Rational Interaction for Moral Sensitivity: A Postmodern Approach to Moral Decision-making in Business

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ABSTRACT. Moral dissensus is a distinct feature of our time. This is not only true of our post-modern culture in general, but also of business culture specifically. In this paper I start by explaining how modernist rationality has produced moral dissensus without offering any hope of bringing an end to it in the foreseeable future. Opting for a form of post-modernist rationality as the only viable way of dealing with moral dissensus, I then make an analysis of a number of ways proposed by both specialists in the field of business ethics, as well as philosophers to deal with moral decision-making in this situation of moral dissensus. The conclusion reached is that none of these attempts succeeds in coming to terms with moral dissensus. I then formulate an alternative approach to moral decision-making which I call: "Rational interaction for moral sensitivity". After explaining this approach, I defend it against some of the most obvious objections that might be raised against it in a business environment.

> When you're talking birth control, what blocks it and freezes it out is that it's not a matter of more or fewer babies being argued. That's just on the surface. What's underneath is a conflict of faith, of faith in empirical social planning versus faith in the authority of God as revealed by the teachings of the Catholic Church. You can prove the practicality of planned parenthood till you get tired of listening to yourself and it's going to get nowhere because your antagonist isn't buying the assumption that anything socially practical is good per se. Goodness for him has other sources which he values as much as or more than social practicality. (Robert M. Pirsig, Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance.)

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Introduction

It is not hard to convince any informed person that moral dissensus is a distinct feature of our time. Numerous examples from a broad range of fields could be cited to prove the point. One could, amongst other things, either refer to irreconcilable viewpoints on issues like abortion and euthanasia in the field of medical ethics, or compulsary AIDS-testing and affirmative action in the field of business ethics. What is however much harder, is to convince people of the meaning and value of moral debate amidst and despite the mentioned moral dissensus. To some it appears that the apparent irreconcilability of the opposing moral standpoints have rendered moral debate meaningless. To these sceptics it seems that moral debate without a shared criterion by which the conflicting truth-claims of the opposing parties could be settled, is merely a waste of time.

The aim of this paper is to argue that moral debate amidst moral dissensus does have meaning and value if due cognizance is taken of the post-modern culture in which we live. In order to achieve this aim I shall start by giving an explanation of the moral dissensus that prevails. Then a critical discussion of solutions proposed by other thinkers for coping with moral decision-making amidst moral dissensus will follow. After presenting an approach called rational interaction for moral sensitivity, which I regard as most suitable for coping with moral decision-making in our post-modern world, I shall conclude by defending it against some of the most obvious objections that might be raised against it in a business environment.

1. An explanation of moral dissensus

The story of the current moral dissensus dates back to the beginning of the modern era (or modernity). In the Middle Ages which preceded the modern era, moral dissensus was not only uncommon, but even the slightest indication of moral dissensus was regarded as a serious and dangerous defect. The era of the Middle Ages was, amongst other things, characterized by two distinguishing features. On the one hand there was the dominant position of the church and on the other hand the supporting role that reason played towards the church and theology. Not only was reason legitimated by the church, but also its role and the scope of its function. Part of the task of reason was to give a rational foundation for the convictions of the church. Furthermore reason was also expected to relate the different convictions and dogmas of the church to each other in order to build a theological system that would seem rationally coherent. Galileo first-handedly experienced just how dangerous it was to deviate from this conception of rationality. Any rational insight that did not correlate with the dogma of the church was discredited and the life of the bearer of such an insight, threatened.

A good example of this role that was ascribed to reason is to be found in the concept of morality which the Middle Ages ascribed to. By the twelfth century Aristotle's scheme of ethics dominated the scene. Aristotle had created a threefold scheme of ethics:

(1) Human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be (human nature in its untutored state),
(2) The precepts of ethics that can transform a person by the instructions of her or his practical reason,
(3) Human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realised-its-telos. (MacIntyre, 1981: 50—51)

The function of moral theory within this scheme was the transformation of the individual from an untutored state to realization of an own telos or end. This threefold scheme constituted the model upon which Christian, Jewish, Islamic and other ethics were built during the Middle Ages. The religious authorities of the Middle Ages authorized reason to define this telos as well as the ethical rules and prescriptions which were supposed to guide humans from their untutored state to the fulfilment of their telos.

