to a normative analysis in the service of prescriptive ends" (p. 54). By normative, they mean ideal, and by prescriptive, they mean the suggested rules, procedures, or means for reaching that ideal. As Meara (in press) notes, those who are prudent have goals and reasoned plans for accomplishing them. Prudence emphasizes long-term goals, good judgment

in the face of uncertainty, and overcoming shortsighted choices (Haslam & Baron, 1994). Prudence as a virtue emphasizes the motivation to do what is good (the goal) and discernment—two of the five characteristics that we presented as characteristics of virtuous agents. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) use the term *discernment* much as we are using the term *prudence*. They see discernment as one of four focal virtues for physicians. For them, discernment includes knowing what is at stake, what needs to be done, and what counts the most. They further observe that those who are discerning (prudent, in our terms) are often the first to realize that a situation has ethical ramifications. We would add that the prudent person has a grasp of the long-range consequences of a variety of ethical choices. Prudence, then, involves appropriate restraint or caution, deliberate reflection upon which moral action to take, an understanding of the long-range consequences of choices made, acting with due regard for one's vision of what is morally good, and a knowledge of how present circumstances relate to that good or goal. Those who are prudent know what rules or principles might apply and whether they should be applied in a particular instance. Prudence also involves knowing when one does not know and being able to figure out what to do in the face of such uncertainty. The patience and caution that the Crees expected and did not receive from Western researchers (Darou et al., 1993) who approached their community for assistance are an illustration of the kinds of mistakes more prudent persons are less likely to make in cross-cultural settings.

Prudence is required in implementing the APA ethics code (1992). It is probably not an overstatement to say that prudence is what is required for psychologists to fulfill the spirit of Principle A, Competence, in the current code. According to that principle, psychologists are expected to understand the boundaries of their competence and the distinctive features of other groups and to exercise careful judgment in areas wherein professional standards are not yet in place. In addition, with few exceptions, there are no simple prescriptions in the current code as to what the professional is obligated to do or what would be ideal in that situation. Throughout the code are found statements that directly or indirectly call upon the discretion or prudence of the individual psychologist. The language of the code is replete with such words as *ordinarily* (e.g., Standard 1.18, Barter), *when professionally appropriate* (e.g., Standard 1.20, Consultation and Referrals), *reasonable* (e.g., Standard 6.06, Planning Research), and the like. Bersoff (1994) reports that "some variation of *reasonableness* appears 40 times; *feasible* appears 15 times" (p. 386); and sees such language as moral compromise (cf. Koocher, 1994, as well). Such language, however, also can provide occasion for the exercise of prudent, professional judgment and can highlight the importance

of developing prudent psychologists through education, training, and experience. The more prudent the professional the more likely he or she will be able to understand which actions are in the best interests of clients, students, or research participants across a wide variety of situations and populations, and the less likely it is that statements in the code will be used as "loopholes" of moral compromise or unwarranted professional self-interest.

Prudence provides an example of how principle and virtue ethics complement each other. In teaching ethics, a case study approach is often used, in which students are presented with either hypothetical or classic cases and asked how the principles they are learning might apply. In engaging in such hypothetical questions regarding proper conduct, students and professional consultants correctly observe that often the "ethical choice" (or the rationale for giving precedence to a particular principle) "depends on the circumstances." The question or quandary usually needs to be placed in context, and a prudent person is better able to envision the significant attributes of the context and to judge circumstances commensurate with intended goals, likely consequences of specific actions, and the perspective of the individuals or group with whom the professional is interacting.

The integration of principles and virtues occurs in actual as well as hypothetical decisions and discussions. The noted moral theologian and bioethicist Richard McCormick emphasizes the prudence of physicians in making difficult choices that he believes ethicists cannot make for them. In his words, "it is inappropriate to attempt to usurp the prudence of the clinician" (McCormick, 1989, p. 358). For example, when consulting on a very difficult case (involving whether to reinsert a feeding tube into an 84-year-old man who had not regained "normal" consciousness for two months), he presented some principles and their applications but did not tell the hospital staff exactly what to do. As he explained to several disappointed physicians:

I insisted that there are no rules that would replace their prudence and exempt them from the anguishing task of wrestling with the untidy and unpredictable clinical realities of individual cases. Anyone who claims to have a rule that will cut through all of the agonies of ambiguity and uncertainty is involved in deception. (p. 358)

In a multicultural milieu, a prudent individual is aware that another's definition of the situation is not necessarily one's own, and, in fact, one is never assured that "what makes good sense" (i.e., what is prudent) is shared. That is why caution (part of what it means to be prudent) is important for professionals. For example, actors or agents in two Western cultures analyzed by Pepinsky (1994) are committed to democracy and thus "adhere to or

*appear* to adhere, to a doctrine of social equality" (p. 21). As a matter of course in everyday life, however, this doctrine carries different interpretations. For the Norwegian (whom Pepinsky labels Actor B), the idea of equality is captured by the following: "*No person* is (or shall appear to be) *better than* any other" (p. 21). For the U.S. citizen (whom Pepinsky labels Actor A), equality is expressed by the statement that "*every person* is (or shall appear to be) *as good as* any other" (p. 21). The subtleties evoked by these interpretations in the strategies of everyday life are beyond the scope of this paper. (See Pepinsky for a thorough accounting of the links between self and society as manifested in her Mode A and Mode B comparisons and through her articulation of alternate views of impulse management, definitions of equality, threats to personal identity, and some of the broader cross-cultural implications of these analyses.) However, that understanding of alternate views (or carefully eliciting the perspective of another through observation, conversation, or study) is a prudent course and enables one to make sense out of a community's customs, practices, or institutions. It enables one, as well, to relate to the "commonsense" nature of the daily activities or attitudes of those who are different from oneself. Prudence enables one to go beyond global, nonnuanced, "taken-for-granted," assumptions, such as (a) that Western cultures are all individualistic or Eastern ones collectivist (cf. Triandis, 1990; Pepinsky, 1994); (b) that the value of methodologically sound research (if it is not harmful) overrides the good or harmony of a community that provides the participants (cf. Darou et al., 1993); or (c) that labeling clients, students, or the general public as consumers (or other business issues) does little to change professional relationships, the character of a profession, or requirements of ethics education (cf. Koocher, 1994).

Many philosophers do not consider prudence a virtue but rather an intellectual faculty that can be applied to the moral domain (Casey, 1991). Some might argue that the characteristics of prudence, which we have outlined, do not convey virtue but are personality traits that can make one's life more convenient or efficient and that carry no moral connotation. Others might argue that what is being described is simply intelligent behavior, at least as intelligent behavior is defined in many Western cultures. Haslam and Baron (1994) would argue that prudence provides a means to picture personality in adaptive and cognitive terms and explicates critical linkages among personality, intelligence, and character. They acknowledge that difficulties remain in clarifying this construct, such as whether prudence is a generalized trait or is domain specific.

Ideas of how personality, intelligence, or character are related are not new and continue to be of interest. Analyzing how personality, intelligence, and virtue intersect using prudence as an exemplar, if even possible, is well

beyond the scope of this project. We believe that however one wishes to view or construe it, prudence is a foundation virtue for psychologists and counselors and provides a thoughtful approach to cross-cultural encounters. Most of us would rather trust in the ethical judgment of a professional who is prudent, however defined, than one who is not.

## Integrity

Integrity is a concept with which we are all familiar. Dictionary definitions generally present two separate but related meanings of the term. One has to do with adherence to a code (typically, but not always, a moral one), and the other has to do with a sense of wholeness or completeness. One who has integrity is said to be incorruptible—would not perform wrong actions or perform any actions, right or wrong, for the wrong reasons. Beauchamp and Childress (1994) believe that integrity is a central virtue in the ethics of health care. They recognize both meanings of the term: adherence to a code or set of beliefs, and soundness, reliability, wholeness, or integration of one's moral character. They tend to emphasize the former. Principle B of the current APA code (1992) is titled simply Integrity and adds the integrity of the discipline to the importance of integrity for individual psychologists. Principle B speaks of integrity in the practices of psychology (i.e., science, teaching, and practice) and in the virtues or qualities (e.g., honesty, fairness, respectfulness, self-awareness) that psychologists are expected to exhibit in promoting such integrity in their work. There is an internal coherence, but not inflexibility or rigidity, to integrity. We agree with and adopt the Beauchamp and Childress definition of the virtue of integrity.

Moral integrity, then, is the character trait of a coherent integration of reasonably stable, justifiable moral values, together with active fidelity to those values in judgment and in action. (p. 473)

Although the standards or values and their internal coherence influence judgment, they do not replace it, which reinforces our notion of the fundamental importance of prudence. Situations such as represented in *Tarasoff* (1976) can often present us with the problem of which course of action best maintains the integrity of a particular professional and that of the discipline.

