

LAW, ETHICS AND ECONOMICS



# The Good, the Bad, and the Just

*How Modern Men Shape Their World*

**RIËL VERMUNT**

# THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE JUST

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# The Good, the Bad, and the Just

## How Modern Men Shape Their World

RIËL VERMUNT

*Leiden University, The Netherlands*

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# Preface

When I started my academic education at Amsterdam University, the duration of the curriculum at that time was six years. It started with a three-year bachelor program and was followed by a three-year master's program. The feature that appealed to me most about the curriculum was the broad spectrum of courses that was offered in the bachelor phase. Although my major was social psychology, other disciplines were taught as well: sociology, pedagogy, philosophy, political science. The courses were mainly taught as lectures. Examinations in each field were oral, with the teacher posing questions about both the lectures and an additional 2,000 pages of reading material.

It was from these courses that my interest in scientific knowledge grew beyond its original focus of social psychology. This interest in other fields has not left me, and during my academic career I have, from time to time, been able to find outlets for the interests and knowledge I have acquired in related areas.

I developed a growing interest in the study of social justice: describing and explaining people's feelings of justice. I focused on the consequences of unjust behavior, and victims' reactions to injustice. Because feelings of justice have a psychological component as well as sociological, philosophical, legal, and political, the subject of justice was extremely suitable for an interdisciplinary approach. But it was only in one or two publications that I had the opportunity to apply the interdisciplinary approach. Now that I am in the fortunate position where impact factors and the number of publications do not matter so much, I am able to indulge in "interdisciplinarity."

In the past, I made an attempt to approach justice from a genuinely interdisciplinary perspective. Mel Lerner played a major role in my discovery of the justice motive, and focused me on the position justice has for people and for society (Lerner 1980). But my first attempt stalled, and I let it rest. The main issue was that I had no paradigm that could serve as an eventual link between the knowledge bases of the various disciplines. What was left was a chain of facts that lacked coherence. It was a great advance when I discovered the work of Foa and Foa (1974) on social resource theory. It was Kjell Törnblom, my Swedish friend and colleague, who introduced their writings to me. Kjell and I applied social resource theory to the study of social justice. We published articles and chapters in books in which we integrated theories of distributive justice, procedural justice, and social resource theory.

It took some time before I recognized what their work could mean for my thinking. That recognition came when I started to set out a justice model in which the focus is not primarily on people's reactions to others' unjust behaviors but on

the active component of people's just or unjust behavior: why and when and how do people act justly or unjustly? To describe this behavior, Foa and Foa's social resource theory was essential. The core of the theory for me is that behavior is viewed as the transmitter of resource allocations. In other words, the relevance of behavior is situated in the allocation of scarce resources.

This book is the result of my thinking. Its realization could not have been achieved without the scientific, pragmatic, and moral support of the people around me: Gezinus Wolters, Leiden University, for explaining neuropsychological phenomena and theories; Jeroen Vermunt, my son, for making the illustrations and figures; the department of social and organizational psychology, Leiden University, for the financial support. And I will not forget the hours with my colleagues in the scientific garden at the Social Science Faculty of Leiden University. I am most grateful to Alison Kirk and her colleagues at Ashgate for their creativity and their efforts to improve the quality of this work.

I have taken the rather unusual decision to offer advice on how best to approach this book. For the impatient reader who would like to have a quick overview, I advise reading the Epilogue first, but only the section entitled "Demonstration." If they are still interested in the rest of the book, I advise them to read the Prologue, and from that text to decide which chapters interest them most. Of course, I would like to believe that readers are as eager as I was when starting this journey of the human adventure and its societal, social, and psychological ramifications, to follow the steps from beginning to end. However, maybe I am asking too much of the reader. Anyway, the advice is well-meant, and I hope that readers will understand it that way.

## References

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- Lerner, M.J. 1980. *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*. New York: Springer.

*I combine well-known ideas and principles in a new way.*

Prof. Dr E. Verlinde, theoretical physicist, *VPRO gids*, 37, 2011 AD

*It is, indeed, no easy task ... to give to all a natural manner, and to each its peculiar nature.*

Pliny the Elder, Book I, Dedication, 77 AD

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# Prologue: The Justice Model

## A Theoretical Notion of Social Justice

We know that from the beginning of written history, people have asked themselves the question: what is justice? Although Greek philosophers coined the term justice, behaviors and attitudes with regard to the exchange of goods (resources) must have been developed long before that period. For instance, following the period when people settled more permanently in fertile areas and agriculture developed, they produced more food than they could consume and began to exchange this food for other goods. Questions must have come up as to how much should food cost—that is, how much, in terms of goods or services, can be asked for the labor to produce the food? Or how much of a certain type of food should be exchanged for what amount of other goods? All sorts of rules may have been tried out until some were accepted by most of the agents involved in the exchange. The assumption is that the rules that have survived were those that were beneficial for individual members of the group or category, as well as for the group or category as a whole. These accepted rules of exchange were coined “just” rules. The social environment is constantly changing, giving rise to new behavioral and social patterns. How rules of fair exchange and allocation of resources develop, how people decide what is right or wrong in terms of allocation, and how psychological and social processes affect fair allocation of food and other resources in the changing world is the subject matter of this book.

## The Allocation Event

A large part, or for some scholars all, of the interactions between people concern the exchange or allocation of resources, like goods, money, or information. A resource is anything of value for the interacting parties, and can be material, such as money or goods, or immaterial, like love or information (Foa and Foa 1974). These authors distinguish six resource classes, the four classes mentioned already—money, goods, love (affection), information—along with status (respect) and service (giving support). *Love* is an expression of affectionate regard, warmth, or comfort. *Status* indicates an evaluative judgment that conveys prestige, regard, or esteem. *Services* involve activities that affect the body or belongings of a person and that often constitute labor for another. *Information* includes advice, opinions, instruction, or enlightenment, but excludes those behaviors that could be classified as love or status. *Money* is any coin, currency, or token that has some standard

unit of exchange value. *Goods* are tangible products, objects, or materials. A specific group of goods is food: a tangible, edible product that increases someone's physical and social mass. Each resource has a positive valence (reward, affection) or a negative one (punishment, hate). Allocation of resources between two interacting parties should be differentiated from exchange of resources. Exchange is defined as a sequence of resource allocations: allocation of resources by one party is followed by or is simultaneous with allocation of resources by the other. The fundamental act is thus allocation of resources, and that will be the focus of this book.

