other engineers may not be able to make the necessary changes immediately because of budget or schedule, or all because changes that they have already made bar the improvement in question. Engineers may also find an alternative way to achieve the same end. For these reasons (and perhaps others), nuclear plants, however alike at birth, tend to grow into noticeably different individuals, much as biological plants do.

Some people, especially philosophers, seem to think of those who stayed on at Fukushima—those who, for example, worked in the dark in cold waist-high radioactive water to restart the generators—as engaged in “superrerogatory” conduct, that is, as engaged in conduct above and beyond what morality requires. The engineers I have discussed this with seem to view the conduct as heroic but required (supposing the “workers” in question to be engineers). An engineer who left when needed would have acted unprofessionally; he would have failed as an engineer even if he left to save his life or look after his family. Engineering sometimes requires heroism (a significantly higher standard than proposed in “supererogatory” conduct, that is, as engaged in an alternative way to achieve the same end. For these reasons (and perhaps others), nuclear plants, however alike at birth, tend to grow into noticeably different individuals, much as biological plants do.

Acknowledgments
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References

Decision-making as a Pluralist Procedure

Valentin Muresan
University of Bucharest, Romania

This paper claims that the use of several moral tests to assess the ethics of a new policy is unavoidable. All the efforts to make credible a methodological monism—by critical or reductionist strategies—have been unsuccessful; moreover, it must be acknowledged that even if there were a single test, when applied successively or by different people it would usually give divergent results. The main aim of the paper is to propose a pluralist procedure of ethical decision-making, using a set of proper ethical tests (such as utilitarian, Kantian, Christian, principlist and casuist) in the frame of an “ethical Delphi” procedure intended to make convergent the supposed variety of verdicts. This pluralist testing process, made by moral experts, is only a fraction of a more complex procedure intended to deliver social sanction for a new moral policy. This longer procedure also shows that the adoption of a new moral policy, rule or law is not only a question of passing a strict ethical test, but also a political (i.e. multi-criteria decision). In general, the adoption of a new moral rule does not rely solely on an ethical test, but is essentially the outcome of a complicated social agreement. That is why in academic applications of the usual moral tests we do not take a moral decision on a new case, but merely simulate it.

Abstract
This paper claims that the use of several moral tests to assess the ethics of a new policy is unavoidable. All the efforts to make credible a methodological monism—by critical or reductionist strategies—have been unsuccessful; moreover, it must be acknowledged that even if there were a single test, when applied successively or by different people it would usually give divergent results. The main aim of the paper is to propose a pluralist procedure of ethical decision-making, using a set of proper ethical tests (such as utilitarian, Kantian, Christian, principlist and casuist) in the frame of an “ethical Delphi” procedure intended to make convergent the supposed variety of verdicts. This pluralist testing process, made by moral experts, is only a fraction of a more complex procedure intended to deliver social sanction for a new moral policy. This longer procedure also shows that the adoption of a new moral policy, rule or law is not only a question of passing a strict ethical test, but also a political (i.e. multi-criteria decision). In general, the adoption of a new moral rule does not rely solely on an ethical test, but is essentially the outcome of a complicated social agreement. That is why in academic applications of the usual moral tests we do not take a moral decision on a new case, but merely simulate it.

Key words: ethical decision-making, ethical pluralism, ethical Delphi, pluralist model

Decisions about the moral value of an action, rule or public policy cannot be reduced to a verdict resulting from the application of traditional tests based on the major ethical theories, despite the fact that handbooks still unanimously support this view. The history of ethical test results is more one of surprises than one of predictability. You would expect, for instance, that people who adopt the same moral doctrine do this in order to approach issues in the same way, including the moral assessment of actions. We all believe that this is the main reason it is useful to embrace the same moral creed. Therefore it seems strange to find that several members of the Romanian Parliament, all active supporters of Christian morality, assessed the legalization of prostitution in opposing ways. On the other hand, it is also strange that two people who adopt different ethical theories—precisely because they offer distinct explanations of moral phenomena—can frequently assess actions in the same manner. When a utilitarian and a Kantian—or a follower of Christian ethics and one of Muslim ethics—debate issues, it is somehow surprising to see them judging situations in the same way in most cases, despite the fact they declare themselves to be supporters of opposing ethical beliefs. Are these beliefs really opposing? In general, it appears that use of tests based on distinct or even opposing theories, such as utilitarianism and Kantianism, can result in different verdicts, but in most cases it results in convergent ones (Kantian and utilitarian moral duties are, ultimately, the same). On the other hand, if we dogmatically adopt a single theory and apply the same test repeatedly to the same action we usually get similar results, but some divergent ones are also possible (see the cases of divergent utilitarian assessments of the same case given as examples in the textbooks).
The labyrinth of Ethical Decision-making