Integrity cannot be judged on the basis of a single situation; it involves coherent integration over time. Principle C, Professional and Scientific Responsibility, also speaks to the virtue of integrity in expecting psychologists to uphold standards of conduct and adapt what they do to the needs of different populations. As with prudence, one could argue that integrity is not necessarily a moral virtue as we speak of it in other domains such as artistic

integrity. We believe that such an argument or such distinctions are not important for our purposes here. Examples of threats to integrity, which are covered in the current APA code (1992), include inappropriate dual relationships, misrepresentation of credentials, and the effect of one's personal beliefs on one's work. At a minimum, all of these threats to integrity misrepresent or impair competence. They can have other adverse effects as well; for example, confusion ensues when clients or students find themselves in dual relationships with therapists or professors.

Before leaving the virtue of integrity, a word about the integrity of the discipline seems important. The integrity of the discipline requires that discovery, interpretation, and application of psychology are coherent, related, and internally consistent. Such coherence seems particularly important for psychologists who label themselves "scientist-practitioner." The continuing bifurcation of science and practice, and their seemingly divergent paths, is a matter of ethical concern, because what is understood or taken for granted (e.g., the language of evidence) within each domain is often different and frequently not as effectively communicated between domains as it needs to be to assure understanding and coherence. As with prudence, professionals need to understand how definitions of integrity vary across settings and may be different than their own. Nonetheless, it seems incumbent on each professional and the profession in general to have integrity and to be able to articulate to the public their vision of and adherence to that important virtue.

We see the two self-regarding virtues of prudence and integrity as inter-related and as important elements in the character of professionals and in the character of the profession. We believe that their exercise reflects a kind of competence and leads us toward the goal of serving the common good. We also think professionals who demonstrate prudence and integrity will make good ethical decisions, develop sound ethical policies, and deservedly enjoy public trust.

## **Respectfulness**

We now focus on the other-regarding virtue of respectfulness. Again, the word has connotations beyond ethics. To respect one is to deem him or her worthy of high regard or special attention. A Western (and often a principle ethics) perspective of this term is much more restrictive than the concept we are presenting here. In the more limited view, a particular kind of attention or respect is emphasized—that of not interfering with another. Respectfulness, however, is more encompassing and is a virtue well suited to many cultures and many professional encounters. It seems especially important in a multicultural society. We must be cautious in thinking about it, however, as

the exercise of the concept varies depending on culture and role. As is well known by those who travel to foreign countries, one is often unsure of what is respectful behavior. Although there is a connection between the principle and the virtue (i.e., respect for autonomy and respectfulness), there is probably not a one-to-one correspondence. We view respect for autonomy as simply an example or part of respectfulness. Virtues do not correspond directly to action guides. For example, even if we are respectful (i.e., we have and want to exercise the virtue of respectfulness), we might not know specifically what kind of respect one would like (e.g., respect for privacy, autonomy, self-presentation, or familial authority structure). Until we further define what it is that the individual or the community would like to have respected—or what respect means—we have no simple guidelines for action.

We view respectfulness as general and particular. We affirm, as does the APA code (1992; see, for example, Principle D, Respect for People's Rights and Dignity), that all individuals, by virtue of the fact that they are human, are entitled to respectfulness whether or not we are interacting with them in a personal or professional capacity. Second, we think there are particular areas in which respect is especially critical. Principle D lists some of those as well (e.g., privacy, confidentiality). Principle B, Integrity, as well as Principle D stress the importance of respectfulness in fulfilling professional responsibilities.

In addition to these specifications, however, we maintain that the virtue of respectfulness means that we, as professional psychologists, respect (i.e., provide special attention, deference, or regard to) individuals or communities on and in the terms they themselves (not the professionals) define. The critical question is how others wish to be respected. For example, if we are counseling a Latina college woman and are urging her to become more autonomous and independent from her family (as is often urged with such clients of European American descent), or are ignoring her presentation of the importance of religion in her life, we may not be respecting her in terms of her standards and expectations regarding her culture, family life, or hoped-for future possibilities. Presenting alternatives is different than setting her agenda or disrespecting her choices. Or, to take a different example, if we wish to recruit research participants from a culture different from our own and for whom we have little to contribute in the way of compensation for their efforts, it would be more respectful to take into account their definition of the situation (cf. Brislin, 1980; Darou et al., 1993). Their definition of what we might be investigating not only lends more veracity to the results (cf. Pepinsky, 1994) but respects them as partners in a collaborative effort, not as depersonalized entities to be used to advance the discipline or our own careers.

## **Benevolence**

The current APA code (1992) is explicit about the virtue of benevolence. Remembering that the Principles reflect ideals and aspirations, one can readily see that Principle E, Concern for Others' Welfare, and Principle F, Social Responsibility, encourage psychologists to be benevolent. To label an individual as benevolent means that person can be distinguished by wanting to do good. To label an institution as benevolent means that it is organized to do good or for the good. Principles E and F call for psychologists to seek the welfare of others and be socially responsible in contributing to it. We believe that benevolence is important if psychologists and the profession of psychology are going to achieve the goal of contributing to the common good. As noted above, Koocher (1994) believes that social responsibility and public interest (both, in our view, rooted in benevolence) need to be emphasized more in future codes.

Benevolence has to be balanced with respectfulness or it can easily lead to arrogance. We are not advocating a hierarchy, wherein the professional is completely in charge of defining benevolence, that is, wherein the professional knows what is good or best for those he or she serves and, regardless of—or in spite of—their views, sets about doing that good. For example, physicians since World War II increasingly have realized the need to balance their obligation to be benevolent with their obligation of respectfulness. Specifically, they have come to recognize the importance of respecting the rights of their patients to be informed about, to consent to, and to make decisions about treatments and research participation. They are much more sensitive to these issues than they were before the events of the Holocaust. For a review of pivotal events in this evolution, see Pope and Vasquez (1991, chap. 7, pp. 74-86).

## **Cautions and Caveats**

In commenting upon Jordan and Meara's (1990) discussion of virtue ethics, Miller (1991) raises several cautions. He warns against "accepting virtue ethics without a set of well-defined principles as the sole moral position" (p. 107). The problem as Miller sees it is that human nature is flawed and thus it is easy for us to delude ourselves and distort the concept of virtue. The most chilling example given by Miller of rationalizing abuses of power as virtuous behavior is that of Nazi physicians who explained their actions to be ones of preserving humanity by extinguishing and experimenting upon those who were Jewish, or, in their view, less than human. Closer to our concerns here are less notorious but still harmful behaviors rationalized as

virtuous. Miller lists several of these (e.g., those who extol the "healing power" of sexual intimacies with clients; or those who claim "courage" in verbally abusing the less powerful). More than a few professors have been known to label verbal abuse as a didactic device to "teach" graduate students how to think, discuss, or defend their points of view.

Jordan and Meara (1991) agree that communities can become isolated and members of those communities can convince themselves about the "virtue" or worth of some behavior that many outside the community would consider gravely immoral, such as the "suicide" of many children at the Jonestown massacre. We agree (with both Jordan & Meara 1990, 1991; and Miller, 1991) that understanding and integrating both principle ethics and virtue ethics are important in developing a profession with high moral standards and professionals who engage in admirable ethical behaviors. Jordan and Meara (1991) point out, however, that even understanding and integration do not guarantee ethical actions. Shweder (1994) makes a similar point to Miller's when he observes that exaggerated virtue becomes vice.

These observations by Miller (1991) and Shweder (1994) illustrate several disadvantages of virtue ethics, against which professionals need to guard. First, it is easy to converse only with those who agree with one. An advantage of a virtue ethics perspective on professional behavior is that virtues are community specific. That advantage, however, can quickly turn to a disadvantage if the community is inbred, ethnocentric, or out of touch with other communities. When such insularity occurs, the "virtuous" behavior of the community's professionals or the virtuous character of the profession is at best irrelevant or at worst harmful. Or if the "motivation to professional virtue" is predominantly self-serving, then the virtue itself is flawed or at least not completely appropriate to a profession's service mission.

Professions and professionals must constantly reassess their concept of virtue to see that their perspectives are not self-serving delusions, narrow entrenched positions, or excessive or obsessive practices. As Miller (1991) implies, one way to do this is to evaluate the virtues of a profession in the context of its principles and goals. For example, can excessive prudence in "duty to warn" situations finally become a violation of the principle of fidelity with one's client? Can adherence to the virtue of respectfulness ultimately render meaningless the principle of veracity? Can one be so preoccupied with one's own integrity that providing for the common good or understanding the integrity of another is sacrificed? The principles also can be evaluated in the context of the virtues and goals of the profession. For example, could relentless application of the principle of justice compromise the virtue of benevolence? One can probably not completely eliminate the hazards present

in the cautions we have raised here. But we can go a long way toward reducing the adverse consequences of not being aware of these hazards by integrating principles, virtues, and goals to chart a coherent course for ourselves and the profession. We need to reassess systematically our motives and perspectives and the virtues we encourage. We need, as well, to be open to exploring and even adopting virtues different from our own.

