

## *Book Reviews*

# Ethics and Politics in the Corporate World

*Moral Mazes: The World of Corporate Managers*, by Robert Jackall.\*  
New York, New York: The Oxford Press, 1988. 240 pages. \$21.95.

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This is an interesting, unorthodox, and provocative book. The author is Robert Jackall, Professor of Sociology at Williams College and author of various works on the social structure of workplaces in this country. His previous studies have focused on blue-collar and other lower echelon workers in their struggles to maintain economic security and personal integrity in the workplace.<sup>1</sup> This study concerns “workers” in management—not CEOs but mid-level management and managers near the top at the divisional level.

### I. Research Method

The book is based principally on interviews and observations at three business organizations. The first was a large textile manufacturer, the second was the chemicals division of a conglomerate, and the third was a public relations firm that was large relative to the size of such organizations but small compared to the other two. Jackall conducted a high number of interviews, over fifty at the two larger companies and forty at the public relations firm.<sup>2</sup> The interviews were occasions not only for conversation, but also for observation of body language and other phenomena in the corporate environment. Additional observations were made in the course of arranging interviews. In conducting interviews and observations,

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1. R. JACKALL, *WORKERS IN A LABYRINTH: JOBS AND SURVIVAL IN A BANK BUREAUCRACY* (1978); *WORKER COOPERATIVES IN AMERICA* (R. Jackall & H. Levin eds. 1984).

2. R. JACKALL, *MORAL MAZES: THE WORLD OF CORPORATE MANAGERS* 205 (1988) [hereinafter by page number].

the author has drawn on his extensive experience as a field social scientist, as a seasoned teacher and academic department head, and, I infer, as a person who has married and had children.

Professor Jackall's description of his research procedure is refreshing for its candor. His original aim had been to conduct interviews and make observations in selected business settings in order to study managerial ethics. His straightforward research proposal was to assess "trustworthiness, reliability, and predictability in a polycentric world that managers often find troubling, ambiguous, and anxiety-laden. Such assessment of . . . organizational morality is a crucial aspect of a more general set of probations that are intrinsic to managerial work."<sup>3</sup>

However, soon after venturing upon on his task, he hit a stone wall. "Thirty-six corporations on both coasts refused permission for . . . access from January to October, 1980."<sup>4</sup> As the author observes, "[t]his was an instructive experience in itself."<sup>5</sup> The reasons given by the refusing companies were plausible, and included the suggestion that the interview process would complicate a crucial stage in business development at the proposed setting. However, reiteration of similar reasons for denials of access, coupled with the author's findings at the sites to which he eventually had access, led him to conclude that these explanations were putoffs. The refusals could be more plausibly explained on other grounds.

Professor Jackall found that the companies to which he finally succeeded in gaining access were pervaded by political infighting of varying degrees of intensity. He naturally inferred that much the same thing was occurring at the places that he was not permitted to visit. "I came to understand that such wariness is warranted because corporate hierarchies are almost always in political turmoil. . . . Nosy outsiders can only complicate already troublesome, or potentially troublesome situations."<sup>6</sup>

If the author's difficulty in gaining access was illuminating, so also was the method of entry that eventually proved successful. "As I criss-crossed managerial circles . . . my personal contacts increased . . . I became acutely aware of the importance . . . [of] having someone . . . vouch for one's probity. . . . Through a totally chance meeting . . . I was introduced to an executive . . . who befriended me. . . ."<sup>7</sup> This initial friendly connection got him entry to one of the sites where he conducted his interviews. Another entry resulted from an "[a]n academic colleague's chance meeting on a tennis court with an executive from . . . the parent

3. P. 13.

4. *Id.*

5. *Id.*

6. P. 14.

7. Pp. 14-15.

corporation. . . .”<sup>8</sup> Thus, Professor Jackall finally tapped into the managerial establishment and became something of a provisional member. “Once admitted . . . I was able to find my way into managerial networks where one manager after another vouched for me to other managers. . . .”<sup>9</sup> While the circumstances under which Jackall gained an opportunity to observe managerial behavior may have been highly irregular according to the conventions of social science, evidently they were quite regular according to the conventions of the managerial fraternity.

Moreover, the data-gathering proceeded on a fiction. As originally designed, the interviews were supposed to elicit accounts of the respondents’ experiences of ethical and political dilemmas in their work. However, interviews solicited in these terms led nowhere. Even with the benefit of a *carte de passage* giving him entry, Professor Jackall continually encountered guarded reserve, evasive responses, and dumb shows on the part of his intended respondents. Accordingly, the interview protocol was changed.