An interaction in which resources are allocated is called an allocation event. An allocation event is instigated by an actor who has discretionary power to allocate a resource between himself and other(s)—recipient(s)—or between two or more recipients mutually. The actor makes decisions to allocate resources to or among recipients. What the actor allocates is labeled here an “allocated resource” or “distribution of the allocation decision”; these terms are used interchangeably. The rules the actor uses to make the allocation decision are labeled “procedure.” Distribution and procedure are evaluated in terms of justice or fairness. Examples of allocation events are fathers dividing candy between their children, or a child who, at a birthday party, divides small presents between self and friends. The child who is asked to divide candy could keep all the candy, or could give away all the candy to another. The child could also divide the candy evenly, so that all children get the same amount of candy. It is not only the actor and recipient(s) who are part of an allocation event, other parties can be distinguished as well. Observers of the allocation event, although not actually receiving a part of the resource, may be very important for the final evaluation of the event because they were past recipients, or may become future recipients, or they may be otherwise affected by the allocation decision. Thus, actors may take into account observers' evaluation of the allocation event in their allocation decision. For instance, in many countries, governmental representatives negotiate with representatives of the police unions for the next work agreement for police personnel. The personnel of other governmental agencies, such as the garbage collecting agency, and their unions, will follow the negotiations closely since they are the next in line for work agreement negotiations. But other citizens will also watch the negotiations closely. An efficiently operating and satisfied police force is in the interest of all citizens. Because of the crucial position of the police force in society, the government, as well as the unions, will keep a close eye on public opinion. Another example is the father who offers a present to one of his children at the child's birthday party and takes the (tacit) opinions of his wife and other children in choosing the present into account. All parties will, for instance, compare the present with what others (siblings) received. Not only is it important that the birthday girl is satisfied and feels well treated, but also his wife and his other children. A gift will be given and received with the greatest enthusiasm if all parties have the feeling that everyone is, in one way or another, satisfied.

Allocation decisions are evaluated in terms of justice. The child who gives all other children equal amounts of candy is said to act justly. The child who keeps all the candy is said to act unjustly, or more precisely egoistically, while the child who gives away all the candy acts not justly, but altruistically. The question is, how can just acts be differentiated from egoistic acts and altruistic acts? The answer to this question is given by the social justice model.

## **The Justice Model**

From the above description of allocation events, it is possible to arrive at the important components of the social justice model. In my view, a social justice model should include four components, reflecting the why, what, and how questions of allocation behavior, as well as the reaction component. The four components are:

- i. The justice motive component, which describes and explains an actor's just allocation behavior.
- ii. The moral component, which describes and explains an actor's moral decision-making, focusing on respect for the other.
- iii. The psychological component, which describes and explains how emotions, cognitions, and social relationships ameliorate or worsen the operation of the justice motive.
- iv. The reaction component, which describes and explains recipients' and also observers' reactions to unjust allocation decisions.

Components (i), (ii), and (iii) can be subsumed under what Greenberg (1987) coined "active justice," because they concern the activities of the actor. Component (iv) can be subsumed under "reactive justice," because it concerns the reactions of recipients and observers to received resources. The main focus of the book is on describing and explaining active justice.

In the four above-mentioned components, several terms need to be defined before we can proceed with their elaboration. An allocation decision is taken by the actor in an allocation event. An allocation decision is accompanied by appropriate behavior that directly or indirectly leads to the actual distribution. For instance, one can give flowers personally or through an intermediary like a mail agency. People are involved, which means that people in some way are related to each other or feel related to each other. Let us think of a group or category of people, such as the family, a neighborhood, a work group or people who watch television. In such a setting, in an allocation event in which resources are allocated, three parties are involved: actor, recipient, and observer.

Justice can be studied from different angles. One angle is to view justice as part of morality. It will be contended in chapters 3 and 4 that only resource allocation forms the basis of morality, specifically the allocation of respect (status). Therefore, I will not discuss justice by starting with a study of morality. Another angle is to



view justice as motivated by psychological processes: as an individual motive (Vermunt 2002). I will start from the two fundamental motives that play a role in resource allocation processes: egoism or self-love, and altruism or other-love. Justice, as the go-between of egoism and altruism, will be described as the drive to do well to others while taking into account one's own position in deciding about resource allocation (chapters 1 and 2). Attempts to allocate resources fairly may be hindered or advanced by social or psychological processes, as described in chapters 5 and 6.

## **The Justice Motive Component**

Many people are convinced that human beings are selfish, that is, that their behavior is directed at increasing their own welfare, often at the expense of the welfare of others. For them, selfishness is good, and "otherishness" is bad. For other people, who are more concerned about the welfare of others, otherishness is good and selfishness is bad. But if the observation is correct and people *only* behave selfishly, how could individuals survive the conflict that placed everyone against everyone else that would logically follow from purely selfish behavior? And how could groups develop as they did and still do? In the same vein, one can ask the question how groups of people would survive if their own interests and life were so poor as not to be worth defending? To answer these questions we should first look more carefully at selfishness, or self-love, and its counterpart, otherishness, or other-love.

### *Self-love and Other-love*

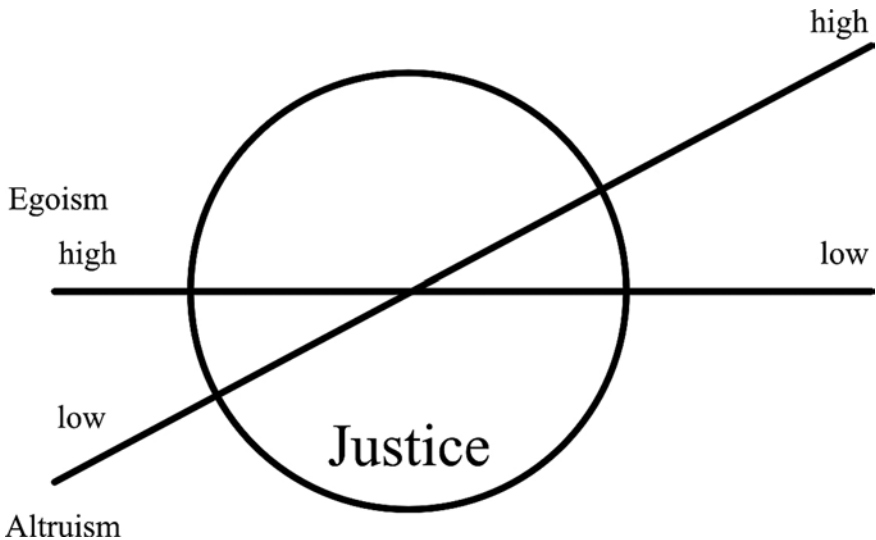
Egoism is defined by Batson (1991) as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing one's own welfare. Egoism, or psychological egoism, defends the view that human beings always act from one single motive: self-love. In the egoistic view, what satisfies one's own needs is seen as just. So, it is judged as just when persons satisfy their needs even if this is detrimental to others. But in this view it is also seen as just when persons satisfy their needs by helping others: such an altruistic act satisfies the motive of self-love. Psychological egoism states that all motives are self-regarding, even motives directed at helping or comforting others, because helping others satisfies a personal need. It is obvious that this argumentation has several drawbacks. As Batson and others explain, having pleasure, as a consequence of helping others, does not imply that pleasure-seeking is the ultimate goal of helping. It can be a mere by-product of helping. Moreover, the egoistic view denies the existence of other motives than self-love. And as a methodological consequence, statements about the self-love motive are not testable—they cannot be refuted—and thus are not scientific statements.