### **Summary of Virtue Ethics**

Virtue ethics focuses on the ideal rather than the obligatory and on the character of the agent or professional rather than on the solving of specific ethical dilemmas. Virtues become meaningful within a context that is both culturally and situationally defined. After MacIntyre (1981), we have presented a context for psychologists that includes psychology as a discipline with several practices whose specific goals or ideals require certain attributes and character traits of its professionals or practitioners. Those attributes are integrated with the personal narrative of the professional and the moral traditions of the communities where the professional resides and those he or she serves. We have proposed five attributes of virtuous agents, which, apart from their ethical importance, are seen as desirable for the competent performance of psychologists and which serve as the basis of character development. We have offered four virtues (the self-regarding virtues of prudence and integrity and the other-regarding virtues of respectfulness and benevolence) that we believe are appropriate to the context we have outlined.

All these virtues are important and interact to form the profile of the virtuous professional. We have tried to show, however, that prudence and integrity are most closely related to the goal of competence, and that respectfulness and benevolence further the goals of developing a psychology sensitive to multiculturalism and providing for the common good. We also have shown that many of the characteristics and virtues of a virtuous agent as described here are contained in the Preamble and six Principles of the current APA code (1992) and are stated as goals expressing the highest ideals of psychology. Ideals have always been encompassed within the APA codes, and although the Preamble and six Principles of the current code have made the notion of ideals more explicit, the present code nonetheless has been criticized for not being as idealistic as it should be (cf. Bersoff, 1994; Keith-Spiegel, 1994a).

A major purpose here has been to raise the profession's awareness of virtue ethics and suggest it as a frame of reference relevant to how we think about ethics and to establish an ethical vision for professional psychology. Although

the list of virtues we have presented is professionally significant, it may be less important than an explicit understanding of the concepts of virtuous persons and a profession's character. Depending on one's goals, arguments can be made for the salience of additional or perhaps even different virtues. Keeping in mind the cautions raised by Miller (1991) and Shweder (1994), it seems particularly important that professionals engage actively in the developing of their own virtues and in the defining and refining of the character of the profession. The attainment and exercise of consensually recognized virtues by professionals will continue to shape the character of the profession.

### **Principles and Virtues: a Rapprochement**

Principle and virtue ethics are related phenomena, and there are several views of the nature of the relationship between the two. Pojman (1990) labels these views thus: (a) pure aretaic ethics (from the Greek *arete*, which he translates as *excellence* or *virtue*), (b) standard deontic ethics, and (c) complementary ethics, also referred to as pluralistic ethics. The first view holds that virtues are primary and have intrinsic value and that the principles are derivative of the virtues. The second view maintains that principles are the heart of morality; virtues are derived from them and are instrumental in accomplishing moral action. The third view, the one we endorse, holds that both virtues and principles have intrinsic value; neither is primary and each balances or serves as a counterpart for the other. We believe that the complementary perspective best characterizes the ethical responsibilities of professionals. Professionals are not only called upon to perform certain actions but to be certain kinds of persons as well. For example, we are called upon to represent certain standards, such as integrity and respect, that exemplify professional excellence.

Although there is debate between the aretaic and deontic perspectives, neither can convincingly demonstrate the primary or derivative status for either virtues or principles. There is substantial agreement (cf. Frankena, 1973), however, that for a complete account of moral behavior, both virtues and principles are needed. The questions of whether virtues are instrumental to right actions or whether principles are derived from virtues is of secondary importance to the ability to understand and integrate both for a more fully developed professional ethical perspective. Frankena offers that he is "inclined to think that principles without traits are impotent and traits without principles are blind" (p. 65). Many of the criticisms of principle ethics come from a non-White perspective and advocate not discarding principles but

going beyond a focus solely on principles or rules of conduct to incorporate virtues and other perspectives into our thinking about applied ethics (cf. Anjos, 1994, for Latin American liberationist; Ratanakul, 1994, for Theravada Buddhist; Sanders, 1994, for African American perspectives).

To introduce virtue ethics into the conversations about professional ethics for psychologists, we have emphasized the distinctions (i.e., obligatory vs. ideal and situation vs. agent) between principles and virtues. As a practical matter, however, in ethical decision making, policy development, or the building of professional character, principles and virtues cannot be separated. Childress (1994, p. 72) states that successive editions of the Beauchamp and Childress book (1979, 1983, 1989, and 1994), although not abandoning a principles-oriented perspective, have become increasingly sensitive to criticisms of principle ethics and "considerably enriched by our increased attention to method, emotions, virtues, care, [and] relationships." Focus on human character, or the questions of who and what we and our ideals are, becomes inextricably linked to our actions. What we do ultimately defines who we become or what the ethical character of our profession becomes. By the same token, our hopes and ideals influence our actions and establish the grounds we use to justify them. As ethical decision making and the development of ethical codes have become more complex, we may need more explicit agreement regarding our ideals and the character and attributes of the profession we aspire to develop. The cultural diversity within the society and within the profession means we can no longer take professional ideals for granted, if we ever could.

Of course, one can agree to the importance of principle and virtue ethics and disagree about the importance of specific virtues and principles. Many in our culture regard autonomy highly, and many of its members are prone to argue in the vein of, "Who is to say what traits or rules are significant for me as a professional, and on what basis is their significance established?" The more important question perhaps is how any list of traits or rules generalizes to the different tasks of psychologists and the various populations with which they interact. The list of virtues and principles that we have proposed is based on our entry point into the conversation that the goals of psychologists (i.e., the context within which they function) are to be competent and to serve the common good. The principles and virtues we suggest need to be debated and evaluated not only in relation to each other but also within this context and across a number of others (e.g., different professional roles, the gender and racial/ethnic identity of professionals, that of clients, students, and research participants, and the continuing changes in professional life in this country).

### Multiculturalism

DuBose et al. (1994) acknowledge the significant contribution that principle ethics, or, to use their term, *principlism*, has made to the development of biomedical ethics as a schema for addressing dilemmas, setting health policy, and improving patient care. DuBose and his colleagues characterize principle ethics as consisting mainly of detailing and applying two major ethical theories ("rule-deontology" and "rule-utilitarianism") and four principles (respect for autonomy, justice, beneficence, and nonmaleficence, discussed above). (Their viewpoint, we believe, is clearly substantiated in the Beauchamp and Childress [1994] presentation and analyses of principles.) Their edited volume, however, is devoted to the examination of the shortcomings of principlism and calls for the articulation and inclusion of other perspectives, including virtue ethics, in the ethical life of health care professionals and the ethical fabric of the health care professions. For a full account and careful elaboration of the shortcomings and proposed remedies, the reader is referred to DuBose et al. (1994); but we sketch here criticisms most relevant to the problems that can result when professionals apply principle ethics to events in a multicultural society. Such criticisms of principlism include (a) the primary place it affords such constructs as autonomy, individual rights, and self-determinism, which comprise the "value complex of individualism," thus deemphasizing the importance of socially or community-oriented virtues or issues; (b) its secularity, which assigns secondary status to "accumulated insights and wisdom of religious traditions" (p. 3); (c) its dependence on rationality and universality to the neglect of emotion and care in special relationships; and, finally, (d) the charge that "it is too Western, too American [read U.S.A.], too white, too middle class" (p. 3). In brief, DuBose and his colleagues have criticized the ethnocentrism of principlism. Distinctive strengths of a number of racial/ethnic minority groups include a more collectivistic rather than individualistic perspective, the centrality of religion and emotions, and special concern for and loyalty to the group and particular units within the group with whom one is closely affiliated (cf. Sanders, 1994). For example, of central importance to many Latinos are religion and family; many African Americans as well—women in particular—find community and strength in extended family and religious traditions. Gudorf (1994), in a feminist critique of principle ethics in biomedicine, argues that principlism in the health care field reinforces an oppressive view of justice and thus excludes the common good or well-being of the most marginalized or least powerful. She also argues that principlism's emphasis on autonomy ignores relational, social, and community aspects of ethics. She suggests that a feminist perspective would substitute individual

integrity for autonomy and make more salient the significance of context in thoughtful ethical reflection.