Under the modified protocol, Professor Jackall presented himself as inquiring whether he would be allowed to interview and observe the respondent and what kinds of questions he might go into if he were given such permission. This transformed the ostensible subject matter into a managerial and analytic problem similar to those that managers are used to dealing with. This protocol at least got the conversations going. Comfortable in their milieu, the managers expatiated upon the kinds of office political situations that might be encountered if Professor Jackall were given the access he sought. Professor Jackall then simply treated these answers as his ultimate interview product. With this kind of response, follow-up formal interviews were superfluous.

The interviews went better not only because they were not “interviews,” but also because Professor Jackall had realized that he would get nowhere asking directly about “managerial ethics.”

Managers do not generally discuss ethics, morality, or moral rules-in-use in a direct way with each other, except perhaps in seminars organized by ethicists. Such seminars, however, are unusual and, when they do occur, are often strained, artificial, and often confusing even to managers since they frequently become occasions for the solemn public invocation, particularly by high-ranking managers, of conventional moralities and traditional shibboleths.<sup>10</sup>

8. P. 15.

9. *Id.*

10. P. 6.

The key to this realization was Professor Jackall's discussion of his research proposal with a helpful executive in the public relations firm to which he was trying to get access. The executive took Professor Jackall through several rewritings of the proposal. Jackall was told that while managers are unwilling to talk about "ethics," they are willing to talk about the same phenomena by a different name. The task for the public relations director was to re-label the subject of the contemplated interviews: "The process . . . consisted essentially of . . . a reformulation of my inquiry that recast the moral issues of managerial work as issues of public relations."<sup>11</sup> Thus, Professor Jackall accomplished an interview study of managerial ethics by not calling his sessions interviews and by not calling the subject ethics.

This lesson should not be lost on those among us who are currently concerned with the state of ethics in such sectors as business, law, medicine, journalism, and government.<sup>12</sup> If we want to survey the nature of ethical dilemmas in contemporary American society, we are unlikely to delve very deeply if the issues are formulated in terms of "ethics." So also, if we want to do anything about changing the ethical character of behavior, we may not get very far by talking about "ethics." Professor Jackall teaches us that a certain indirection is necessary for effective investigation, and the same approach is probably necessary for effective reform.

## II. Principal Findings

Professor Jackall summarizes his findings as follows:

My search for access involved me in some of the crucial bureaucratic intricacies that shape managers' experiences. These include organizational upheavals, political rivalries, linguistic ambiguity, the supremacy of chance and tangled personal connections over any notion of intrinsic merit, the central significance of public relations, and, perhaps especially, the ceaseless moral probations for inclusion in a managerial circle. Managers keep their eyes on the organizational premiums that shape behavior, values, ethics, and worldviews in corporate bureaucracies.<sup>13</sup>

11. P. 15.

12. See, e.g., HARVARD UNIV., THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT 1986-87 (1988) (discussing state of ethical training in universities and arguing for more active role for educators); AMERICAN BAR ASS'N, COMM'N ON PROFESSIONALISM, ". . . *In the Spirit of Public Service: A Blueprint for the Rekindling of Lawyer Professionalism*" (1986) (recommending changes in legal profession that would raise ethical standards).

13. P. 16.

He substantiates this general conclusion with an impressive array of evidence. Part of the evidence consists of salient events described by various respondents, corroborated in several instances by other respondents in the same company. An example is the process of evasion of responsibility by a manager with official responsibility for making a decision that is unpleasant or risky. In one particular case, the managerial problem was to resolve a dispute with an outside company concerning contract performance.<sup>14</sup> Although the outside company's claim lacked merit, rejecting the claim would have involved an unpleasant confrontation. The manager arranged first of all to postpone dealing with the problem and then to reconceptualize it into one having "legal" aspects. As a "legal" problem, its resolution required participation by the legal department. That further delayed resolution and shifted part of the responsibility for rejecting the claim to the legal department.

Another case demonstrates how a divisional manager "milks" a manufacturing facility by holding off major repairs and refurbishment over a sustained period of time.<sup>15</sup> Postponing such expenditures enables the manager to show profitable results during his tenure, for repairs that can be postponed will be charged to the bottom line of the manager's successor at the facility. Since tours of duty for upward-bound managers are about three years, and since a good manager usually can postpone major repairs for that long, in principle major plant renovation need never be undertaken. Of course, that can result in plant obsolescence, loss of efficiency in the long run, and diminution of America's competitive position in the world. But those effects are not recorded in the manager's dossier.