This scheme was however radically altered with the arrival of Protestantism and Jansenist Catholicism during the Renaissance, as a new concept of reason then became dominant. It was asserted that reason could not supply a true end (or telos) for humankind, because the power of reason had been destroyed by the fall into sin. This development was taken one step further during the Enlightenment when the notion of the inability of reason to design ends (or a telos), gained further support from the role that the dominant philosophy of science ascribed to reason. Thus reason no longer received legitimation from the church but from science. Science therefore formulated a new criterion for rationality. The key features of this new criterion of rationality was subjectivism and universalization. On the one hand it was stated that knowledge should no longer be based on the authority of the church, but on the rational activity of the individual (e.g. Descartes). On the other hand, in order to prevent relativism, the rational claims of the individual should also be checked and scrutinized by other independent and rational individuals. This effectively reduced the area in which truth claims could be made to mathematical relations and empirical statements (Hume). This new concept of rationality had severe implications for the status of moral statements. MacIntyre spells out the implication of this new standard of rationality when he states: "Reason does not comprehend essences or transitions from potentiality to act; these concepts belong to the despised conceptual scheme of scholasticism. Hence anti-Aristotelian science sets strict boundaries to the powers of reason. Reason is calculative; it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more. In the realm of practise it can therefore speak only of means. About ends it must be silent" (1981: 52). The result of this changed view on the possibilities of reason was that it became impossible to prove why the "is" statements of reason should become "ought" statements.

Philosophers of the modern era took up the challenge to develop a new concept of ethics within the restrictions imposed upon them by modern rationality. Kantian ethics is a particular fine example of such an approach, as it attempts to meet the two criteria set forward by the modern concept of

rationality. On the one hand it stated that the rational individual is the source and authority of moral laws. In this way the demand that the source of knowledge should be the rational individual, was met. The second demand of modern rationality was that statements should be universally acceptable. Kant attempted to meet this demand by insisting that the individual who formulates the moral laws should determine whether he/she was, at any given time, willing to accept that law as a universal one by which everybody should abide (cf. Burrel *et al.*, 1981: 76–78).

Although Kant's proposal for a modern rational and universal ethics did fit within the parameters of modernist rationality, it did not succeed in becoming the dominant ethical approach. Within the same parameters that Kant formulated his modernist ethics, other philosophers devised alternative ethical theories which also met the standards of modernist rationality. While Kant took the reasoning of the practical reason as his individualistic starting point, utilitarianism preferred pleasure and egoism, the personal interests of the individual, as their starting point. Both the latter two approaches then universalized their individualistic starting point in order to meet the demand of intersubjective control.

Two problems arose as a result of this development. The first was that there was no way in which the rival claims of the different ethical theories could be settled, as all of them formally met the demands of modernist rationality (MacIntyre, 1981b: 5). There was no shared rational norm against which the merit of the rival ethical theories could be judged. In this way modernism produced moral dissensus without the possibility to cure it, should it wish to remain true to its concept of rationality. The second dilemma was posed by exactly this moral dissensus. According to modernist rationality, rival truth claims on one question could not be tolerated. According to modernist expectations a rational investigation and analysis of a situation should result in a coherent and non-contradictory truth claim. The fact that ethics produced exactly the opposite result, especially led the positivist thinkers to the conclusion that a rational study of ethics was not a viable project. They insisted that only those areas in which empirically verifiable statements could be made, were open for rational investigation. To make truth claims in other areas, like ethics where it is not possible to translate

moral utterances into empirically verifiable statements, was considered as pure folly. Ethical theory and moral statements were therefore rejected as meaningless by these positivist thinkers. Although they could not deny that people were making moral statements, they did however deny that these moral statements had any status as truth claims (cf. Ayer, 1985: 20). It only had the status of opinions. This development opened the way for ethical relativism and scepticism, because one moral opinion was seen as just as valid or unvalid as the next. In this way positivism not only restricted the rational parameters in which ethics could operate, but it went one step further and totally abandoned ethics as a candidate for serious rational investigation.