Pojman (1990) summarizes a similar series of problems with respect to rule-governed ethics raised by virtue ethicists:

(1) they lack a motivational component, (2) they are founded on a theological-legal model that is no longer appropriate, (3) they ignore the spiritual dimension of morality and (4) they overemphasize the principle of autonomy and neglect the communal context of morality. (p. 116)

The fact that virtues are community specific (Jordan & Meara, 1990), although problematic in some ways (cf. Miller, 1991), may make virtue ethics more relevant to furthering ethical discussions in multicultural milieus than principle ethics (cf. Ratanakul, 1994; Sanders, 1994). For instance, Dana (1994), in discussing ways to ensure competent and ethical multicultural assessment practices, suggests that

Virtue ethics can bridge the apparent cultural contradictions in the acceptability of principle ethics which are limited in time, place, and cultural setting. . . . Education for an appreciation of virtue ethics is needed. (p.352)

Perhaps part of the current emphasis on virtues or ideals is a reaction to, or an inevitable balancing of, the sharpened focus on individual rights that has occurred in the United States since World War II. Safeguards to individual rights are critical (and essential to U.S. Constitutional law), but as Audi (1994) observes, even though an emphasis on rights produces ethical behavior, it does not necessarily produce ideal or admirable behavior. He believes that the academic climate is indeed chilly (and certainly not communal) if relationships are dominated by rights rather than cooperative inquiry and mutual respect. A major criticism of rule-governed ethics is that the principle of individual autonomy is overemphasized and the concept of community is deemphasized. When the idea of autonomy is taken to its extreme, each individual is accountable only to self and to his and her own moral code; no one is accountable to a larger community (MacIntyre, 1981). Morality is social (cf. Wilson, 1993) and rooted in the traditions, customs, or practices of community. These communities may be professional, cultural, religious, regional, or other. Many argue (cf. Pojman, 1990) that individuals cannot make moral decisions on rational grounds alone, apart from community standards. Even when one makes an individual decision to disregard or violate a standard of one's community, an evaluation of the communal perspective is part of the decision-making process. The process is similar to the Beauchamp and Childress (1994) explanation described above of how one balances principles. Although a specific community perspective may not

prevail in a situation, it is taken into account before a decision is made or a policy is established. These criticisms and characteristics of principlism demonstrate to us that professionals, however competent, are not prepared to grapple with ethical concerns in a multicultural milieu if they are proficient only in principle ethics.

Ethnocentrism in the moral domain, however, is a concern that applies not only to principlism. Edel, Flower, and O'Connor (1994) speak of the problems associated with assuming that the distinctive characteristics of one morality are the distinctive characteristics of any morality. For example, in articulating "different kinds of rules and their significance," these authors contrast a Western view of Kant's categorical imperative ("it is never permissible to lie" [even to someone who is threatening murder, has a weapon, and asks if the intended victim is in your house]) with Ladd's (1957, as reported in Edel et al.) investigation of Navaho ethics using this Kantian dilemma or situation. Ladd posed this situation to a Navaho and asked a series of questions as to whether the respondent would tell the truth or lie with respect to the whereabouts of the announced victim. It was clear from the answers given (e.g., reasoning with the potential murderer about the consequences of the action, such as jail) that the Navaho structured the problem as one of how to save a life rather than (as Kant did) a dilemma between truth telling and lying. In addition, it seemed important to save the life of the potential murderer as well. When Ladd asked, "What would you do if the potential murderer threatened your life if you didn't tell the whereabouts of the intended victim?" the Navaho replied he would just have to take the gun away. Among the reasons for doing so: "That's the only thing that's good for him" [the potential murderer] (Ladd, p. 378, cited in Edel et al., p. 260).

Edel et al., (1994) provide us with another example. They observe that those of us who share a Western perspective are often unaware of the clear distinctions we draw between right and wrong. From such a perspective, a satisfactory solution to a moral question is achieved by being able to decide definitely who is right and who is wrong. They compare this view with one such as found in some North African Mediterranean cultures, in which the goal or ideal is not to determine who is right and who is wrong but to preserve the honor of the participants. From such a perspective, a satisfying solution would be a compromise that both sides could accept with honor. Cultural differences with respect to moral rules or ideals occur on multiple levels as the two examples illustrate. In the first, we see that the differences between Western and Navaho viewpoints stem from the conception of the problem; in the second, both groups may define the situation as a moral conflict but have very different views regarding the morality of the solution.

Simply being proficient in virtue ethics, however, does not change the fact that the task of integrating principle ethics, virtue ethics, and multiculturalism is a difficult one. This seems especially so when we acknowledge explicitly several features of what we have been about here—features that could make our approach to the characteristics of virtuous agents and the virtues we have selected much less meaningful for professionals in a multicultural society than they are from the perspective of U.S. European Americans. These features are that (a) the tradition in which we have established the meaning of virtue and in which we have argued against its total relativity is a tradition rooted in Western civilization; (b) the profession of psychology and all its practices are based on an individualistic model of achievement; (c) the entrepreneurial ethic (i.e., the logic of commerce, [Jennings, Callahan, & Wolf, 1987] and the commerce of professional psychology [Koocher, 1994]) pervades much of professional life, including psychology. In addition, the five characteristics or assumptions that we presented as a basis for the development of a virtuous professional rest upon an agentic, self-determined view of human beings, part of what DuBose et al., (1994) call the “value complex of individualism.” What then gives us warrant to suggest that virtue ethics by itself or in combination with principle ethics provides any more guidance than principle ethics alone in the development of a profession that is sensitive to issues raised by multiculturalism?

One could argue that psychologists for some time now have been addressing issues of gender and ethnicity and that a virtue ethics perspective is superfluous to this task. As evidence for this argument, one need only to look at a small sample of the “early” work of well-known scholars in counseling psychology (e.g., Atkinson, 1983; Birk & Tanney, 1976; Casas, 1984; Fitzgerald & Harmon, 1973; Helms, 1984; Pedersen, 1978, 1985; D. W. Sue & D. Sue, 1977; D. W. Sue, 1978, 1980; Sue & Morishima, 1982) and the later work of these scholars and others (e.g., LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990; Leong, 1986, 1995; Ponterotto, 1988; Ponterotto & Casas, 1987; Ridley, 1989; Ridley, Mendoza, & Kanitz, 1994). The ethical ramifications of multiculturalism are at least implicit and often explicit in these and other similar works. Nor, one might argue, is the ethics code, albeit with some criticism (Payton, 1994), silent on these matters. To cite just one example here: Psychologists are expected to act with sensitivity and respect toward others (see, for example, Principle D, Respect of People’s Rights and Dignity, of the current APA code [1992]).

Virtue ethics, like principle ethics, can differ across cultures. Different ethnic and/or racial groups might, for instance, prize virtues different from the ones presented here or rate the importance of the virtues highlighted here

(with prudence as the cornerstone) differently. Conceivably, people from some cultures might value justice as a virtue (discussed here not as a virtue but as a principle) or might give priority to respectfulness over prudence. Nevertheless, we believe that virtue ethics provides a useful multicultural framework for several reasons. First, the stating of virtues fosters self- and other-awareness by making explicit what is often implicit. Such awareness could reduce ethnocentrism and increase cross-cultural understanding. Second, explicit statement of virtues provides a frame of reference for asking whether and how other cultures are similar or different. Cultures may differ in the virtues they espouse, in the relative importance placed on different virtues, or in the ways particular virtues such as prudence, integrity, respectfulness, and benevolence are defined and expressed in the common-sense practices of everyday life. Third, once questions about other virtues or ways of being virtuous are considered, we can evaluate what virtues (if any) are appropriate for the profession in this time and place and decide if and how we might want to develop them. Finally, we have noted several examples from the multicultural literature that either explicitly or implicitly call for the inclusion of virtue or virtue ethics to ensure ethical and competent behavior in professional cross-cultural interactions (cf. Anjos, 1994; Dana, 1994; Darou et al., 1993; Ratanakul, 1994; Sanders, 1994). Virtues or a discussion of them are not confined to Western cultures.

Each culture provides its members with characteristic ways of thinking about the world (including what constitutes virtuous behavior). Often, however, these cultural beliefs are not only implicit and unexamined but are also used as standards against which to judge others who behave differently (e.g., Triandis, 1990). Explicit statement of virtue ethics enables one to become self- and other-aware, to examine one's own beliefs, and to contrast them with the beliefs of others. Such awareness can increase understanding that one's own way of thinking, behaving, or believing is only one among many possibilities. In other words, self- and other-awareness can enhance tolerance and, perhaps, reduce negative judgments of those who are different.