Another, more important, objection against the concept of psychological egoism is that even if the origin of a motive is relevant, the direction of the action

that is instigated by the motive may be more relevant. Is it directed to increase one's own welfare or well-being, or the welfare or well-being of another? It makes a huge difference in intentionality, as well, if one tries to help another or oneself, whether both motives originate from one and the same origin or not. If there is self-love in helping another, there is less self-interest involved than helping oneself. Helping oneself satisfies a personal need *and* it increases one's own welfare or well-being. Helping another satisfies a personal need, and increases the *other's* welfare or well-being. The concept of altruism or psychological altruism has the same drawbacks as the concept of egoism.

Self-love, the motive that is seemingly the driving force behind any action, is seen from the psychological egoism point of view as a discrete entity. Batson (1991) differentiates between egoism and altruism, and views egoism and altruism as opposite poles of a dichotomous category. In my view, self-love is not a category but a dimension that can run from total self-love to negligible self-love and all positions in between. The amount of self-love motivation is one component that makes an act more or less selfish. Altruism can be viewed as a dimension as well, running from high altruism to low or zero altruism. The two dimensions form the axes in a two-dimensional space, though the axes are not perpendicular to each other, denoting that high egoism goes together with low altruism and vice versa. The two dimensions are depicted in Figure P.1. The horizontal axis is the egoism dimension running from low to high, and the tilted axis is the altruism dimension, running from high to low. Within this structure, justice can be positioned as an oval that is situated between the altruism and egoism axes—a bit further away. The design of the oval is such that there are positions in the oval in which egoism exceeds altruism. In other words, there may be situations where egoism rather than altruism can be defended on the basis of justice arguments. For instance, in a situation of illness it is considered just that the actor should take more. We may infer from Figure P.1 that altruism, or keeping an eye on the welfare and well-being of others, is sometimes more dominant than one's own well-being or welfare, but that one's own well-being is not forgotten. The oval may be smaller or larger, or may be situated at another position, more to the right or left, or more to the top or to the bottom, but the figure is clear that justice on the one hand and egoism and altruism on the other hand are related, but are not the same.

Viewing egoism and altruism as dimensions is related to Schokkaert's list of motives (Schokkaert 2006) that run from self-interest via reciprocity to pure altruism: a dimension of motives with egoism and altruism as opposite ends of the dimension and mixed motives in between. This seems attractive, but a one-dimensional representation of the two motives gives the impression that egoism and altruism have one and the same underlying principle. And that need not be the case. As is shown on brain image pictures, the operation of each motive occurs at different positions in the brain's physical substrate. Moreover, some authors state that pure altruism brings costs for the individual and is quite a different process from pure egoism. Elster (2006) defines true altruism as "the willingness to incur a loss of material welfare to enhance the welfare (material or not) of others."



**Figure P.1** Egoism, altruism, and justice

Incurring costs for oneself and the probably related distress is quite different from pleasure-seeking: helping other to fulfill a personal need. Altruism is also described in terms of utility. To link, for instance, actor's utility to recipients' utility, one can view resource allocation as a sort of gift-giving (Kolm 2006: 7) from the actor to the recipients. A gift is a resource that is given to increase another's satisfaction. In other words, the actor's utility is not achieved by selfishly consuming the resource, but is derived from the consumption of the resource by others. Kolm developed an equation relating the actor's satisfaction to the recipients' consumption.

*Allocation Motive: Intensity, Direction and Content*

For some, a negligible amount of self-love seems to be a natural attitude toward the social environment. It is as if they are easily moved to help others in need without much deliberation or mental calculation. When they see another person in distress their natural reaction is to help the other. Others have a natural attitude of self-love. They show mistrust toward others as if the others are motivated to decrease their welfare and well-being. Selfish people help themselves in the first place and find this behavior a natural and just way of doing things. "Otherish" persons help others without calculating their own costs. Other people show a mixture of self-love and other-love. They will help others, but not at all costs—their own interests are factored into their decisions to allocate resources between self and others. For these people it is a challenge to help another if they only see a small return compensation now or in the near future. Moreover, it is also a challenge when they

expect to incur costs by helping another. If they help another, with only a small chance of compensation or moderately high chance of incurring costs, one can label that help as a strong example of fair or just behavior. One cannot label this behavior selfish or otherish. The intensity of a just allocation motive may thus be high or low. Those with a low or weak justice motive ask for more compensation and are not prepared to incur higher costs by helping another. Those acting from justice motivation have to overcome resistance in the sense that their tendency for self-love pulls them toward not acting, while their tendency for other-love pulls them in the direction of indiscriminate acting. For some individuals, their self-love or other-love must be massaged to act in a balanced way. The Good Samaritan acted altruistically in helping the victim, while the Jewish Priest and Levite acted egoistically by refusing to help the victim. Neither act is labeled fair or unfair. The Good Samaritan or the Priest/Levite would be said to act unfairly if they had asked for a large sum of money for the help. However, the Good Samaritan would be said to have acted justly if he had asked the recovered victim for appropriate compensation for the costs he had incurred. Moreover, because the Jewish Priest and Levite did not show respect for the victim, by neglecting him, they acted immorally.

Helping oneself or helping another are opposites with regard to the object the act is directed at: self or other. For high self-love individuals, the perception of people in need is distressing because of the consideration that helping decreases one's own welfare. To evaluate the justice of an act, it is essential to consider whether one acts toward oneself—the act is primarily directed at reducing one's own distress while helping an other—or toward the other—the act is primarily directed at reducing the other's distress. In other words, is the act intended to increase or decrease one's own welfare or the welfare of the other?

In evaluating the selfishness or otherishness of an act, both the direction of the act (to self or to the other) and the content of the act are relevant. One can help another or one can harm another: helping another is generally seen as just, while doing harm to another is not. In this respect, Batson defines altruism as "a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another's welfare." The act is directed at the other and the motivation is to increase the other's welfare or well-being.

An additional element in the evaluation process is what the consequences of an act are. A person may be motivated to harm another, but the outcome might be that the other benefits from the act. For instance, your boss evaluates your work negatively (according to you, the boss did not take all relevant information into account) and designates you to a task which he is convinced you will be unable to complete satisfactorily. He is eager to show that he is right about your incompetence. But if you fulfill the task adequately you will rise in your colleagues' esteem. Was the boss's decision not so egoistic after all? Another example is the person who helps another but with detrimental effects for the other's well-being: You give the support the other asks for, but in the circumstances the effect is to increase the other's distress. Was the support given less altruistic? In both cases,

the consequences will probably affect the selfishness/otherishness evaluation of the act. Concluding, evaluation of the type of motive instigating an act may be influenced by the intensity, content, direction, as well as the consequences of the act. Let us look more carefully at the justice view with these concepts in mind.