These results bring to light several lessons: 1) using a single test does not ensure the uniqueness of the ethical verdict, as commonly expected, and using several tests does not guarantee a diversity of verdicts; 2) it is possible to have (a) two distinct, even opposite, tests (such as the utilitarian and the Kantian) leading to the same verdict, and also (b) two different tests resulting in two distinct verdicts; 3) it is also possible to have (c) a single test (used at different times or by different people) that leads to different verdicts, but also (d) a single test leading to a single verdict.

How is it possible that the same test (case c), when applied by different individuals or by the same individual at different times, can lead to different verdicts? And how, equally, is it possible that different tests, based on competing theories, lead to the same verdict in most cases (case a)? For instance, how is it possible to evaluate the same case using consequentialist methodology and get sometimes one result, sometimes another? Or how is it possible that a utilitarian and a Kantian, who try to convince us that morality means different things, in most cases get the same results from the assessment process? Is assessment not an intrinsic part of an ethical creed? And if we have the same ethical creed, how is it possible to have distinct verdicts? Are the ethical decision-making frameworks so weak or even simply wrong?

The Unavoidability of Ethical Pluralism

My answer is that if ethical decision-making procedures were designed to ensure a verdict’s uniqueness and thus the overall internal consistency of moral assessments. However, there is no algorithmic ethical test. It is acknowledged that ethical decision-making procedures are not conclusive, in the sense that any verdict is merely probable and therefore revisable. This is because during any test procedure a number of factors are involved in establishing milestones to guide deliberation. They include, for instance, the utilitarian and the Kantian leading to the same verdict, and also (b) two different tests resulting in two distinct verdicts; 3) it is also possible to have (c) a single test (used at different times or by different people) that leads to different verdicts, but also (d) a single test leading to a single verdict.

Ethical methodological pluralism is a doctrine that claims that: there are several explanations of the ethical verdict and therefore the unity of the moral judgment, I suggest that the use of several tests is preferable. Methodological monism is not the most promising solution: ethical pluralism seems to be the single viable strategy of moral evaluation.

Ethical methodological pluralism is a doctrine that claims that: there are several explanations of the ethical verdict and therefore the unity of the moral judgment, I suggest that the use of several tests is preferable. Methodological monism is not the most promising solution: ethical pluralism seems to be the single viable strategy of moral evaluation.

Although the terminology is not identical, this approach is similar in its purpose to the so-called "integrity approach" of corporations.

The integrity approach advocates the simultaneous and balanced use of the three ethical approaches [utilitarianism, deontology and virtue theory]. Sound decisions based upon integrity preclude the denial of moral complexity or setting for a simple, narrow-minded resolution based upon less than three key ethics approaches. An understanding of the theories or ethical views adopted by members of a pluralist group of ethical decision-makers, including the theories or ethical views adopted by members of a pluralist group of ethical decision-makers, including

Spontaneous Convergence of Verdicts from Proponents of Opposing Theories

In a study devoted to the analysis of the status of modern applied ethics, Alasdair MacIntyre tackles the assessment convergence, which for this reason becomes part of the general strategy currently embraced nowadays – forget the so-called “disagreement” that exists between moral philosophers concerning the profile of a genuine moral theory; this contrasts with the hope for a universal rational agreement nutured by all supporters of what he calls the “dominant conception of morality” (Kantianism, utilitarianism, contractarianism and their various combinations):