Another example involved a case of a manager doing nothing about literally deafening noise levels in a textile manufacturing plant.<sup>16</sup> Effective sound-control equipment was available, but it was expensive. Installing the equipment would have entailed interruption of production and risked instigation of employee anger over the fact that nothing had been done previously. These became overriding concerns. It is also possible, according to my own observation of corporate accounting techniques, that the company's corporate accounting procedure may have had something to do with it. Usually, the cost of such equipment is rapidly depreciated and this imposes heavy short-run charges against income. Under the typical managerial accounting procedure, equipment depreciation is charged to a department's operating budget. While installation of such equipment could reduce the eventual workers' compensation liability (for impairment

14. P. 78.

15. Pp. 91-100.

16. Pp. 105-15.

of employee hearing resulting from continued use of noisy machinery), the projected saving in workers' compensation liability would not be credited to the department. At any rate, the plant noise remained deafening.

Professor Jackall is convinced that these specific instances are representative of continuously recurring events of the same type. He bases this conclusion partly on reports of similar instances from respondents in his survey.<sup>17</sup> His conclusion is reinforced by the way in which other respondents reacted to the mention of such instances. Their responses made clear that the respondents themselves either had experienced similar problems or had heard about them in neighboring managerial precincts, in other companies, or through industry lore.

To be sure, these kinds of problems do not arise every day. Normal management, at least mid-level management, does not involve a steady diet of major crises. Crises of that magnitude usually occur not more often than every few months; the rest of a manager's time is spent in routine administration, making reports, and monitoring department activity. However, problems that have serious practical and ethical dimensions, although infrequent, are salient because they involve the greatest risks and opportunities in a managerial career and pose the sharpest tests of an individual's capacity to cope with his environment.

Managers have difficulty coping, Professor Jackall finds, because of the managerial working environment in the typical American company. This conclusion rests on his assumption, which seems plausible, that the environments in his survey are fairly typical if by no means universal. Professor Jackall then endeavors to fathom the sources of the difficulties that managers face in their moral maze, as he calls it.

First, managers are bent on success, defined as seeking to rise as high in the company as ability, political skill, and luck permit. "Striving for success is, of course, a moral imperative in American society. In the corporate world, this means moving up or getting ahead in the organization."<sup>18</sup> That managerial level workers in this country have to function in a "striving" environment is not news, nor is it news that striving is not merely a fact of life for managers, but generally their principal goal in life. Of course, not all or even most of the strivers keep striving:

Some managers . . . resign themselves to immobility. . . . Or they have made a realistic assessment of the age structure, career paths,

17. See, e.g., the "Brady" case on pp. 105-12 (highly trained accountant reported he was fired after discovering that CEO was "fiddling with the numbers"); the "sales contract" case on p. 120 (merchandising manager reported that he will break promises made to smaller companies in order to preserve sales made to larger companies).

18. P. 43.

and power relationships above them and conclude that there is no longer real opportunity for them . . . Whatever their reasons or perceptions, some managers find therefore comfortable organizational niches and settle into them.<sup>19</sup>

But those who stop striving are failures according to the mores of the system, and often so according to their own self-estimation. The striving, moreover, is for personal advancement, rather than for artistic success in the invention of products or techniques or for the success of the organization as such. The latter kinds of achievement may be important, but only as means or by-products. The fact that managers are strivers means that they are supposed to solve problems, meet specific goals, and produce results. They receive recognition, compensation, and promotion accordingly. A mind so framed is unlikely to be speculative or philosophical.

More fundamentally, when “ethical” implications are confronted in the problems that managers must solve, those implications are secondary virtually by definition. “Ethical” implications for a manager are aspects of a problem that lie outside the matrix of variables according to which the manager’s performance will be evaluated. To identify aspects of a managerial problem as “ethical” is to relegate them to the margin of managerial calculations. They will remain marginal unless and until they are redefined as operational criteria and incorporated in the set of objectives towards which the manager is striving.

Short-range vision and narrow perspective thus are apparently typical of the contemporary mid-level management environment in this country. Authority for defining operational objectives and performance criteria lies with upper-level management. Since upper-level managers have authority to define what the strivers are to strive for, they also have responsibility when an ingredient of a problem is labeled as being “ethical” and hence peripheral. Thus, if CEOs wonder about the causes of ethical deterioration, they need not go far to see the root of the problem.