Explicitness about the virtues considered important in the professional culture of North American psychology enables us to ask how other cultures served by psychology are similar or dissimilar. For example, stating that for many psychologists prudence is a virtue enables us to ask such questions as, "Is prudence important universally?" "Is prudence as important in other cultures as it is in this one?" "What is the role of prudence in professional life?" Asking these types of questions also increases self- and other-awareness. Explicitness about the virtues also allows a slightly different question: "If prudence is a virtue in a given culture, how is it defined and

manifested?" "What behaviors enable one to infer that an actor is prudent?" Each of the virtues described here might take different cultural manifestations. For example, in a society wherein value is placed on singular achievement, prudence might be expressed in self-interested terms such as staying in school so that one can get ahead, integrity as being true to oneself by speaking one's mind, respectfulness as respecting others' autonomy, and benevolence as noblesse oblige. In a culture in which singularizing oneself through individual achievement is less valued, prudence might be expressed as helping a member of one's extended family financially so that he or she can stay in school, integrity as not disagreeing openly and thus maintaining group harmony, respectfulness as deferring to and/or carefully considering the opinions of important others, and benevolence as working reciprocally for common goals.

As we have discussed above (cf. Darou et al., 1993; Ratanakul, 1994; Sanders, 1994), virtues seem important in a number of cultures different from middle-class White U.S. culture, but we know little about how virtues or their manifestations differ across cultures. We, therefore, offer the following speculative example about how explicit consideration of virtues can lead to hypotheses about cross-cultural differences in their manifestation. The supreme ethical standard for Japanese is the survival of the group. Specific cultural characteristics such as food, dress, language, or religion can, therefore, be sacrificed for the good of the group (O'Brien & Fugita, 1991). Thus Japanese immigrants may have displayed prudence by incorporating elements of American culture (e.g., Protestant beliefs) into their daily lives so that the group could survive.

The example given above is, as we have noted, speculative. Clearly, more research and cross cultural discussion are needed to determine the accuracy of our description of Japanese Americans specifically and the cross-cultural utility of virtue ethics generally. Such cross-cultural encounters require participants to practice respectfulness, however. Indeed, respectfulness practiced cross culturally may also demand that we consider adopting others' virtues (cf. Sanders, 1994), or changing how we express the four virtues described in this paper. In other words, respectful cross-cultural behavior means at least to consider changing our own culture. Thus exploration of virtue ethics across different cultures and learning from professional colleagues who are racially and ethnically diverse may produce changes in our understanding and practice of professional virtues. Whether the professional character of psychology is affirming of multiculturalism and, in turn, is significantly shaped by it seems an ultimate criterion for determining the meaningfulness of virtue ethics for psychology and other professions.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS

### Research

Empirical verification of ethical constructs (i.e., establishing their construct or criterion-related validity) is often not as convincing as would be preferred by those professionals who make decisions, set policy, or develop ethical standards for their professions. This is a particularly troubling state of affairs for psychologists who seek knowledge through empirical investigations that are subject to rigorous standards of design and measurement. "Hard-headed" social scientists are not assured even when such respected ethicists as Beauchamp and Childress (1994) observe that ethics is not a demonstrative science or when a respected philosopher of science-psychology (e.g., Rychlak, 1968) emphasizes both the dialectical and demonstrative tradition of the discipline. To date, there is little empirical work with respect to principle or virtue ethics.

Psychology does, however, through the work of Kohlberg (1984) and others (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg et al., 1983; Rest, 1983, 1984, 1986), have a tradition of empirical research with respect to moral development or moral reasoning. The focus of this work, however, is not the ethical behavior of professionals. Nevertheless, summary comments about this work are warranted, because it provides a foundation for thinking about ethics research in psychological terms and provides four explicit links to the empirical investigation of professional ethics. First, the research in the Kohlberg-Gilligan tradition (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Kohlberg et al., 1983; Rest, 1983, 1984, 1986) enables us to understand when we are exploring descriptive ethics (the "what is") and when the normative (the "what ought to be"). Second, as Punzo and Meara (1993) note, Kohlberg's (1984) work focuses on the other-regarding virtue or principle of justice, and Gilligan's (1982) ethics of care foreshadows the inclusion of self-regarding virtues (e.g., integrity) in theory, research, and everyday ethical practice. Thus Gilligan's work paves the way for models of ethical behavior (both descriptive and normative) that include both principles and virtues. Third, and despite its difficulties, Gilligan's work has emphasized for ethics research alternative philosophies and methods of science beyond logical positivism. Finally, Rest, building on the work of Kohlberg (1984) has developed a Four-Component model of moral behavior that (a) integrates cognition and affect, (b) relies on findings from the developmental, social, and personality literature of psychology, and (c) sets forth processes that are empirically refutable and can be linked to concepts from both principle and virtue ethics. We turn now to considering these connections in more detail.

A systematic research program in professional ethics could be developed in several ways. Whatever direction one takes, however, one needs to be aware of the similarities, contrasts, and differences between the psychology of morality (e.g., Kohlberg et al., 1983; Gilligan, 1982; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Rest, 1986) and the constructs from professional ethics, such as the concepts of principle and virtue ethics developed here. In particular, we think it would be helpful for the profession to develop research that could inform how ethics codes are written and how professional organizations, such as the APA, might proceed on policy issues for which we have little empirical data. Typically, scholarship in professional ethics is applied and normative (i.e., it is more concerned with what ought to be and with applying that "ought" to professional life rather than describing "what is"). The work of Kohlberg, Gilligan (1982), and Rest in moral reasoning or development could be best characterized as descriptive ethics—that is, explaining "what is." Descriptive ethics (what is) can be an important part of determining the normative ethics (what ought to be). Psychology, perhaps more than any other profession, has fostered an interaction between what is and what ought to be. In developing the first APA code, the committee asked psychologists to submit actual descriptions of situations in their professional activities that required ethical decisions; these responses were classified and became the basis for the first *Ethical Standards* of the association (Hobbs, 1948; APA, 1953). In other words, the committee assessed the "what is" in determining the "what ought to be." There have been questions raised (cf. Payton, 1994) with respect to why this same approach was not followed with the revision procedures that resulted in the current APA code.

As with judging the worth of agents, claiming to research the "ought" might be an uncomfortable concept for many psychologists. As Haslam and Baron (1994) point out, however, psychologists are proscriptive in many realms of policy making, and they urge us to be more explicit about (and, we would add, more aware of) this fact. Sometimes, policies of the APA with respect to social policy are based on data and sometimes on judgment. (cf., for example, Prilleltensky, 1994). Research questions related to ethics are often framed with an implied, if not an explicit "ought" (cf., for example, Welfel & Lipsitz's [1984] cogent review of such research). What we argue here is that the empirical literature, in researching professional ethics for psychologists, needs to emanate from a framework that investigates both the "is" and the "ought," and we need to be clear about when we are doing which. Furthermore, we must recognize how limited our empirical (not necessarily rational, logical, or philosophical) information really is in this arena.

The second of our four links needs little elaboration here. Punzo and Meara (1993) believe that Gilligan's (1982) work represented a departure in how

moral development was conceptualized in the Western tradition. She suggested other possibilities, such as that women's view of morality was "in a different voice"; that morality consisted of processes other than the principle of justice; that moral judgment was not necessarily hierarchical; and that actual, not hypothetical, dilemma was a stronger method of assessment. The implication was that qualities (e.g., the quality of voice) of individuals were as important as a certain kind of stage-ordered reasoning. The self was more prominent in conceptualizing morality. That the ideas of individual qualities and the importance of self were brought to psychology in the context of morality can be viewed as a link to applying the concept of virtue, in particular self-regarding virtue(s), to professional ethics.

Gilligan's (1982) work also suggested possibilities for different methods for investigating morality. Alternative methodologies (see, e.g., Hoshmand, 1989; Howard, 1986) could be fruitful in empirical investigations of professional ethics. The research on moral development conducted from a qualitative perspective (e.g., Gilligan) provides a beginning, although questions of internal and external validity can be raised (c.f. Colby & Damon, 1983). As an example of how other methodologies might be used to establish construct and criterion-related validity, let us look at later qualitative work in this vein (e.g., Brown & Gilligan, 1992). From our perspective, this work is informative and intuitively appealing and thus warrants an open-minded critical evaluation. Well-controlled replications would seem to be in order, however, before one could have confidence in its generalizability. For example, one might envision analyzing such data as the verbal accounts collected by Brown and Gilligan through a more systematically organized methodology of narrative (cf. Howard, 1986; Howard, Maerlender, Myers, & Curtin, 1992). For instance, Howard and his colleagues demonstrated the effectiveness of autobiography as part of a multitrait, multimethod methodology in establishing the validity of two important counseling constructs: assertiveness and trustworthiness. We see this work as particularly appropriate in investigating virtues and establishing their validity.