The “dominant conception of morality” is the view that the rules of morality are such as every rational agent would accept them. In this sense, ‘applied ethics’ is concerned with the application of these universal principles (for instance, beneficence, the prevention of harm to particular social spheres, the usual expectation being that the disagreements between principles automatically mirror the disagreements between the verdicts on applied ethics assessments. (MacIntyre 2008, 50)

This irreducible pluralism of moral theories, views and methods has little chance of being eliminated. However, contrary to the view that plurality of methods inevitably entails plurality of verdicts, it has been proved that people with different ethical views may easily reach the same solution when they are put together to solve a practical problem. MacIntyre gives as an example the story of the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, which proves that the disagreement in principles (in the theories or ethical views adopted by members of the team), instead of generating a similar disagreement in their assessment of the case, was compatible with a practical agreement. This is how we were easily reached.

The Belmont Commission is another good example of a pluralist group of ethical decision-makers, including people with various ethical involvements who, instead of spending their time in an unending dispute around the best moral theory, rapidly arrived at a convergence of opinion and agreement in a common verdict. How can this algorithm of agreement work?

MacIntyre sees three possible explanations for the commissioners’ straightforward agreement. The first is that adoption of conflicting or rival moral principles may, surprisingly and unexpectedly, lead to the same verdict in the field of applied ethics. There is nothing new in this statement, but the question is: how is such a thing possible? We could use this example to wonder whether the so-called gap between principles (and the distinct explanations they give to moral phenomena) is as great as has been assumed, since their assessment outcomes are similar rather than conflicting. The second explanation is that the members of this assessment group did not actually apply their own principles (or theories, or ethical views); in fact, they judged the matter not following the principles they claimed to adopt, but in the light of the natural case, because there was a lack of evidence and they were casuists without knowing it. This implicit use of the same method explains the convergence of results. Finally, the third explanation, to which MacIntyre...
subscribers, is that the workings of the commission were presented in a false light, with the claim that the deliberation process was completely rational; in fact, all deliberation and decision-making inside the commission were ‘be-ing’ about the cultural and economic interests – with historical multi-criteria one. Moreover, that it is exactly this mentioned above (in which lay people may participate the technical stage (involving specialists in ethical The testing process would, therefore, include two stages: negotiation, and various forms of irrational persuasion "wisdom" (Millar et al. 2006, 10). This is not a method to discover in facts the supposed ethical difficulties raised by a new biotechnology, but one focused on a pluralist and expert assessment of the moral acceptability of an already formalized public policy concerning that biotechnology. Now, suppose we succeeded in assessing such a policy, using several ethical tests and making the evaluators’ opinions converge using an ethical Delphi. How should we proceed to socially impose the new moral policy, starting from the belief that morality is a social product and that a moral rule is a device required by society to protect some of its most important values? Is social muthom, or the influence upon them only by the rational criteria included in the ethical tests or should something more be added? My suggestion is that the social recognition (homologation) of a new moral rule as a dominant one in comparison with other types of rule is done following a further assessment process – on multiple criteria this time (not only moral), such as political, religious, and even personal. The conclusion is that the decision to adopt a complex new moral policy is necessary merely an ethical one; it is, in the last instance, a political/multi-criteria one. Moreover, these extra-ethical criteria can offer the true moral rule as a dominant one in comparison with other types of rules (i.e. a multi-criteria and autonomic “deliberative one (i.e. a multi-criteria and non-ethical – and irrational factors related to personal feelings or random human reactions. These issues raised (such as the human status of foetuses); this process was a little too fast. The IBC set up a “drafting group” composed of legal experts, three experts in genetics, three in bioethics, two in moral philosophy, one political expert: an interdisciplinary and pluralist group. It deserves to be noted that the organizers believed that the best place to take ethical decisions was in an ethical commission, but nobody knew what form a case of moral regulation, but nobody knew what form it should take in order to be able to serve the divergent interests of the citizens of all states – those of scientists and physicians, the religious organizations and the NGOs – in a manner consistent with other related regulations that had already been adopted. The IBC was an international project to regulate the use of genetic data belonged to the UNESCO Director General. In 2001 he asked the International Bioethics Committee (IBC) to draft the new regulation. The document was finalized three years later, in 2003, at which point some voices claimed that the process was a little too fast. The IBC set up a “drafting group” composed of experts: an interdisciplinary and pluralist group. It deserves to be noted that the organizers believed that the best place to take ethical decisions was in an ethical committee that was “independent, multidisciplinary and pluralist” (UNESCO 2003, Article 6). In this case, the panel was made up of four legal experts, three experts in genetics, three in bioethics, two in moral philosophy, one in anthropology and one in chemistry. The moderators were experts from France and the USA. All logistical support was, of course, granted. The panel first established the moral foundations of the new regulation (the principle of dignity, which is fundamental; then