The strict rationality imposed by positivism resulted in the exclusion of vast areas of human life from rational discourse. According to the positivist standard it was meaningless and even impossible to talk with rational integrity about subjects like ethics, culture, religion, the meaning of life, etc. Rouse also confirms this state of affairs when he says:

> The positivists' aim was the legitimation of those discourses which could be reconstructed in accordance with formally rational procedures. All other forms of inquiry could be rejected as noncognitive, nonsensical, or both (1991: 608).

This situation was clearly intolerable. The conviction finally arose that the problem was not so much that ethics, culture, religion, etc. were not suitable subjects for rational investigation, but rather that the concept of rationality that had developed, was too narrow. It should be replaced with a new standard of rationality that would enable us to have rational discourse over more than just the empirically verifiable reality. This reaction to the restrictive rationality of modernity is one of the developments which are nowadays referred to as post-modernism.

Post-modernism does not aim to abolish the achievements or methods of positivist science, but rather wants to draw attention to the restrictions of positivism (cf. Cahoone, 1988: 2). It's aim is to develop a broader rationality which will render rational discourse possible on those areas traditionally excluded from such discourse by positivism. The implication of this project is the acknowledgement of alternative criteria for meaningful statements. Not only those statements that meet the demands of

empirical verifiability will be accepted as meaningful. Narratives which make a contribution towards understanding culture, religion, ethics, etc. are also to be considered legitimate means to convey knowledge of our world in its multi-faceted reality (cf. Fekete, 1988: I-III; Burrel et al., 1981: 91–101).

Another typical feature of modernity that is also rejected by post-modernism is the demand that conflicting truth-claims should be adjudicated in order to reach a coherent single answer to a specific problem. Although this kind of demand has validity and may even be necessary in the Natural Sciences, there is no need to adhere to it in the Social Sciences. In the latter field, post-modernism states that different and even rival explanations could co-exist (cf. Lyotard, 1989: 73). The tension and interaction amongst the different explanations or narratives could create fertile new perspectives regarding the matter under discussion.

This alternative or post-modernist rationality simply accepts multi-culturality and moral dissensus as an integral part of the contemporary world. Moral dissensus is no longer seen as an unfortunate development, but rather an interesting phenomenon.

In the remaining part of this paper I shall reflect on the implications of this moral dissensus for moral decision-making in our post-modern culture.

2. A critique of attempts to cope with moral dissensus

It is important to make a clear distinction between personal moral dilemmas and moral disputes. In the case of a personal moral dilemma, one is faced with a tough choice between options which normally serve different interests. One does however have the luxury of making up one's mind without having to reach consensus with all parties involved. In the case of a moral dispute however, two or more parties with rival moral views are involved and it is therefore much harder to come to a conclusion on what the suitable moral standpoint or action would be. Although the prevailing moral dissensus have implications for decision-making in both personal moral dilemmas and moral disputes, its effect is particular severe in the case of moral disputes. I shall therefore focus mainly on decision-making in moral disputes in the remainder of this paper.

Because moral dissensus poses some severe difficulties for the process of moral decision-making as I have already indicated in the previous section, it comes as no surprise that a variety of attempts to cope with moral decision-making has been suggested by both specialists in the field of business ethics as well as in philosophy in general. All these attempts, to my mind, fail to address the problems presented to moral decision-making by the situation of moral dissensus. In this section I shall give a short description of three of these attempts as well as an explanation of why I do not consider them acceptable solutions to the problem.

2.1. Stating, but avoiding the problem

Quite a number of textbooks on business ethics identify the different moral theories that guide people in making decisions when faced with moral choices. Most of these books would identify the two basic approaches to moral decision-making, viz the deontological and consequensialistic approaches. Apart from giving an explanation of the basic tenets of these approaches and the different moral theories that could be classified under each of these, some would also proceed and identify the strong and weak points of each of these approaches (cf. Esterhuyse, 1991: 17–25; Hoffman and Moore, 1990: 5–18). A popular conclusion that is drawn after such an exposition, is that one should be conscious of the approach one adheres to, as well as the reasons for one's commitment to that particular approach or moral theory.

It is not to be denied that this approach would render one a better understanding of one's own, as well as opposing viewpoints in a moral dispute. However, what this approach could not do, is to suggest a solution to the impasse created by two or more rival standpoints in a moral dispute. It can at most give the rival parties a better insight into the cause and nature of their dispute. The reason why this approach fails to solve the moral dispute, is that it acknowledges that both the basic approaches to moral decision-making (i.e. deontological and consequensialistic) have a rational and moral validity. It therefore implicitly admits that there is no neutral referee who could judge the rival claims made by two or more parties in such a dispute.