### *The Justice View*

It seems that justice more than egoism and altruism demands cognitive activity to arrive at the justice evaluation of a certain division of goods. According to the view of psychological and ethical egoism, a just distribution of goods is the one that allocates all the goods to the person him/herself. Therefore, a justice evaluation of an egoistically derived allocation is simple: It is just if the person him/herself receives all that there is to allocate. No reference needs to be made to another. According to the view of ethical altruism, if the term ethical altruism exists at all, a just distribution of goods is the one that allocates all the goods to the other. In the same way, the justice evaluation of an altruistically derived allocated resource is simple as well: It is just if the other receives all there is to allocate. No reference needs to be made to the allocator him/herself. When an evaluation is made about an allocated resource in which both the needs of the allocating person as well as those of the receiver are taken into account, a sort of cognitive algebra is needed to arrive at the evaluation that the allocation process is performed justly. This is called a justice evaluation (see also Jasso 1978).

Thus, the egoistic as well as the altruistic view of human behavior is rather one-sided: The behavior, so it seems, is directed toward oneself, disregarding of the other, or toward the other, disregarding the self. This is not a realistic presentation of people's behavior. People do not often behave in a way that is purely directed at others or purely directed at self. In other words, people are not often purely selfish (egoistic) or purely otherish (altruistic). People mostly take into account the position of others as well as their own position. And it is this taking both subjects into account—me and other—that makes an act, in principle, just. Justice bridges egoism and altruism. In principle, because taking both positions into account does not, in itself, make a just act. As was said before, the motivation is also essential for labeling an act as just. Thus, to help another while taking into account one's own position is a just act when the positions are balanced. An act aimed at helping the self while harming another is not a just act. The agent indeed takes both positions—self and other—into account, but the act is not aimed at helping the other.

Justice may thus be regarded as taking a position in between these two views. It not only takes the "me" (self-love) or the "you" (other-love) into account, but both you and me. But taking both into account can go two ways: One way is that the focus is on the "me" with "other" as a reference point. The vision in which the other is seen as a reference point assumes that helping oneself is only possible if one offers part of the resource to the other. In this view, the focus is on self and the agent is motivated to favor him/herself, but realizes that this is only possible if the

other is favored as well. In essence, thus, it is a selfish strategy and is primarily not directed at the well-being or welfare of the other. Allocations with “self” as the focus are based on the weak justice motive: the person is willing to help another, but only because it is beneficial to the self as well. The other way is that the focus is on the “other,” with the “me” as the reference point. Allocations with the “other” as the focus are manifestations of the strong justice motive.

### *The Operation of the Justice Motive*

This idea of rational other-love is best realized in the justice motive. As said, according to the justice motive view, a person evaluates the justice of an allocation by taking into account what the other receives as well as what the person receives. Both components of the evaluation process originate from the evaluating person, but the objects of the evaluation are other as well as oneself. According to the psychological egoism view, the person who likes to satisfy both needs of self-love—having pleasure in helping oneself and in helping the other—will be a person who has to make a split. Sometimes this person prefers to help him/herself and sometimes he/she prefers to help the other. Helping is not done primarily from a justice motive but from a hedonic motive.

Just behavior is behavior that is aimed at increasing the welfare and well-being of the recipient (and observer). The actor thus behaves according to what is generally referred to as the justice motive. Some scholars argue that actors have a sense of social responsibility to help and thus to increase welfare and the well-being of the recipient. But, according to Lerner’s theory of justice (Lerner 1977), actors only help or allocate justly if they think the recipient deserves it. In Lerner’s view, children learn to postpone direct need satisfaction in order to gain more in the future. In a stable environment these experiences lead to the notion that one gets what one deserves and is entitled to: the personal contract. Only if the actor thinks that the recipient deserves it will the actor divide resources justly. If, however, the actor thinks that recipient does not deserve a certain amount of a resource, the actor will not provide the resource. The child celebrating her birthday will give candies to the invited children and not to the uninvited.

Lerner’s justice motive explanation is focused on a “deservingness” evaluation of one of the parties in the interaction, for instance, on the recipient’s deservingness. Why not take into account the attribution of deservingness and entitlement of the actor, recipient, and observers? The Good Samaritan is focused on the deservingness of the other: is convinced that the victim deserves to be helped. The Jewish Priest does not think in terms of the other’s deservingness, but of his own deservingness: he is convinced that he is entitled not to incur costs by helping.

As Lerner has indicated, the growing child learns from being rewarded and/or punished that good consequences follow from good behavior and bad consequences from bad behavior. Lerner assumes that these reward–punishment chains are generalized to the behavior of others as well, resulting in a belief that

the world is a just place where people get what they deserve. But if the justice theory, according to Lerner, emphasizes commitment to the personal contract, how can one explain that, for instance, in helping behavior, a recipient's deservingness is taken into account but not the actor's own deservingness? Both of these deservingness considerations should be taken into account in a justice theory. It might result in a more or less balanced decision for the actor to help or not.

Consideration of the deservingness of observers is relevant as well. If the actor has to decide whether to help the neighbor, the actor may take into account that helping now will affect future behavior toward another neighbor. The actor can decide then that in this case the obligation (Folger 2001) toward the first neighbor is less than future obligations when other neighbors may ask the same.

The introduction of own deservingness in transactions may also explain why people offer more resources when a small gift is used, for instance a pencil, to encourage helping. Lerner explains this by referring to societal norms that govern exchange behavior. Offering a small present changes helping into a more generally accepted economic exchange in which altruistic helping becomes an economic activity. Lerner (1980) showed that participants in the study offered more money in conditions in which a small gift (of negligible financial value) was allocated by the actor (the person at the door) than in those conditions where there was no such gift. But receiving a small gift might be interpreted by the participant as compensation for being bothered by the actor's fate and by showing that the actor understands the participant's deservingness: "I understand that you do not deserve to be bothered by me and my project, but with this small gift I would like to offer some compensation." Moreover, it might also be assumed that the participant weighs his own deservingness of becoming involved in and bothered by the actor's fate against the actor's deservingness. And if the participants evaluate the actor's deservingness to be higher than theirs, the participants will offer a gift. If, however, the participants evaluate their deservingness higher than the actor's, they will not be inclined to help. This interpretation of justice theory gives a more important role to deservingness than in Lerner's formulation. It makes the elements of deservingness and entitlement in justice theory—when these assumptions are corroborated—more prominent. Moreover, this view supports the notion that justice is a balance between own interests and others' interests. If this idea is correct, one can ask the question what the Jewish Priest could have done for the victim while still bearing in mind his own interests? Instead of helping directly he could have warned people or paid other people to help the victim. The Priest's status would not have been reduced and it would have shown him to be a man of compassion, which is appropriate for a priest.