Convergence Induced: the Ethical Delphi

What I want to propose here is to be even more systematic and to develop an ethical test that is able to make opinions cohere. This can be based on the “Delphi method”. From this, an “ethical Delphi” was obtained by a group of specialists in the frame of a European research project on “ethics in biotechnology”, and which led to a modification of this latter: a methodological ethical Delphi. In its original form, this test does not include any moral theory or ethical method for assessing, for example, a new biotechnology: using an ethnocentricized Delphi “it is not possible to directly deduce from the data analysis the ethical acceptability, or otherwise, of any proposed biotechnology” (Millar et al. 2006, 10). The testing process would, therefore, include two stages: negotiation, and various forms of irrational persuasion “wisdom” (Millar et al. 2006, 10). This is not a method to discover in facts the supposed ethical difficulties raised by a new biotechnology, but one focused on a pluralist and expert assessment of the moral acceptability of an already formalized public policy concerning that biotechnology. Now, suppose we succeeded in assessing such a policy, using several ethical tests and making the evaluators’ opinions converge using an ethical Delphi. How should we proceed to socially impose the new moral policy, starting from the belief that morality is a social product and that a moral rule is a device required by society to protect some of its most important values? Is social muthom, or the influence upon them only by the rational criteria included in the ethical tests or should something more be added? My suggestion is that the social recognition (homologation) of a new moral rule as a dominant one in comparison with other types of rules (i.e. a multi-criteria and non-ethical – and irrational factors related to personal feelings or random human reactions. These issues raised (such as the human status of foetuses); this process was a little too fast. The IBC set up a “drafting group” composed of experts: an interdisciplinary and pluralist group. It deserves to be noted that the organizers believed that the best place to take ethical decisions was in an ethical committee that was “independent, multidisciplinary and pluralist” (UNESCO 2003, Article 6). In this case, the panel was made up of four legal experts, three experts in genetics, three in bioethics, two in moral philosophy, one in anthropology and one in chemistry. The moderators were experts from France and the USA. All logistical support was, of course, granted. The panel first established the moral foundations of the new regulation (the principle of dignity, which is fundamental; then
A Pluralist Ethical Decision-making Procedure

Valentin Moresan

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In contrast to the UNESCO procedure described above, this scheme distinguishes between GR and GPDE (groups with different functions and powers), the kernel of the pluralist decision procedure being represented by the drafting group for the new ethical code (P1) (which is created by UNESCO). But GPDE is not a provider of final moral verdicts. Its activity aims at applying moral tests to a given case. Its main objectives are to identify the divergence and convergence of several expert moral assessments and to identify the roots of their disunity; to provide a professional basis for the final ethical decision, which is a “political” one; to provide a map of the moral problem under discussion for the use of people and politicians who will take the final decision; and in general to encourage systematic and professional ethical thinking in the moral assessment of the main practical issues.

It may be objected that the presence of GDP suggests that whether a rule is moral or not depends on its approval or rejection by society and not by an objective ethical reason. Or that the concept of cultural relativism: that all moral rules are dependent on the social context in which they are established. In reality, both happen: the moral character of a new rule is established by GDP, not by GDP, and the members of GDP may use universal principles (I find it is an error to ignore universal moral principles in building ethical codes, as usually happens). GDP does not establish the morality of the new rule, but only decides whether the society recognizes the morality of the regulation approved by the GPDE experts. This suggests that the new moral rule or policy acquires its authority ultimately from a kind of social consensus and not only from technical ethical reasons such as “maximization of utility” or “respect for human dignity”, and similar. One may ask what Richard Hare (1993) does when he applies principles of prudential reasons to cases: does he establish the moral character of the case? In fact, he only simulates a part of the process of moral assessment, conceiving it as a social phenomenon.