We think the work of Rest (cf., for example, 1983, 1984, 1986) provides significant potential for research in professional ethics, specifically, our conception of the integration of principle and virtue ethics. Conceptual linkages have already been made between his work and ethics education (cf., for example, Welfel & Kitchener, 1992), including the training of counseling psychologists (Rest, 1984). Rest (1983) characterizes morality as standards that govern human cooperation, in particular the distribution of rights, duties, and benefits. His view is akin to that of Wilson (1993), who views the moral sense as basically social. In his Four-Component Model of moral behavior, each component links cognitive and affective aspects of a psychological

process or set of processes. He hypothesizes that for a moral action to occur the actor has to engage in both the cognitive and affective aspects of each of the processes. Morality from this perspective represents a balancing of individual rights and the common good. The emphasis on rights, duties, and benefits and the balancing of the individual and social is reminiscent of the characteristics of principlism or principle ethics. In fact, Welfel and Kitchener (see especially Kitchener, 1992; Vasquez, 1992; Welfel, 1992) organize their agenda for ethics education in the 1990s around the Rest Four-Component model and the Kitchener (1984) adaptation of the Beauchamp and Childress (1983, 1989) ethical principles. Kitchener (1992) states that the Rest model is not only a good way to organize the empirical literature with respect to ethics education but also provides a good model for the training itself. The psychological processes in the Rest model are similar to ones we believe to be important in the development of virtue. We now turn to a brief explanation of the Rest model, and make explicit some of the links we see in the Four-Component model and virtue ethics. These links suggest features of the model that could serve as a basis or an entree for the development of research in the area of professional ethics (both principle and virtue) that might approximate the research agenda suggested by Welfel and Lipsitz (1984).

Component 1 of Rest's (1983, 1984, 1986) Four-Component (psychological processes) Model of moral behavior has sometimes been referred to as moral sensitivity and involves empathy. In its simplest form, it means interpreting the situation as a moral one, understanding who is affected by the situation, what courses of action are available, and how each course of action will affect others in a given situation. Discernment is involved in Component 1 and, in addition, one needs empathic skills. We believe that both of these characteristics are essential for the development of virtuous agents (see *Characterizing Virtue Ethics* above).

Component 2 involves moral reasoning. Based on his research with the Defining Issues Test (DIT; Rest, 1975, 1979), Rest (1986) reinterprets the Kohlberg six-stage, cognitive developmental approach to moral development as "how people arrive at judgments of which course of action in a social situation is morally right or wrong" (p. 179). In this component, he links social cooperation and justice and states that the six stages of moral reasoning can be viewed as a primary reflection of an individual's perception of how social cooperation can be organized (e.g., favor for favor, or ideals for constructing a society). Welfel and Kitchener (1992) describe this stage as deciding "which course of action is just, right, or fair" (p. 179). One has recourse to codes of ethics, as well as the philosophy and principles behind the rules in the code. Moral reasoning appears also to depend on one's capacity to analyze theoretically (and, we would argue, practically) what is

at stake—what the issues are and how to decide conflicts. Moreover, principle ethics is of assistance here in providing a way to specify the issues involved and to conceptualize ethical conflicts. Discernment and a developed sense of prudence are part of one's capacity to analyze what is "fair or just" and, we would add, beneficent or respectful or whatever virtue or principle a particular professional thinks is relevant to the situation. Rest (1986), we believe, would concur with our adding guidelines beyond justice or fairness, because he states that concepts other than justice (e.g., political or religious ideals) are influential in how individuals make moral judgments; and people differ in the weight they attach to justice in reaching their moral judgments.

Component 3 is a question of giving priority to ethical reasons or courses of action when there are other compelling reasons for acting otherwise. Welfel and Kitchener (1992) use the example of how an ethical course of action (confronting a colleague about unethical behavior) could compete with a social desire to have smooth relationships or avoid awkward or unpleasant encounters. Rest (1983) discusses (and 1986, in briefer form, mentions) a number of theories that would motivate one to choose the moral or ethical alternative, including the concern for self-integrity and one's identity as a moral agent, or, to use our terminology, as a virtuous professional. Whatever the reason for the motivation to perform the ethical act, we see a parallel between this component and the first characteristic we listed for a virtuous agent, that is, one who is motivated to do what is good.

Rest (1986) claims many interconnections between cognition and affect for Component 3. He states that

one obvious one is that imagining a desired goal or outcome implies having some sort of cognitive representation of it, and *desiring* it implies having positive affect toward it. (pp. 14-15)

We see a link here between the processes of Component 3 and the ones we describe below, related to cognitive components of ethics education with the Ideal problem solver as model (Bransford & Stein, 1993), and affective and personalization components of ethics instruction using a possible selves model (Markus & Nurius, 1986).

Component 4 involves executing or implementing one's plan of ethical action. Rest (1986) refers to this as ego strength; we might refer to it as self-regulation or implementing the fact that one is a virtuous agent or professional. The correspondence between intentions and actions is often far from perfect. Sometimes the ethical action is performed but, in the face of adversity, is not maintained.

These four components of moral behavior—sensitivity, reasoning, deciding, and implementing—characterize psychological processes well repre-

sented in the theoretical and empirical literature of our discipline. Some instrumentation (cf. Rest, 1979) is available that could be applied or adapted to the professional ethical arena. We have suggested how aspects of the four components relate to our conceptions of virtue ethics and the conceptions of principle ethics we have discussed here. Further, Rest (1986) presents an agenda for research on the model compatible with our views of what needs to be investigated. For example, he suggests (a) developing instrumentation for actual, not hypothetical, situations, (b) focusing on instrumentation for developing Components 3 and 4, (c) studying the motivational aspects of the processes, (d) studying the pattern and interactions of all four components and their ability to predict targeted ethical behaviors, (e) improving the methodology for evaluating educational interventions, and (f) investigating cultural differences.

Rest's work appeals to us for a number of reasons; in particular, it is responsive to some of the varied criticisms of Kohlberg's work (cf., for example, Kohlberg et al., 1983). For example, Kohlberg's work has been criticized for being gender biased, for focusing on one overarching principle, the construct of justice or justice reasoning, and, despite claims to the contrary, for being ethnocentric and thus unable to accommodate multicultural perspectives. Rest (1983, 1984, 1986) judiciously moderates the claims of cross-cultural generalization for cognitive development approaches to morality, such as his own and Kohlberg's. He suggests that the DIT (Rest, 1975, 1979) and the Kohlberg coding scheme for evaluating moral reasoning in dilemma solution cannot be translated simply to other cultures. He states that these measures are biased against finding concepts or processes of moral reasoning other than those constructs (i.e., justice reasoning) the instruments were designed to measure. Rest (1986) is careful to argue that

whether or not there is only one set of underlying structures with regard to moral judgment development . . . remains an empirical question. (p. 181)

Rest (1986) also reports that in studies of moral reasoning with the DIT, educational level is a much better predictor of one's level of moral reasoning than is gender. Rest's understanding of cultural perspectives and data with respect to gender and educational level seem important to us. Issues related to multiculturalism have been reviewed above but, to date, we have little information about gender except for information regarding sexual intimacies (Holroyd & Brodsky, 1980; Pope, Tabachnick, & Keith-Spiegel, 1987) and nonerotic touch (Holub & Lee, 1990) with clients. The frequency for such activities seems highest when the professional client pair consists of male therapists and female clients. Gilligan (1982) and Kohlberg et al., (1983) made gender a central, albeit controversial and unresolved, issue in moral

development. Gudorf's (1994) thoughtful feminist critique of principle ethics and other feminist perspectives (cf. Feminist Therapy Institute, 1990; Brooks & Forrest, 1994; Worrell & Remer, 1992) notwithstanding, we have no reason to believe that there are differences between the genders with respect to the application of the principles or the development of the virtues we have suggested.