2.2. *The ethical checklist*

A number of specialists in the field of business ethics have devised ethical checklists to guide people in making difficult moral decisions in the business environment. The motivation given for these kind of checklists is normally that the ever changing nature of moral dilemmas in the business environment makes ready-made and timeless solutions impossible (cf. Henderson, 1990: 72). Rather than relying on timeless answers, a rational and rigoristic procedure should be followed to make moral decisions. The ethical checklist is an instrument proposed to guide and structure this process of ethical decisionmaking. A typical example of such a checklist, is the one proposed by Nash where the person facing a tough moral decision is supposed to work through and answer the following twelve questions:

(1) Have you defined the problem accurately?
(2) How would you define the problem if you stood on the other side of the fence?
(3) How did this situation occur in the first place?
(4) To whom and to what do you give your loyalty as a person and as member of the corporation?
(5) What is your intention in making this decision?
(6) How does this intention compare with probable results?
(7) Whom could your decision or action injure?
(8) Can you discuss the problem with the affected parties before you make your decision?
(9) Are you confident that your position will be as valid over a long period of time as it seems now?
(10) Could you disclose with qualm your decision or action to your boss, your CEO, the board of directors, your family, society as a whole?
(11) What is the symbolic potential of your action if understood? If misunderstood?
(12) Under what conditions would you allow exceptions to your stand? (Nash, 1990: 80)

It is not to be denied that this and similar kinds of checklists have some value. Businesspersons confronted with tough moral choices indeed find these checklists valuable, especially when they are on their own and have to make a decision in a relative short time.

The problem with such checklists however, is that whilst they are helpful in personal moral dilemmas, and will contribute towards more responsible decision-making, they still do not address the problems raised by the current moral dissensus. Two persons from different cultures, or even from the same culture and the same corporation, might come up with conflicting and irreconsilable decisions when they are using the same checklist. Such a conflict is not caused by deficiencies in the checklist, but by the different moral approaches that the two said persons adhere to. An utilitarian and a deontological thinker might end with opposing views when they are confronted with a question like the last one mentioned in Nash's checklist: "under what circumstances would you allow for exceptions to your stand?". The deontological thinker, for example, might say that he/she would under no circumstance allow for exceptions, while the utilitarian thinker might well be able to identify circumstances that warrant deviations from the policy or ethical guidelines from the company that he/she represents.

This indicates that although the checklist might be a valuable aid, it cannot stand up to the challenge posed by moral dissensus. As soon as rival views are generated by a checklist, the checklist itself can no longer provide any guidance towards the solution of the moral dispute that has arisen. Moral dissensus still rules and therefore overrules and relativises the conclusions suggested by the ethical checklist.

2.3. *Habermas and discursive consensus*

One of the more promising attempts to deal with moral decision-making amidst moral dissensus, is offered by Jürgen Habermas. His philosophy is in part a reaction against the strict conception of rationality imposed by positivistic science (cf. Griffioen, 1991: 528). According to Habermas positivist rationality excluded vast areas of human life from rational discourse. He attempts to reopen the debate on rationality in order to develop an alternative conception of rationality which could reintroduce those areas of life, excluded by positivist rationality, to the domain of knowledge and rational discourse.

With this epistemological focus, Habermas wishes to abolish the premature closure of the debate on knowledge by the positivists. He proposes that the aim of philosophy should be the facilitation of an ungoing critical debate on what could and could not be considered as knowledge.

Instead of the positivist criterion of empirical verifiability, Habermas proposes consensus within an ideal speech situation as the criterion for knowledge. According to his alternative conception of rationality, knowledge is formulated in conversational consensus established through the interaction of rational participants. By this qualification he excludes any non-discursive ideas of knowledge.

The obvious objection to this concept of rationality, is that it opens the door to relativism and could therefore not be seen as a serious substitute for positivist or modern rationality. It seems as though any consensus established by persons through discursive interaction should be considered as knowledge. Habermas denies this implication by indicating that there are certain rules that apply to this process of discursive knowledge formulation.