We must consider whether this scheme contains a mix of ethical and non-ethical procedures, the latter risking an alteration of the moral substance of the project. Despite appearances, the first principle (the requirement for the adoption of a new law or public policy) and the previously adopted moral rules. What follows is also an ethical step: the application of typical ethical tests (GPDE) and the writing of a moral report (RM) which gives the evaluation of the moral project, the new code or policy. Finally, at the level of GDP a new evaluation occurs; this uses both ethical and non-ethical criteria, but the presence of the non-ethical criteria does not affect the moral nature of P2. This means that GDP should not be seen as a group involved in ethical assessment, but as one meant to socially approve and impose a new moral rule, guided by moral and non-moral criteria. The requirement for the adoption of the new law or new moral public policy (but not of its moral assessment) is that it is always done on non-moral criteria too.

It may also be objected that the procedure is too

the principles of equality, solidarity and responsibility; as well as some form of welfare, precautionary and vulnerability principles) (see UNESCO 2003, Preamble). The group worked in a typical “practicis" manner (see Article 1), the criterion of moral acceptability being the degree of “internal consistency" with the moral principles accepted and “external consistency" with other moral rules concerning human rights. It also pursued consistency to the international law, sometimes by broadening the meaning of confidentiality and consent, so that the regulation cannot be imposed unless the legislation of the country allows it (DHGD, 2003). The expert group proposed a number of general philosophical options concerning human nature, freedom and responsibility (as opposed to biological reductionism, for example), in the light of which the document was conceived. The first draft of the document was issued in November 2002 and it was sent to the IBC to be analysed. Overall, there were seven meetings of the expert group, but they did not have the last word in the social and political approval of the Declaration: this belonged to a political group, representing all stakeholders.

To ensure coverage of the positions of all parties in the document, the draft was submitted to a public debate. The public character of a moral regulation and the requirement for it to be accepted by society at large (not imposed in a paternalistic way) seemed to be a necessary prerequisite for the next stage, which was the democratic exercise of transparency. This also presents a particular public policy, designed to address the multiple criteria (including moral, economic, religious, or other public representatives, will inevitably judge by multiple criteria (including moral, economic, religious, political and strategic ones), as well as rational and irrational factors, and will accept or reject P2 together with the RM. It will also establish the weight of this new regulation is a law or only a political directive?, what kind of penalties should be associated with it, and what kind of sanctions should be applied to the non-compliance. What follows is also an ethical step: the application of typical ethical tests (GPDE) and the writing of a moral report (RM) which gives the evaluation of the moral project, the new code or policy. Finally, at the level of GDP a new evaluation occurs; this uses both ethical and non-ethical criteria, but the presence of the non-ethical criteria does not affect the moral nature of P2. This means that GDP should not be seen as a group involved in ethical assessment, but as one meant to socially approve and impose a new moral rule, guided by moral and non-moral criteria. The requirement for the adoption of the new law or new moral public policy (but not of its moral assessment) is that it is always done on non-moral criteria too.

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The Pluralist Ethical Decision-making Group

The procedure of methodological pluralism that I am proposing here requires us to recognize all the tests derived from the great theories and all the decision-making frameworks independent of theories, and to give them an equal chance in the evaluation process; i.e. to use all of them inside a pluralistic ethical decision-making group (GPDE). This group should be composed of experts who know the investigated field well and who are also able to handle a moral decision method or know how to apply a general ethical doctrine or moral gestalt (such as the Christian one). An important step in such a process is the setting up of a panel of experts which knows the facts and is able to apply one of the following ethical decision-making methods:

• Here’s utilitarian method (or other utilitarian procedures);
• the principlist method;
• the ethical matrix;
• moral casuistry;
• Christian ethics;
• other ethical decision-making methods (such as the Kantian method, the ethics of care, virtue ethics, and so on).