Folger's deonance approach (Folger 2001; Folger, Cropanzano, and Goldman 2005) deviates somewhat from Lerner's justice motive approach (Lerner 1980). In Folger's approach, justice is viewed as an ethical standard that creates an obligation to disregard the self-interest of material or immaterial benefits (see also the concept of moral mandate, Skitka and Houston 2001). Turillo et al. (2002) view fairness or justice as "an ethical standard conceived independently of self-



interest so that it can act as a constraint against an otherwise unfettered self-interest" (841). According to the deontic approach, justice is a human motive "that can rise above self-interest" (841). In their study, participants observed an actor treating a recipient unfairly by offering only 10 percent and keeping 90 percent of a sum of money. Observers were prepared to accept a loss of money if that guaranteed that no money at all would go to the actor who kept 90 percent for himself (Turillo et al. 2002). The authors explain the observers' self-sacrificing behavior as a demonstration of the operation of the justice motive.

Starting from the definition of altruism, these results can be explained in terms of the operation of the altruistic motive (Batson 1991; Elster 2006). An actor who allocates the financial reward evenly between self and other is relatively disadvantaged (receives \$5) compared to an actor who takes 90 percent for himself (receives 6\$). An observer is prepared to sacrifice money in order to "compensate" for the misfortune of the 50 percent actor. In the case of punishing an advantageous actor, the observer pays less to an advantageous actor (18/2) then to a less advantageous actor (10/10). That seems rather altruistic.

Interesting in Folger's approach is that fairness as ethical principle acts as a constraint to self-interest. People have an obligation to help when another is in need. The deontic approach "represents a way of understanding fairness-related phenomena that points to the key role of morally accountable conduct" (Folger, Cropanzano, and Goldman 2005: 230). One should add to this statement that people have an obligation toward the self as well—they can be held responsible for what they do to themselves. In the balanced view of justice propagated here, people not only have obligations to others but also to themselves.

## **The Moral Component**

Morality, in short, concerns the appropriate allocation of the resource status (respect). The justice model thus includes a moral component. This statement is not without risk. Many scholars will fervently defend the theoretical notion that justice is part of morality, rather than morality being part of justice. I agree in this debate with developmental psychologist Kohlberg (1981), who viewed moral development as principally concerned with justice. How then can justice and morality be related? To answer this question I will give the following example that was put forward by Folger (Folger, Cropanzano, and Goldman 2005): "Consider a supervisor who gives an incomplete, 'positive spun' explanation for a key decision, versus one who treats a subordinate rudely and disrespectfully. The latter action would likely be viewed as immoral. The former might be a bit sloppy, but 'immoral' seems too strong a word" (230). Why is one behavior labeled immoral and the other not? The authors do not answer this question. One answer might be that treating people disrespectfully highly reduces others' status and integrity, while giving incomplete information does that to a lesser extent. Receiving complete information tells recipients that the actor evaluates their status highly,



while incompleteness of the information reduces it. Attacking others' integrity and status is immoral. Both actions are immoral, the one more than the other.

Haidt (Haidt and Graham 2007) defends the view that morality is more than justice. The author distinguishes psychological foundations of morality, of which fairness/reciprocity and harm/care are only two. The other three foundations are in-group/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. According to Haidt, societies developed virtues based on these five psychological foundations. The psychological foundations run parallel with built-in intuitions. The interesting issue with the five foundations is that the first two refer to the basic principle of equality, while the other three refer to inequality. Respect for authority implies disrespect for subordinates; in-group loyalty implies discrimination to other groups. Purity/sanctity refers to inequality based on opinions about human nature. Moreover, the group value model of justice (Lind and Tyler 1988) and the relational model of authority in groups (Tyler and Lind 1992) are connected, respectively, to Haidt's in-group/loyalty and authority/respect modules of morality. In other words, the first two foundations reflect compassion for human beings in general, while the last three foundations reflect compassion for particular human beings. In my view, a morality should be based on respect for all human beings.

In terms of allocation events in which resources are allocated between parties, status and information are both resources to be allocated. As described earlier, status and information are only two of the six resource classes that parties allocate in interactions with each other. For instance, in the psychology/economy literature, allocation of money and goods and fairness reactions to the received resource are studied. In the procedural justice literature, fairness reactions to allocation of less tangible goods like service (caring about the recipient) and information (giving accurate information) are studied. And as Folger's example shows, rude behavior and a recipient's fairness reaction are also investigated. In all these examples scholars assume that people react in terms of fairness to deserved as well as undeserved outcomes of allocation decisions. But, specifically in the case of status allocation, the term moral seems to be appropriate. Moral behavior, therefore, can best be defined as allocating status (respect, dignity) to another. Morality in this sense has three flavors: respect for persons, social relationships, and groups (society).

### *Allocation Rules and Morality: Respect for Persons*

Recipients react to outcomes of allocation decisions in terms of fairness. But how can actors, recipients, and observers decide whether an act is fair or morally right? The stance defended here, and worked out in detail in chapters 3 and 4, is that allocation decisions should be founded on good argumentation. Actors should underpin allocation decisions with good reasons. Of course, it is sometimes difficult to decide whether an argument is valid, but in furthering groups, organizations, and societies, people developed and develop rules for smooth interactions and to reduce conflict. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is a set of rules to

guide and evaluate the way people should be treated. Although one can observe many violations of this set of rules, its existence gives human rights watchers, governments, and non-governmental organizations important tools for criticizing violations and eventually bringing responsible persons to justice. The process of rule development and acceptance is often accompanied by conflict, and it takes time before rules are generally accepted. Sometimes, catastrophes, war, or severe accidents may lead to new rules and increased acceptance of rules. The ferocities of the First and Second World Wars were the starting point of the development of rules for warfare such as the Geneva Convention for behavior toward captured soldiers, as well as toward civilians. The rules are used as argumentation to legitimize a certain course of action: My act is fair or morally right because it is in line with one of the rules of the Geneva Convention or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Morally wrong or right applies well when it concerns the need rule. The need rule is often applied to people who are in a dependent relationship to others, like children, sick people, the elderly, or captured soldiers. The essence of the need rule is that the need state of the dependent person is the ground for allocation of resources. In other words, the recipient's status (need position) is taken into account. The higher the need, the higher the care should be. Treating someone in need inappropriately harms that person's dignity and is said to be immoral. Haidt and Joseph (2007) relate this behavior to one of the five moral modules, the one prescribing care for the needy and to avoid doing harm to them. Another moral module Haidt and Joseph differentiate with regard to persons is authority/respect, which is subsumed here under status allocation.