The ideal speech situation provides the context for the process of knowledge formation. This ideal speech situation does not refer to the personality or skills of the participants, but to the structural features of the discourse. In an oversimplified way it could be portrayed as that situation where all participants in the discourse are truly equal and in which all forms of coercion or force have been removed. The only force allowable in this situation is the force of the best rational argument. Against the background of this ideal speech situation, the basic rules of the process of knowledge formation is the following: (a) The only evidence that participants may introduce in the discourse, is empirical experience which is objectively accessible. In the case of norms, only those norms that can attain consensual recognition in the discourse itself are permissible (cf. Davison, 1981: 164). (b) The process of communicative interaction is driven only by the force of the strongest rational argument. (c) Only those experiences, arguments and norms that can attain consensual agreement is regarded as knowledge. Any knowledge formulated in this way is always open to revision in future.

The obvious advantage of this broader rationality that Habermas proposes, is that it readmits most of the areas excluded by positivist science to the domain of knowledge. Because experiences about culture, values and norms are widely shared amongst human beings, they are according to Habermas' conception of rationality appropriate material for the process of knowledge formation. There are however a number of serious objections that could be raised against Habermas' approach. The first objection that might be raised within a business environment is that his idea of an ideal speech situation is an unattainable dream within corporation life, because corporations are traditionally and functionally organized into hierarchies in which people at the top have more power and control than people lower in the hierarchy (cf. Smith, 1988: 17). This objection however, is not too serious, because Habermas himself admits that his conditions for an ideal speech situation is counterfactual. He is making an ethical appeal on participants to act as if these conditions have already been met. There surely is some merit in this idea.

The more serious objection that I wish to raise, is that although Habermas' philosophy is a reaction against modernist rationality, it still fails to transcend one typical feature of modernist rationality. That feature is the idea that all truth claims should be integrated into one final coherent truth statement. This is reflected in his conviction that only those statements on which consensus is possible, could be regarded as knowledge. In the light of what has been said in the previous section on moral dissensus and the impossibility of reaching consensus between the rival moral approaches and theories of our time, it is evident that Habermas does not succeed in overcoming the impasse created by moral dissensus. If the only norms we may accept as true are those to which all possible participants in an ideal speech situation would agree, we would have either very few norms, or pretty vague superficial and therefore nearly meaningless norms.

3. An alternative approach

Against the backdrop of the insufficiency of the above mentioned attempts to deal with moral dissensus in moral decision-making, I wish to suggest in this concluding section of the paper an alternative approach to moral decision-making. In this approach

I shall assume that moral dissensus is an irredeemable fact for the foreseeable future. I shall therefore not try to overcome moral dissensus, but rather formulate a proposal for moral decision-making that pays due cognizance to the fact of moral dissensus.

When a moral dispute between two or more parties develops and moral dissensus is accepted as a permanent feature of our culture, one of three basic options for dealing with such a dispute could be chosen. These options are:

(a) Irrational methods for solving the dispute, such as resorting to violence or throwing a dice to determine which of the rival opinions should be chosen.

(b) Suspension of the dispute by declaring it in principle impossible or even undesirable to attempt making any progress towards a solution to the dispute. This is the option that moral and cultural relativists as well as moral scepticists might opt for.

(c) Rational interaction between the rival parties with a more modest aim than consensus as the purpose of the interaction.

The third of these options is the one I wish to recommend and motivate as the only viable and responsible option in a post-modern culture. The reason why I find the first two options unacceptable, will transpire as I motivate my choice of the third option. In order to motivate my choice for this option, I shall explain in detail what I mean by *"rational interaction with a more modest aim than consensus."*

By rational interaction I am referring to a dialogue between two or more persons who have a stake in the moral issue under discussion. There are no other qualifications that participants have to meet other than being stakeholders in the issue under discussion and being willing and able to discuss the specific issue in a rational and tolerant way. "Rational discussion" in this context refers to the reciprocal stating of arguments that all partners are capable of understanding. The rationality implicated here, is therefore not the strict rationality of positivism, but allows for arguments in which values, culture, religion, emotions, etc., are taken into consideration. Rational arguments of this type is the only valid means of persuasion permitted in such a dialogue.