How could we systematically coordinate such a heterogeneous decision-making group, characterized by divergent ethical views? Some would probably say that this process takes place spontaneously, as the case of the Belmont Commission shows. But none of us is omniscient or infallible and therefore it is preferable to control the process. We can do this, I suggest, by making the assessment team work under the procedure called the methodological ethical Delphi – a method that helps the group members to reduce the dispersion of their assessments and ultimately to propose a final (provisional) solution. As we have seen, the ethical Delphi is an “iterative participatory process between experts by utilizations of concepts and ideas from the experts’ points of view, to encourage ethical reflection and provide a rational basis for making ethical decisions. Practically, the GPDE could be structured by this process is the basis, by funneling the process, which becomes functional on demand. It has to have a monitor or coordinator (M) with experience and moral insight. M’s task is to coordinate the activities of the panel, allowing the experts to reach a consensus of the views expressed by the experts in the form of a conclusive social judgment. The experts’ capacity to obtain information about the preferences of all “stakeholders” and about the foreseen consequences of the policy assessed is crucial at this stage. The interaction of the panelists will also ensure clarification of their philosophical, religious or political commitments, so that all evaluators will judge the same facts, as far as possible. At this stage no methodological uniformity is desirable. Rather, methodological pluralism should be encouraged. The moral verdict (RM), even if provisional, has to make an evenhanded opinion of all the people on the panel (the statistical trend of opinions in the panel), on other moral considerations, on M’s own moral wisdom and power of persuasion, and on the aim of providing a pragmatic supplement to evaluative in mind is also obvious. It explains why the members of the group can reach a common result although they remain supporters of their initial divergent moral beliefs and principles.

The various methods of ethical decision-making mentioned above provide a strictly moral evaluation of the new rule or policy, regarded from various moral perspectives and from various angles. To reach a consensus does not mean reaching the correct result. The ethical Delphi, which is meant to generate convergence of opinions in conjunction with the set of ethical tests, only helps us to arrive at a clearer structure of the moral problem under discussion and to offer the political team a solid basis for decision-making. It identifies those topics that the group of experts considers important for the subject examined, various perspectives and various ethical rules may support the policy-makers by enhancing their moral creativity and capacity for ethical decision-making when faced with complex moral issues in situations of incomplete or disputed information. This evaluation process of undertaking the same act using several methods produces a strictly ethical verdict signed by the monitor; this moral decision is finalized in a report submitted to S. This report is most often decisive for the subject examined. The results of a Delphi procedure provide a “map” of the experts’ opinions on the subject examined. The results of a Delphi procedure provide a “map” of the experts’ opinions on the subject examined.

Moreover, a moral rule is a rule imposed by society (political or religious), but it is not imposed from outside, but self-imposed (pace Kant). To be self-imposed it must be known and publicly discussed. Public debate is an early step in the decision-making process. This can be carried out through press releases, manuals, consensus conferences, and similar. The democratic accreditation of the new rule is not a political fait accompli, but a necessary condition of its morality. Moral rules are public rules and a necessary condition of the existence of an ethical code is to be public. Therefore, to complete an ethical decision-making process we need to set up a second group, often consisting of not experts but of politicians, representing the public opinion of the people and so on; this second group is meant to take the final decision concerning the issue under assessment. It will consider first of all the ethical decision of the expert panel, but will also take into account the results of the public debate including, political, economic and legal opinions. The strictly ethical (technical) verdict is only one element of the broader political decision (which we might call the “broad ethical decision”), the latter being taken as a result of multi-criteria analysis. Ultimately, responsibility for the final decision belongs to the group of experts. The whole community concerned must participate in the development of new moral rules they will obey in the future. This is part of the modern conception of morality.

In fact, it is easy to see that a broad and ethical decision concerning the issue under assessment. It will consider first of all the ethical decision of the expert panel, but will also take into account the results of the public debate including, political, economic and legal opinions. The strictly ethical (technical) verdict is only one element of the broader political decision (which we might call the “broad ethical decision”), the latter being taken as a result of multi-criteria analysis. Ultimately, responsibility for the final decision belongs to the group of experts. The whole community concerned must participate in the development of new moral rules they will obey in the future. This is part of the modern conception of morality.