New directions for research in professional ethics seem overdue. Welfel and Lipsitz (1984) accomplished a careful, thoughtful analysis of the research related to the ethical behavior of professional psychologists (see also Welfel, 1992). Although sympathetic to the problems of such research, they concluded that we should be skeptical about what had been accomplished to that date. They observed that the profession needs to improve both the quantity and the quality of empirical research in professional ethics. They registered concern about the use of fairly unsophisticated research designs, although acknowledging the difficulties in assessing constructs as complicated as ethical decision making. They recommended that researchers broaden the kinds of problems they study, observing that the bulk of the work had focused on a rather narrow range of decision making confined to the relation between a chosen course of action and compliance with some provision of an ethical code. They also suggested changing the focus from the time-honored question of why unethical behavior occurs to a far more common (and, we would add, far more significant) question for the profession of why ethical behavior occurs. They additionally made a strong case for ethics researchers to integrate the findings from other areas of psychological research such as personality, developmental, social, and particularly, the work on moral development and reasoning. They professed optimism about the future, however, stating that research in this arena was in its initial stages but that now,

necessary resources are present: adequate research models, better conceptualizations of ethical decision making, and the full support of the professional organizations to propel research in ethical behavior into its next level of development. (p. 40)

We share Welfel and Lipsitz's (1984) skepticism and believe their criticisms of the research and their recommended research directions are sound. The results of empirical work in professional ethics over the last 10 years have not supported the optimistic note that ended their review, however. Since the Welfel and Lipsitz work appeared in 1984, more resources have been developed. For example, recent scholarship has focused on alternative research paradigms (Hoshmand, 1989; Howard, 1986) and their associated assumptions and methodological implications, and has proposed an expanded view of constructs to be empirically explored (e.g., volition or agency,

Howard and Conway, 1986, 1987). Rest (1986) has published his integrative work, which (a) drew on data from over 500 empirical studies that used the DIT (Rest, 1975, 1979), (b) integrated social, intrapsychic, and developmental roots of morality, (c) presented well-established empirical findings with respect to moral reasoning as well as future directions for research, and (d) articulated theoretical advances in his four processes (Four-Component) model of moral action. In addition, the processes of ethical decision making have been more clearly articulated in the domain of principle ethics with the work of, for example, Canon, 1992; Goodyear, et al., 1992; Kitchener, 1984, 1992; Meara and Schmidt, 1991; Patton and Meara, 1992; Vasquez, 1992; Welfel, 1992. Several authors (e.g., Kitchener, 1992; Welfel & Kitchener, 1992; Rest, 1984; Welfel, 1992) have set the stage for the theoretical integration of the Rest (1983, 1984, 1986) Four-Component Model and the Kitchener (1984) adaptation of principle ethics for both research and education in professional ethics. Finally, as judged by all the consultation and discussion about revising the APA (1992) ethics code, continued commenting on it (e.g., Keith-Spiegel, 1994b), the development of other ethical documents, the many surveys of ethical practices (e.g., Pope & Vetter, 1992; Tabachnick, Keith-Spiegel, & Pope, 1991), and journal pages devoted to ethics, it seems safe to say that professional organizations have indeed sponsored and given full support to improving ethical knowledge and research.

Although the resources are here, we believe they have not as yet (to use Welfel and Lipsitz's [1984] words) propelled research in ethical behavior into its next level of development. We believe, as they did 10 years ago, that the profession needs to achieve such a "propulsion of research," and we have set forth some ideas that counseling psychologists and others might use to go about affecting it.

We end this section by summarizing two exploratory research projects: one related to principle ethics (Shea, 1991, 1993) and the other related to virtue ethics (Punzo, 1993). Shea conducted several exploratory studies to determine whether he could establish empirically the use of the ethical principles of respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, justice, fidelity, and veracity by college students. Several approaches were used, and the relationships of gender, gender role identity, and impression management with the ethical principles were considered. The approaches included (a) rating the acceptability of brief (one sentence) dilemmas; (b) choosing between one of two principles in a forced-choice format, in which each one is contrasted with each of the others; and (c) asking subjects to provide solutions and to choose among "equally compelling rationales" for more elaborate or longer

(one or two paragraphs) dilemmas. The latter two approaches were better measures than the first.

When ethical dilemmas were presented in the context of equally compelling rationales, respect for autonomy was considered more important than either justice or fidelity, and justice more important than fidelity. However, when asked directly about the principles out of the context of a dilemma, a different hierarchy emerged. Beneficence was the most important, nonmaleficence was second in importance, followed by justice, veracity, and fidelity, which were seen as equally important, and, finally, respect for autonomy was considered the least important. There were no effects for gender or impression management. There were minimal effects for gender role identity. Regardless of gender, participants who had a more traditional view of marital relationships had a lower score on respect for autonomy in the respect for autonomy/ fidelity comparison; the more androgynous participants had higher scores. Shea (1993) interprets these results as promising for the empirical study of principle ethics. The principles do seem to be constructs that subjects can distinguish from one another and that they place in hierarchies that can differ depending on the context. Further, he suggests that hierarchical levels of ethical reasoning may exist within the principle level of the Beauchamp and Childress (1994) and Kitchener (1984) scheme for conceptualizing critical ethical judgments as well as between levels. The results do not support, for college age participants at least, gender differences in principle ethics. Shea is cautious in his interpretations, and we share that caution; nonetheless, the work shows promise for the development of instrumentation for principle ethics.

A difficult question for psychology has been finding a means to establish empirical links between moral cognition and moral action. To state the question another way, how does one move from Component 3 to Component 4 in Rest's (1986) model? Using action identification theory (Vallacher & Wegner, 1985), Punzo (1993) addressed this question from a virtue ethics perspective. Action identification theory has been developed and empirically investigated in nonmoral domains. The theory posits that a crucial link between what we think and what we do can be found in how we identify or label an action. High-level identification contains a higher level of conceptual understanding and might include information about the consequences or implications of the action. Low-level identification emphasizes the details of the action and is more concrete or mechanical. Depending on one's skill level and the complexity of the task, different levels of identification can be optimal. Those who are considered masters at a task, however, generally sustain a high level of identification over time (see Punzo and Vallacher & Wegner for a more complete explanation). In testing their theory, Vallacher

and Wegner developed the Behavior Identification Form (BIF), which asks subjects to identify 25 common everyday actions (for example, the subjects would be asked to identify the activity of "making a list" either as "getting organized" or "writing things down"). Punzo, using a format similar to the BIF, created a Moral Agency Scale (MAS), which consisted of two subscales, one for self-regarding virtues and one for other-regarding virtues.

Punzo (1993) entered the BIF and then the appropriate subscale of the MAS into regression equations. The criteria for the first regression were measures of competent performance in the other-regarding moral domain and in nonmoral action proficiency. The criteria for the second were measures of performance in the self-regarding moral domain and in nonmoral action proficiency. Results indicated that the BIF significantly predicted other-regarding morality but not self-regarding morality. The other-regarding scale of the MAS did not add to the prediction of other-regarding morality; the self-regarding scale of the MAS did approach significance in predicting self-regarding morality. Punzo's results are inconclusive and he was not able to establish the construct validity of the MAS. Nonetheless, we believe that action identification theory coupled with revision of the MAS shows promise for the investigation of virtue ethics.

We have come to several conclusions based on these thoughts about research. We believe that it would be fruitful to develop programs of research that focus on ethics of professional life and policy setting with respect to issues in which there are little empirical data. We think it is important to establish the construct validity of virtues and principles and attend to matters of criterion-related validity. The research questions need to be carefully framed and sensitive in regard to both the context of the profession and its goals and the context of the communities that the profession serves and from which professionals come. Moral action appears to be a multifaceted process that includes cognition, affect, and behavior and their interactions. Within this matrix of complex processes and environments, it seems unreasonable to have narrow or single-minded definitions of "the ethical," for example, to claim that the other-regarding virtue of justice can explain or encompass most of the psychology of morality. We cannot assume or try to make multicultural data fit into rigid preconceived schemes. We need to study how the definition of the ethical emerges from the commonsense (cf. Pepinsky, 1994) standards of communities and how, if at all, different cultures experience and interpret the principles and virtues we put forward for study. In empirically establishing construct and criterion-related validity for principle and virtue ethics, we can profit from psychology's tradition of research in moral development and build upon the thinking of Kitchener (1984, 1992), Rest (1986), and Welfel (1992). Researchers in the arena of professional ethics need not only

to establish validity for their constructs but also to develop refutable questions, programmatic inquiry, and methodology appropriate to the task.

## **Instruction**

Education in professional ethics, which is required in all APA-accredited programs (APA, 1986), is often accomplished through a specialized seminar and is reinforced in practicum and research courses and during internship training. Such instruction is usually competent and thorough, although its effectiveness in promoting "multicultural professionalism" (cf., for example, Ridley et al., 1994) can be questioned. As noted above, we believe that including virtue ethics within existing ethical and professional education can improve training for a multicultural society. Below, we give two general recommendations that we believe would help to produce professionals who are knowledgeable, self- and other-aware and self-regulating, who are able to generalize their knowledge and skills across a variety of settings, and who are able to foster character development in themselves and possibly in others. In addition, we describe two specific instructional metaphors that we think would stimulate students' discussions and thoughts about principle and virtue ethics.