In the literature, moral dilemmas are described in abundance to show how difficult it often is to act in a morally right fashion. These dilemmas are discussed in Chapter 3.

### *Allocation Rules and Morality: Respect for Social Relationships*

Aristotle described several rules for maintaining good relationships between citizens, between citizens and state, and between state and citizens. The justice with which Aristotle was concerned has two branches: the distributive one of honors and the like among citizens by the state, and of private property by contract and agreement; and the corrective, the remedying of unfair distribution. The distribution is a question not of equality, but of right proportion; and this applies to retribution, which is recognized as one of its aspects. Later on, these rules of allocation became more detailed. Take the rule of right proportion. Adams (1965) elaborated on this idea by incorporating what A receives (outcome) in relation to what A invests (input) as compared to what B receives in relation to what B invests. When the ratio of inputs and outcomes of A is in proportion to those of B, A's received resource will be evaluated as fair. Research data shows that this rule is widely applied in all kinds of settings where people make investments. For instance, the rule will be applied in the work situation. When an actor allocates

resources (a bonus, for instance) in negotiations with group members, the equity rule will serve as guideline for the allocation decision. The actor will presumably argue that a group member has made this level of investment and that a certain reward is appropriate. In other words, the actor offers appropriate arguments for the distribution resulting in a higher justice evaluation of the offer and thus in higher chances of acceptance of the offer than without the arguments. In the case of financial reward, the allocated resource is evaluated in terms of justice or fairness and not in terms of being morally right or wrong.

It is generally accepted that these rules of distribution are not viewed as appropriate under all conditions. Lerner (1980), for instance, assumed that in close relationships the need and equality rule are more dominant than the equity rule, and that in economic transactions the equity rule is more dominant than the equality rule. These distribution rules are, to a large extent, accepted in most Western societies. This means that in distributing resources like salary or goods, reference will be made to the rules. And acceptance of a certain division is greater and people find the distribution more just if actors make explicit reference to the rules. In other words, distribution rules are used as reasons to justify a distribution of resources among recipients. It must be emphasized again that distributions as described are evaluated in terms of justice and not of morality.

Next to distributive rules, in prescribing how much of a resource a recipient should get, the actor may apply rules that prescribe how the relationship between actor and recipient should be. These rules or criteria are not primarily used to give recipients their due, but they are applied to express the quality of the relationship between actor and recipients. In this sense they can be labeled relational values: values by which the relationship between people is evaluated. Tyler and Lind (1992) assume that the three most important relational values indicate how morally right an actor is toward recipient and observers: the actor should be impartial, should respect recipients as well as observers, and should behave in such a way that he/she can be trusted. Haidt and Joseph (2007) would subsume these behaviors under the moral module of authority/respect. Impartiality means that the actor gives equal consideration and attention to the behaviors, opinions, and attitudes of all involved; respect means that the actor highly values the persons displaying the behaviors, opinions, and attitudes, irrespective of how he/she values the persons' behaviors, opinions, and attitudes; trust means that the actor displays the same behavior and opinion toward all involved and in all situations. In many cultures, impartiality (or neutrality), respect, and trust are basic values, and applying these values in allocation processes will elicit positive feelings and just evaluations, while not applying these values in allocation decisions will elicit negative feelings and evaluations of having been treated unjustly. Procedural rules, therefore, are often regarded as more important for assessing justice than distributive rules, except for the allocation of status.

Types of concrete allocation behavior, subsumed under the umbrella of the three abstract values neutrality, respect, and trust, have been developed by researchers in recent decades. Leventhal (1980), for instance, proposed the following

criteria for evaluating the fairness of a procedure: consistency, bias suppression, accuracy, correctability, ethicality, representativeness. Further developments of procedural justice focused on criteria for the assessment of interactional justice (Bies and Moag 1986), emphasizing interpersonal sensitivity, such as not asking inappropriate questions.

Because recipients apply these criteria to evaluate the morality and fairness of the allocation event, actors can be motivated to use the criteria to justify their allocation decisions. Implementing, for instance, the accuracy rule, increases a recipient's trust in the actor, and thus increases the recipient's positive feelings, justice and moral evaluations, and acceptance of the allocation decision. Thus, the actor may announce that he/she will allocate the resource in proportion to the hours worked and that he/she will accurately count the worked hours (an indication of trustworthy behavior). In doing so, the actor gave good reasons for their allocation behavior and this behavior will likely be evaluated as just.

When the above-mentioned distributive and procedural rules for resource allocation touch vital parts of the recipient's life, property, integrity, or dignity—that is, the recipient's essential status—neglecting these rules will be evaluated as immoral behavior.

### *Allocation Rules and Morality: Respect for the Group*

Does Cinderella's stepmother have respect for her children? The stepmother and her daughters treat Cinderella with disdain, while she rewards her daughters. Cinderella does not get the same beautiful clothes and treatment as the two daughters. The stepmother neglects Cinderella's essential status. Moreover, the stepmother does not care about creating harmony in the group of children she is responsible for. She makes no attempt to increase happiness and justice for all (in-group/loyalty, Haidt and Joseph 2007). On the contrary, she increases differences in wealth and treatment between her daughters and Cinderella.

Maximization of people's justice experiences, as well as minimization of differences between people with regard to these experiences, is a crucial element of moral and just decision-making (Rawls 1971). Thus, it is not only crucial that the distributing actor has just motivation and proper argumentation for the allocation decision, but the actor should pay attention to the way the decision finds its way through to the receiving group of people.

Rawls (1971) described a social arrangement based on the aggregative–distributive dichotomy. According to Rawls, a just society can be achieved by applying the two principles: “the basic structure of society is to be designed first to produce the most good in the sense of the greatest net balance of satisfaction and second to distribute satisfaction equally” (Rawls 1971: 36). From a social psychological as well as from a justice and moral point of view, the “maximin” principle is highly interesting. From the justice point of view, maximization of justice experiences and minimizing differences in in/justice feelings between group members is widely described as being beneficial for the recipient as well as

for the group as a whole. Although this idea has not been worked out fully in the ethics literature, in the justice area some findings point to the detrimental effects of injustice between groups. Urry (1973), for instance, has pointed out that not absolute differences in wealth between groups initiates protest and revolution, but the relative deprivation of one group versus another. The same conclusion can be drawn with regard to members of a group. These observations may lead to the conclusion that, for the “maximin” principle, differences in allocated resource between group members—the relative position with respect to the resource—are more important than the absolute position with regard to the resource. The question is whether these observations apply to allocation of status and respect as well. Or, with regard to status allocation and the moral evaluation of received respect, is the difference between group members in received respect less important than the absolute respect received? Referring to the Cinderella case: Is it the disrespectful treatment of Cinderella that elicits moral outrage or is it Cinderella’s disrespectful treatment in relation to the treatment the other daughters received?