Tolerance means to respect the partners in the dialogue as moral agents who don't merely have a stake but also a valid contribution to make in such a discussion. Participants therefore have to allow one another freedom to express their own opinions as well as countering and criticizing those of their partners.

Participants in such a dialogue needn't be able to give an account of the specific moral tradition to which they belong or the moral theory, if any, to which they subscribe. Such a qualification will only lead to an elitist conception of dialogue which will exclude vast numbers of people who can make valuable contributions to such a dialogue. People who will be excluded by such a qualification are either people with a low level of conceptual development or with scant knowledge of moral theories and moral reasoning. Another group that might be excluded by such a qualification, are those people whose ability to tell stories have been hampered or retarded by the ban that positivistic science has placed on story-telling as a valid means of knowledge formulation. It is exactly this story-telling ability that is needed in order to explain one's moral background and the reason for adhering to it.

The aim of this rational interaction or dialogue should not be to reach consensus, but a more modest aim than consensus should be envisaged. This more moderate aim that I have in mind is *moral sensitivity* for the practical and other implications of one's moral persuasion. If one accepts that differences in moral persuasions are not caused by deficient moral reasoning, but that two or more rival moral positions could each be based on valid rational and moral grounds, consensus clearly cannot be considered as a realistic and viable goal for a dialogue between the disputing parties. The best one could hope for is that rival partners in such a dialogue would be willing to reformulate their own positions in the light of the criticism expressed by their partners on the practical and other implications of their moral stance. Rather than attacking the moral theories on which their respective points of view are based, partners should be focussing on the practical and other implications of the moral positions presented by the different participants in the dialogue. By means of this kind of interaction participants will become aware and sensitive of implications of their moral stance which they either have not foreseen or haven't realized the full extent of, in the past. If consensus does in fact

arise, it should be welcomed, praised and enjoyed, but it should still be considered a bonus. If consensus does not follow, the dialogue should not be considered a failure, because a positive development nevertheless would have occurred. That is that participants have at least realized that there are some consequences to their positions that are not universally acceptable and therefore requires reconsideration.

Returning to the three options stated at the beginning of this section, my opposition to the first two options and support for the third option should be clear by now. The first option is unacceptable, because irrational methods for dealing with moral disputes do not provide any possibility for making rational and lasting progress on moral disputes. It furthermore also is not compatible with morality, because it does not take the interests of all people involved in that dispute into consideration. The second option is also unacceptable because it represents an uncalled for and premature closure to a dispute. It therefore also destroys the opportunity that the dispute offers for the moral growth and development of those persons involved in the dispute. The third option that I have opted for, however, utilises the potential of the dispute for moral development and also facilitates more responsible action by all parties involved — irrespective of the moral theory to which they subscribe. It thus proves that moral disputes are meaningful and valuable amidst moral dissensus as long as the participants respect the conditions stipulated above.

In order to indicate that this approach is not just a lofty theoretical ideal, but could be applied within the business environment, I shall now consider a typical situation that might arise in a business environment and illustrate how this approach could be applied. I shall also respond to the major objections that businesspersons might raise.

Let us take the example of sexual harassment. There are three companies, called A, B and C in which female personnel have been complaining about sexual harassment by their male colleagues. This has lead to a moral dispute within all three companies, because although some were convinced that there were indeed cases of sexual harassment, others disagreed. Some males and even a few women argued that what the first group labelled as sexual harassment was only friendly and informal interac-

tion and very much part of the culture of the indigenous people. The latter group even accused the first group of being unfriendly, hypersensitive and creating a hostile climate in the company.

The CEO of company A was infuriated when he/she learned about the dispute and decided to use his/her authority to deal with it in no uncertain terms. He/She therefore summoned all the employees and informed them that according to his/her assessment of the situation there was no sexual harassment and that he/she does not want to hear anybody talking about the topic again.

The CEO of company B received the news about the dispute on sexual harassment in a rather indifferent way. He/she called a meeting of the executive management and discussed the issue with them. They decided to do nothing about the dispute, because they believed that both parties had valid points of view and they feared that whatever action they would take, might be interpreted as either cultural or moral chauvinism.

The CEO of company C also called a meeting of the executive management and informed them about the moral dispute on sexual harassment. They decided to arrange weekly one hour meetings for four consecutive weeks in all sectors and on all levels of the company. Employees would have the opportunity to continue the dispute in those meetings, but only according to the guidelines of rational interaction for moral sensitivity as mentioned above.