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a new scientific research or technology be assessed with the long-term potential consequences in view, even where uncertainty in the light of current science (the “precautionary principle”). Moreover is; have moral character the process of adopting a new policy ought to be autonomous: that is, it should not come from outside (from “rulers” or the staff of a company), but from inside (from the will of all the members of a country or organization). A code of ethics is morally imposed not by a paternalistic procedure but by one which is assumed freely and autonomously (L’Etang 1992). This reminds us again of Kant: the typical moral precedent of the internal sanction. Which brings us to another important point: an ethical code can be public. Moral evaluation issues should be moved from the narrow circle of experts to the public arena; they must be debated in a transparent manner with those affected by them. In a successful democracy the citizens’ attitudes should be known by the rulers and the rulers’ intentions known by those governed (the principle of transparency or publicity). This process may be left in the hands of hazard or it may be managed rationally. Regarding the moral assessment of actions, policies and similar, the most objective human point of view is not that of a certain moral theory or method, but the combined points of view of several theories or methods used for the benefit – and with the democratic participation – of a large number of people.

Concluding Remarks

The issues approached in this article do not belong to ethics in a narrow sense, nor to the practice of public policy among a group with divergent views on topics that have an ethical dimension, but to a kind of research – an academic practice which isolates the “ethical tests” in their theoretical technicality, that in the last instance, a real moral decision is a question of social agreement, and in some cases a political decision. Morality is a social institution, not a private choice. As for the GPDE, I see it as an expert group functioning on not following “theoretical” background: imagine the members of the group using not simplistic ethical tests (such as the calculation of consequences, the causistic comparison of a new case with the basic model, the categorical imperative, or similar) if they are grounded on ethical theories; instead, they use as a test a kind of Kuhadian paradigm, including several devices (including theories, fragments of theories, principles at different levels, the usual tests, paradigmatic examples, relevant analogies, ethical explanations which are not theories, and their own phronesis formed by using a given at hudgey) that could be used when and where needed. In short, they use a moral paradigm, which gives them a kind of gestalt for judging all concrete cases. Instead of the utilitarian test we shall have the utilitarian paradigm. In fact, this is the way we function as ethical evaluators. If we are Kantians, we see the moral world in Kantian colours. The theologian in the group will, for example, firmly claim the immorality of abortion (which is obvious in his gestalt), while the utilitarian may support the morality of abortion (which is also obvious in his gestalt), and a doctor with religious sensibility will adhere, at least in part, to the views of the others. This supposes a “change of paradigm”, a gestalt switch, which is difficult and essentially irrational process, the result of an intense and common activity of convincing partners by using both rational and irrational (persuasive) means. The moral discourse is used in this case, at least partly, as an instrument of persuasion, (in the emotivist meta-ethical tradition). And the result may be the adoption of one of the paradigms, or of a partly modified one. This could explain why a text as that of the Oviedo Convention on cloning was finally written in a Kantian style and not in another. In this approach, an ethical decision such as the setting up of a new moral rule is not a completely rational process. The result of this negotiation will be a verdict which is never final.

Of course, not all ethical decision-making tools are like those proposed in this article. This is a large scale one and, generally, ethical tools are relative to the context. Members of the community of applied ethicists are called to elaborate such instruments in accordance with various organizational and individual contexts, all of which fall under the form of a hierarchy of procedures. The individual methods of ethical decision-making may serve, for instance, the institutional formation of an ethical mind among all the employees.

To conclude, imagine at one extreme the moral philosopher with her ethical and meta-ethical complex problems, without a great interest in application; then a middle ground populated by applied ethicists of various kinds (among them managers of ethics, makers of methods, builders of ethical codes, specialists in ethical training and the formation of ethical thought); and at the other extreme the interested users of these new products originating in ethics – the managers and personnel of various organizations and the public at large. These all participate in specific ways in the contemporary game of applied ethics. The professional applied ethicist has to address the issues and try to help. Using what? Not the Nicomachean Ethics or the articles of Prichard on intuitionism, but an appropriate “ethical toolbox”. This article was intended as another tool in this ethical toolbox.