Rawls (1971) labeled the notion about group justice—mean justice evaluations as well as deviations between justice evaluations—as a theory of the intuitive type, because one cannot logically derive the precedence of one element over the other. In other words, both elements are of equal importance in assessing the justice of an allocation decision. That is, an allocation decision should result in the highest mean justice experience for all involved, as well as the smallest difference between the justice experiences of all involved. But there may be arguments for giving priority to one of the elements over the other. As already mentioned, an allocation event is considered here as consisting of agents (actor, recipients, and observers), resources, and allocation rules. Actors making the allocation decision will, of course, view their decision as fair or morally correct. Recipients and observers, however, may differ from the actor with regard to the justice and moral quality of the decision and evaluate the allocation decision as less just or less moral. But also, recipients and observers may differ mutually. Recipients, as the most directly affected by the allocation decision, often evaluate the allocation decision as less just or more just than observers. The reason is that observers take into account more or other aspects of the allocation event than recipients. Some would say that observers are biased in their perception of the allocation event. Whatever the attitude of the observers, the end result is that all three involved parties may differ in their evaluation of the allocation event, and that as a consequence the average justice evaluation of the event will not differ much from the theory-derived mean of justice evaluations: a mean that lies in between totally unjust and totally just. Of course, the actor is bound—being a just allocator as he/she sees him/herself—to increase the average level of justice evaluations. But the assumption is that attention will primarily be focused on the differences between the justice evaluations of the agents involved to reduce conflict. Moreover, several social scientists have pointed to the phenomenon that neither absolute poverty nor absolute resource possession give rise to protest and conflict, but relative poverty and possession: poverty in relation to other relevant groups or categories. Translating this observation to the

allocation event elements of mean justice experiences and differences in justice experiences adds an argument for the primacy of the differentiation component over the mean component. Therefore, the assumption is that priority can and should be assessed between the two components of group justice: An actor will try to take an allocation decision such that, first, the differences between justice experiences between all involved will be as small as possible, and only second that mean justice experiences will be as high as possible. When both components refer to a group member's status position, they contain a moral component. Not only did Cinderella receive less than her sisters—which is an injustice—but she was treated very disrespectfully in comparison with her sisters—which is immoral.

### **The Psychology Component**

As already pointed out, an important element of the allocation event is the actor who divides resources among recipients. The actor's role is crucial because he/she is the initiator of the allocation and is responsible for its outcome. In theories and research on distributive justice, the actor has only played a minor role as a background figure who is essential but is kept out of focus. More recently, when research started in the realm of procedural justice, the actor's role became more prominent. Tyler and Lind (1992) formulated the relational model of authority and revaluated the actor's role. In this model, a good relationship between actor and recipient is what recipients strive for, and an indication of a good relationship is the fairness of the actor's treatment of the recipient. Before the formulation of the relational model, other features of the allocation model had the attention of researchers, such as the distributive and procedural rules.

The justice notion described in the present chapter is a continuation of the ideas of Tyler and Lind, but emphasizes even more firmly than these authors do the important role of the actor, focusing on the actor's emotions and cognition, and how they affect the operation of the justice motive. A just actor is one who is motivated to act fairly and, as previously described, this means that the actor not only takes into account the interests of others but also the interests of self. In other words, the actor is constantly weighing what he thinks others deserve and what he/she deserves. This balance can easily sway in one direction or the other, that is, that decisions to allocate resources between self and other can become more self-directed or more other-directed. The actor's mental state can influence the operation of the justice motive, resulting in a more unbalanced allocation decision. Operation of the justice motive is challenged by internal and external conditions.

### *Conditions Affecting the Operation of the Justice Motive*

Operation of the justice motive—its weak as well as its strong form—depends on factors in the actor's personality, the social environment, and on features of the allocated resource.

Some people are more other-oriented and therefore are more inclined to take another's position into account. In the literature, this inclination is related to phenomena such as field dependency. Field-dependent persons (Hakstian and Cattell 1976) need the presence of a "yardstick" in order to orient themselves in the social environment, while field-independent persons do not. Moreover, brain research results show that some people have more so-called mirror neurons (brain cells) than other people. Mirror brain cells play an important role in "reading" the intentions of others. Persons with more mirror brain cells are better able to read others' intentions, and are better able to evaluate another's need state. It is likely that other-oriented people and people with relatively large numbers of mirror neurons are inclined to do good to others. In addition, it is likely that self-oriented people and people with relatively small numbers of mirror neurons are inclined to do good to themselves. Chapter 1 will expand in more detail the evolutionary development of the justice motive.

Emotions may also affect the operation of the justice motive. Self-preservation emotions are differentiated from moral emotions. Positive self-preservation emotions are, for example, happiness or joy; negative self-preservation emotions are, for example, anger or anxiety. Anxiety is a central experience for human beings who realize that they are mortal, and who often feel uncertain during periods of economic and social crisis; the uncertainty elicits anxiety feelings. A third important source of anxiety is formed by the perception or presence of groups of strangers. Anxiety has a large influence on perception and cognition, and may affect operation of the justice motive. Moral emotions are defined by Haidt (2003: 276) as those "that are linked to the interests or welfare of society as a whole or at least of persons other than the judge or agent." Among the positive moral emotions are moral pride, self-approval, elevation and gratitude. Among the negative moral emotions are shame, guilt, and embarrassment. Some people are prone to positive or to negative moral emotions. People easily feel guilty or ashamed after having taken an allocation decision; for example, they think they have offered too low a financial contribution to a program to help children in need. Others easily feel pride in their allocation decision: they value their financial contribution as more than sufficient. It is further assumed that the experience of shame interferes with orientation on others. The person feeling shame turns inward and is less responsive to the needs of others (Tangney et al. 2007). Guilt feelings have the opposite effect on responsiveness to others' needs: a guilty person may be more prone to do good things for others.

The social environment challenges the justice motive as well. The presence of a needy person will move even a selfish person. The behavior of people in economic games reflects what is meant by just behavior: the desire to do well to others as well as to themselves. Perception of a needy other might elicit an actor's helping behavior. When an actor sees another drowning, the first inclination is to help. Some actors jump into the water to rescue the drowning person, others are more cautious and deliberate over whether their action will be successful. Others may seek help in different ways, such as calling an ambulance or the police. In such



cases, the other is totally dependent on the actor and this dependency increases the actor's motivation to help. One can observe helping behavior in more controlled settings, as well. This might be the case when the other is totally dependent on the actor, for instance in a Dictator Game (DG). In a DG, the actor offers a bid and the other can only accept the bid. In one of our studies, we made the dependency of the recipient on the actor even greater: the actor knew that the recipient was not aware of the value of the token representing money (Van Dijk and Vermunt 2000)—the actor's token was twice the value of recipient's token. So, the actor could present him/herself as a just person by offering an equal division of tokens. But actually, the actor received twice the amount of money as recipient. What we found, however, was totally different from the predictions of game theory. Actors in the DG did not misuse the recipient's dependency by offering few tokens. Instead, they offered more tokens (money) to recipients than predicted. From these and other findings one may conclude that when a recipient is completely dependent on an actor, the actor is willing to set aside personal gain in order to satisfy the recipient's need. Of course, the actor could have offered the other all the tokens, showing pure altruistic behavior. This was not the case, showing that the person also tried to satisfy their own needs. This behavior is a good example of the earlier description of justice as a bridge between egoism and altruism.