When one assesses the possible outcome of these three different approaches, it seems that company C has the best chance of making progress on the issue. Employees in company A who differ from the CEO would experience feelings of humiliation, anger and alienation. The dispute also would not be solved, but would only be suppressed by the authority of the CEO.

Employees in company B on both sides of the dispute might either get the impression that management is indifferent towards their problems or that they approve of what the opposing party is doing. This might also lead to feelings of alienation.

In company C however, employees would experience that management is concerned about the issue and is willing to do something about it. After the four meetings, most employees would be at least more sensitive about the way in which they interact with persons of the opposite sex. A consensus or

workable compromise might even arise from these meetings which could address and eliminate the problem. Whatever the outcome, what seems to be sure, is that some kind of moral development is inevitable to follow from this exercise.

In closing this paper, I shall now turn to three possible objections that people in business might raise against this approach of rational interaction for moral sensitivity. The first and major objection that might be raised is that there simply are occasions where some form of consensus or compromise is needed in order to secure a unified course of action. In such situations business does not have the luxury of allowing rival moral views to co-exist indefinitely. They simply have to make a resolution and all employees have to abide by that decision. Rational interaction for moral sensitivity, these critics would claim, is therefore not a viable strategy for dealing with moral dissensus in such situations.

It is undeniably true that situations which demand speedy and definite resolutions on the part of business, do develop. This does not however mean that these situations have rendered the approach of rational interaction for moral sensitivity as such implausible. There are numerous other situations where a speedy consensus is not required and where the proposed approach could be utilized. Even in those situations where a definite resolution is required on short notice, it does not exclude rational interaction for moral sensitivity as a strategy to prepare the way for such a resolution. The person or persons who have to make the decision will enhance the quality of that decision should they allow themselves to be informed by the rival moral positions that exist within their business by introducing the proposed strategy for a limited period of time. A compromise decision reached in this way would probably be able to endure more criticism and would be easier to propagate to one's employees than one that has been taken unilaterally and without considering rival opinions in the business itself. In short then: even when time does not allow for an extended rational interaction for moral sensitivity, a limited and restricted exercise in this approach would still render a higher quality of decision-making possible than in the case of simple unilateral decisions.

A second objection that might be raised is that rational interaction for moral sensitivity as an ap-

proach to moral decision-making is too time consuming. Although it is true that this approach is time consuming, I do not regard it as legitimate criticism of this approach. The fact that it does require some time doesn't deal so much with the approach itself than with the area in which it operates. Any person who is a specialist on processes of change in the field of human attitudes, values and culture will confirm that there are no lasting quick-fix solutions in this field. Change in this field simply is more time consuming than adjusting nuts and bolts. Change in this field is also very difficult to achieve. Experience also has taught that the quality and durability of changes in these areas are enhanced if the people who have to change are involved in the making of the process of change. Rational interaction for moral sensitivity offers just such an opportunity to involve people in the changing of attitudes when it comes to moral disputes.

A third objection that might be raised against this approach is that it is doomed to failure if people are not willing to participate in the process. This objection poses an interesting challenge. On the one hand it could simply be dismissed as unimportant, because it is true of most processes of change: if people do not want to play the game, the chance of the process succeeding is very poor. On the other hand however, this objection raises the question on how to motivate people to engage in the process of rational interaction for moral sensitivity (cf Jonas, 1981: 47). There seems to be a number of strategies that could be followed in order to motivate people to become involved in the process. The first is to tell them the story which explains the fact of moral dissensus. If they realise why moral dissensus prevails and why moral dissensus will be part of our world for the foreseeable future, they are in a much more favourable position to understand that moral disputes need to be approached in a different way than other decision-making processes. A second way is to inform them about other similar situations where this approach was utilized and where it succeeded. Success-stories always seem to render credibility to any approach. A third way in which people could be motivated to engage in this approach, is when leaders within a business, both formal and informal, identify and take ownership of this approach. Their example will give further credibility to this way of decision-making. The fourth, final and maybe

the most compelling way of motivating people to become engaged in rational interaction for moral sensitivity, is to indicate that participation in this approach enables and empowers them to actively help shaping and creating the culture in which they have to work and live.

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