The first general recommendation is to integrate ethics instruction throughout the curriculum, building upon the structure and information provided in a specialized course. A specialized course in ethics allows in-depth consideration of issues, but its relative compartmentalization within the curriculum can lead to inert knowledge (Whitehead, 1929), or knowledge that can be recalled when explicitly requested but is not spontaneously applied to solve novel problems. Given that one goal of ethics instruction is to develop professionals who can recognize and deal with ethical dilemmas and constructs that they may not have encountered previously, techniques are needed to encourage generalization of knowledge. Instruction that includes multiple exemplars (e.g., discussion of ethical issues and the development of meaningful ethical tasks or assignments in a variety of classes with different professors) is more likely to result in generalization. Although discussion of ethical issues in multiple classes is an important aspect of integrating ethics instruction throughout the curriculum, our recommendation is actually broader. We would argue that ethics instruction must engage and nurture students' intellects, social sensibilities, and emotional understandings. Discernment, tolerance for ambiguity, self- and other-awareness, and perspective taking, for example, are all valued characteristics of psychologists and virtuous agents. Making explicit the connections between characteristics

desirable in scientist-practitioners and virtuous agents can make ethics education more sensible and less rule bound.

The second general recommendation is to employ what has been called "scaffolded instruction" (Day, Cordon, & Kerwin, 1989; Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976; Wood, Wood, & Middleton, 1978). In scaffolded instruction, teachers initially bear most of the responsibility for discovering problems, presenting issues, explaining, clarifying, questioning, and so forth, although the learner participates as much as he or she is able. As the learner develops competence, however, responsibility, or control, gradually shifts to the learner. This type of instruction, like instruction that includes multiple exemplars, facilitates generalization (Day & Cordon, 1993). In addition, such instruction represents a model of professional behavior for the learner. Teachers who use scaffolded instruction must exercise discernment, tolerate ambiguity, possess both self-awareness and social sensitivity, and be able to entertain other perspectives. Learners taught through scaffolded instruction acquire generalizable content knowledge and witness the manifestation of valued characteristics of the profession (and professionals who are virtuous agents) in action. Ideally, such students will later employ scaffolded instruction to guide the development of others.

Although these two general recommendations are intended to promote generalization and provide models of professional behavior, the two specific instructional metaphors are included as practical techniques for engaging students in dialogue. The first metaphor is the Ideal problem solver (Bransford & Stein, 1993). The steps of Ideal problem solving are first, to identify problems and opportunities; second, to define goals; third, to explore possible strategies; fourth, to anticipate outcomes and act; and fifth, to look back and learn. Applied to ethics education, Ideal problem solving might mean teaching students the five steps named above (for numerous exercises for teaching each of these steps, see Bransford & Stein) and asking students to practice each of these steps with issues related to ethical dilemmas, policy setting, or character development.

We suggest the Ideal problem solver for two reasons. First, the Ideal problem-solver model is based on extensive research in cognitive psychology, documenting good reasoning skills. Second (and more important for our purposes), each of the steps is necessary in ethical thought. As we have argued, virtuous agents must exercise discernment, that is, they must be able to identify which problems and opportunities or goals for the profession are ethical in nature and define them as such. They also explore strategies for dealing with the question at hand and anticipate the consequences of enacting different strategies. Finally, they are self-regulating in that they review the

results of their actions. Thus the Ideal problem solver provides a tool for explaining the steps of good problem solving in general and ethical problem solving, planning, and goal setting in particular.

Although the Ideal problem solver is primarily a means for conveying to students some of the intellectual aspects of becoming a virtuous agent (although identifying problems and opportunities can have an affective component), the second instructional metaphor, possible selves, can be an instructional tool for engaging students' affect. Possible selves (Markus & Nurius, 1986) are images of oneself as one hopes, expects, and fears being in the future. Possible selves can be more or less elaborated and vivid; they often include the reactions of others; and they can carry more or less affect (Markus & Nurius). An elaborate, vivid, and affect-laden possible self can motivate and guide present behavior. For example, a hoped-for image of oneself as a respectful professional might include such specific behaviors as asking others' opinions; listening carefully to what others say and suspending "rash judgments" about them; envisioning others' reactions to these behaviors, such as trusting and liking; and imagining one's own feelings of self-satisfaction and pleasure. Similarly, a feared image of oneself being unethical (e.g., practicing insurance fraud by placing incorrect diagnoses on insurance forms) includes others' reactions should they find out (e.g., shock, disapproval) and one's own feelings (e.g., shame). These images can then provide a guide for present behavior. The idea of possible selves is intuitively appealing and easily understood; even children readily comprehend the idea (e.g., Day, Borkowski, Punzo, & Howsepian, 1994). These characteristics lead us to believe that ethics instruction that includes discussion and elaboration of possible selves (e.g., a personalized profile of one's virtuous, hoped-for, possible self) will enable teachers and students to integrate intellectual, social, and affective aspects of virtue.

In summary, we believe the goal of professional education is to assist students to become the kind of professionals that (a) they would like to be, (b) the profession idealizes or aspires to educate, and (c) diverse communities find competent, beneficial, and trustworthy. To help achieve this goal, we recommend that ethics instruction be integrated across the curriculum and into students' intellectual, social, and emotional experiences. In addition, we think that ethics instruction should allow the student to participate in the ethical responsibilities of decision making, policy setting, and character development (of themselves and the profession) as fully as they are able, while providing a scaffold whereby teachers complete (and hence model and teach) aspects of these tasks that are currently beyond the learner's competence. Both of these general recommendations are intended to foster students' independence and ability to generalize their knowledge. We also suggest two

practical strategies for implementing ethics instruction: the Ideal problem solver and possible selves. Both of these strategies foster dialogue and help make concrete for students the affective, cognitive, and social objectives of ethics instruction.

## SUMMARY

Communities grant professional autonomy to those professions that competently perform needed services and take seriously (above their own self-interest) the welfare of the individuals with whom they work and the good of the community at large. Within this context, we have discussed ethical criteria that are practical, and we have explored the notions of principles and their derivative rules, which form a problem-solving perspective for professional ethical decision making. In addition to scholarship related to coherence of theory and application of principlism in ethical decision and policy making, we have noted a resurgent interest in matters of virtue or character ethics. We have found this interest both in the popular culture, the academic literature of several disciplines, and multicultural critiques of principle ethics. We view this interest as a reflection of the shortcomings of principlism and a counterbalance to the emphasis on individual rights over the last 50 years in the professional ethical literature, the legal system, and popular culture.

We have argued that a more complete understanding of professional ethics includes, in addition to principle ethics, a cognitive grasp of virtue ethics, and that better ethical practice can be achieved through efforts to develop virtues commensurate with one's professional mission. Toward that understanding, we have suggested five characteristics of virtuous agents and four virtues that might be appropriate for the responsibilities and goals of psychologists in their various professional roles. We have applied our arguments to the various tasks of psychologists and counselors and have tried to provide a rationale for how integrating principles and virtues can assist professionals in making difficult decisions, setting policies (e.g., revising or interpreting ethics codes), and developing the ethical character of themselves and their professions. We discussed the particular relevance of virtue ethics in enhancing professional competence and sensitivity as well as public trust of professions in a pluralistic, multicultural society.

A profession and its virtues are not static, and as a profession develops, its members change their views as to what they consider virtuous behavior. Such changes seem best achieved through research and education in an explicit, deliberate fashion that integrates the ethical enterprise with other knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed by professionals and personalizes it

to encompass the affect, cultures, and motivations of professionals and the communities they serve. Professional virtues are not static, but neither are they completely relative or chaotic. We believe that if a profession lacks coherence in its mission and ethical character (i.e., in its views of competence and the common good), the public will lose its trust in the profession. Loss of trust jeopardizes the professional's autonomy. As a consequence, the profession itself could deteriorate to such an extent that outside regulation rather than professional judgment will increasingly determine its standards and responsibilities and how they are to be achieved.

Professionals work and study continuously to increase their knowledge and improve their skills. In like manner, they strive continually to understand the meaning of their work in the context of their ambitions and responsibilities. Within that context, their beliefs and judgments with respect to ethical conduct, their ethical character, and actual behaviors need to be coherent. Reflections upon and increased understanding of the moral domain (its theories, principles, virtues, and other constructs) in the context of professional codes, changing mores, multicultural communities, and intellectual and technological advances provide ways to improve one's ethical decisions, policies, and character. Thoughtfulness of this sort facilitates the development of professions of the highest integrity. Finally, such reflection helps pave the way for the development of professionals who are trusted, trustworthy, and competent, and who can (with prudence, integrity, respectfulness, and benevolence) envision and articulate goals that contribute to the common good of the communities and individuals they hope to serve. Such professionals determine the character of a profession and can set the stage for the possibility of ethical wisdom, a virtue we all hope to encounter when seeking professional services.

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