An actor's perceptual focus on the social environment can suddenly change. Discussing trivial (male) issues with a male friend, the arrival of a female friend can change the conversation and the atmosphere: It can be inferred from the content of the conversation between the male friends that the atmosphere was friendly and cooperative, but with the arrival of the female friend the atmosphere between the two male friends becomes more competitive. They both want to show the female friend who is the best—they compete to win her attention.

Allocating a resource to another is also affected by the type of allocation event and by the relationship between actor and recipient. When a recipient gives a gift to an actor, the actor is inclined to reciprocate. Several authors have contemplated the issue of reciprocity. In short, reciprocity is viewed as the motivation that a gift elicits another gift. An actor gives a gift in anticipation of either getting something in return or not. In a work relationship, a gift may be given in order to get something done by the other person; for example, assistance in performing a task. In a friendship relationship, a gift is not given with the idea of getting something back—the gift is given in return for received friendship. Moreover, a gift may be given to a person of the same status or to a person of a different status. A person can give a gift to a higher-status other or to a lower-status other. In both cases they expect to get something in return. The giver must be very careful in offering a gift to a person of a different status. The gift can easily be viewed by the recipient as a bribe or as undue influence. In both cases one expects to get something in return. In all these cases, the initiative starts from one person. He or she is the actor, the other is the recipient. And the other may or may not reciprocate. In fact, reciprocation is a case of resource allocation in which two allocation events follow each other. It is plausible to assume that the increasing



complexity of society with its intricate status hierarchies has molded the operation of the justice motive. Chapter 2 will describe the influence of the emerging society on the operation of the justice motive.

In addition, the differentiation between material and immaterial resources will have an effect on the operation of the justice motive. It may be assumed that allocating a material resource makes one's own position on the resource more salient than allocating an immaterial resource: being asked to offer money makes one's own financial position more salient and easier to calculate than being asked to listen to someone. Offering money challenges the justice motive more than making time for listening. This assumption of effect can also be made for a positively valued resource as compared to a negatively valued resource. In the economic literature, reactions to losses (negative outcome of a resource) are not the inverse of reactions to gains (positive outcome of a resource)—people weigh losses heavier than gains (Harinck et al. 2007). Moreover, losses are mostly divided equally, while gains are mostly divided according to contribution or merit (De Dreu 1998).

### **The Reaction Component: A Theory of Injustice Reactions**

In everyday life, people often experience injustices: they become angry because their salary is less than they think they deserve, or they are not treated with due respect. In the Netherlands, police officers protested against a new salary contract in which, in their view, increased occupational hazards were not sufficiently compensated. They prepared action to show their anger, like refusing to fine civilians for small misdemeanors. In addition, in interviews they showed contempt for the lack of due consideration—a pat on the back—for irregular working hours and for their often difficult work as police officers. They felt undervalued by society for what they do. Hollywood text writers went on strike to protest against the low financial compensation for their work. Many other examples can be given showing the anger and frustration resulting from underpayment and/or undervaluation. But one can also observe that people often do not become angry and start protesting, even though they are objectively in a disadvantaged position. Take, for example, immigrants in the Netherlands. Their income is very low but most do not protest against their miserable situation. Why these differences between groups of people with respect to the evaluation of their situation and their readiness to act? According to Lerner (1977), people will not protest against their bad fate if they think they deserve it. Deservingness is a sufficient and necessary condition of justice evaluations. But what does it mean, that they do not deserve their bad fate? As stated above, deservingness is an evaluation of the situation in which a fairness (but sometimes a moral) component is operative. One compares the present situation with an internal norm—derived from early experiences—and when the present situation deviates (negatively) from that norm then the present situation is evaluated as undeserved and thus as unfair. A major component of

unfairness, therefore, is the discrepancy experienced between people's present situation and a simulated situation. Folger (1987) assumed, in this respect, the operation of a simulation heuristic which people use to evaluate their position in the group or society. Folger further assumed that simulation can occur in several ways. One is the internal norm as comparison standard. Other ways are the situation of others in more or less similar conditions, such as others from the same sex, with the same status, from the same profession, and so forth. Another simulation method is to compare one's present situation with one's situation earlier in time. Such a comparison may lead to the conclusion that one's situation is worse than expected, and this discrepancy is accompanied by negative emotions and/or action to overcome the discrepancy. In social psychology, much time and energy is devoted to unraveling the cognitive and emotional mechanisms of justice evaluations, such as research on the role of uncertainty and self-esteem in justice evaluations or the application of cognitive algebra to arrive at equity judgments of one's income.

Knowledge about recipients' evaluations and reactions to allocation decisions is of crucial importance to actors. If actors have knowledge of the precise justice evaluations and reactions of recipients, they can take account of these and eventually adapt their allocation decisions. Some recipients react differently from other recipients to injustice. The same allocation outcome may be evaluated by some people as unfair while others may judge the event as less unfair or even moderately fair. If an actor is motivated to allocate resources as fairly as possible, and if the actor wants to use the fairest arguments for the decision to be made, and if the actor wants to accomplish an allocation that is most fair for as large a group of recipients as possible, the actor needs knowledge about the reactions of the recipients (and observers) to injustice. Most research of recent decades has been conducted to elucidate the conditions of fairness evaluations. Distributive justice theories are developed to predict reactions to unfair resource allocations, and procedural justice theories are developed to predict reactions to unfair application of allocation procedures. In the realm of distributive justice, Adams (1965) has shown that underpayment—compared with the payment of relevant others—is evaluated as unfair and results in, for instance, decreasing work performance. Adams also distinguishes other reactions such as protest and cognitive distortion of performance. In the realm of procedural justice, research showed comparable results: Modde and Vermunt (2007) found that an inaccurate evaluation procedure for academic performance was judged as unfair and increased norm-violating behavior.

The question that remains after all these studies is how unfair the treatment has to be before the recipient decides to take action, and what the likelihood of a certain reaction to the unfairness is as compared to other reactions. Our knowledge, and thus also the knowledge of actors about recipients' reactions, is far from complete, making it difficult to accomplish a fair allocation decision. Chapter 7 will describe—as a new approach based on Törnblom and Vermunt