A second critical characteristic of managerial decisionmaking is the very complicated nature of problems that the decisionmakers have to deal with. Professor Jackall develops this point by extensive anecdotal illustration rather than by analysis. Illustrative “cases” that managers confront have been alluded to—whether to spend heavily for such items as new production machinery or sound-control equipment, or whether to “blow the whistle” on a defective product. Such problems are all “polycentric,” to use Professor Lon Fuller’s terminology.<sup>20</sup> Multiple constituencies have

19. *Id.*

20. Fuller, *The Forms and Limits of Adjudication*, 92 HARV. L. REV. 353, 394 (1978).

stakes in the case, multiple incommensurate values are in competition, and the appropriate time horizon for resolving the issues is neither fore-ordained nor logically determinable. Anyone who has had to function in the real world deals with such cases, although usually ones of smaller scale than those confronted by upper-level corporate managers.

However, Professor Jackall does not go very far into the substantive aspects of managerial problems.<sup>21</sup> He treats the substantive issues essentially as independent variables: Given these difficult problems, how do managers handle them? This shallow treatment of the substantive problems in management is a serious limitation on the depth of Professor Jackall's analysis. Throughout the book, and particularly in its eloquent concluding chapter, Professor Jackall decries the institutional insensitivity which he sees as the result of managerial decisionmaking processes. This assessment may be commendable for its sincerity, but it is disappointingly simplistic in terms of the issues that managerial decisionmaking has to resolve.

In solving the problems they confront, managers must deal with lines drawn on two intersecting planes. One is the plane of authority and on it are the gradients of power and responsibility, real and formal. This is Professor Jackall's subject of attention—*who* decides and *how*? The other plane is that of substantive trade-offs between such factors as life, safety, product quality, production cost, treatment of employees, issues, etc.—*what* is to be the decision? On the plane of substantive issues, lines have to be drawn between what is right and what is wrong, between what to do or avoid doing, and what not to do or permit to be done. All adults and most children know that the lines on this plane are often difficult to draw. Does a parent commit marginal additional time to earning more income or to giving greater attention to the children? What is to be done about a cheater or slacker on our team? Such situations are often governed by indistinct normative standards—they involve “gray areas.” Moreover, the facts of the “case” may be uncertain and unascertainable. Often both the governing norms and the operative facts are difficult to specify clearly. Difficult analytic and descriptive tasks are involved in saying what is the right thing to do.

Equally difficult is the task of all real world actors, including business managers. A real world actor not only must “say” what is the right thing to do, but also do it. The line the actor must draw is not merely analytic and descriptive, a hypothetical course of action in the face of hypothetical uncertainties. The line is a line of action, drawn in the face of unresolvable uncertainties. Risks of irreversible adverse consequences attend every

21. See ch. 5, “Drawing Lines.”



course of action or inaction. For example, if the plant is not equipped with sound-control equipment, some of the employees will go prematurely deaf. But if the plant is so equipped, the operation may cease to be profitable and all of the employees may be prematurely unemployed. Professor Jackall directs very limited attention to this substantive aspect of line-drawing.

Perhaps his reticence in this respect reflects his respondents' shallowness of ethical sensitivity and vacuity in discourse about ethical issues. With few notable exceptions, they seemed not only oblivious to normative issues, but also inarticulate in attempting to discuss them. It is not so much that they had difficulty in deciding where to draw lines on the substantive field, but that they had trouble stating the considerations involved in drawing a line. Professor Jackall has left the substantive problems in this unanalyzed state. More probing inquiry might have revealed that most of the problems involved *triage* of one kind or another. This may have been why the respondents were inarticulate. The respondents were professional problem-solvers, and in their terms of reference the problems were often simply insoluble.

Professor Jackall discovered that managers nevertheless are acutely aware of the other plane—the gradients of power and authority within which they have to function when dealing with the difficult problems they face. Indeed, uncertainty about authority generally is a managerial preoccupation, and often an obsession. As Professor Jackall summarizes: “Managers know that whatever efficacy they may have in their occupational world they have through their bureaucratic milieux . . . I mean the complicated, experimentally constructed, and therefore contingent, set of rules, premiums, and sanctions that men and women in a particular context create and re-create . . .”<sup>22</sup>

The uncertainty and instability of the manager's position of authority contributes to a pervasive ethical relativism. Every substantively difficult issue has to be considered by a manager not only “on its merits,” but also in terms of the manager's scope of effective power and, reflexively, in terms of the effects of a decision on the manager's present position and future prospects. “Sunday school ethics—the public espousal of lofty principles—do not help managers cut the sometimes unpleasant deals necessary to make the world work. . . . Managers are paid . . . to make difficult choices among unclear alternatives. Such uncompromising tasks demand continual compromises with conventional verities.”<sup>23</sup>

22. P. 112.

23. Pp. 118–19.

The remainder of Professor Jackall's findings are concerned with these compromises—how managers and organizations deal with the contradictions between the “conventional verities” and the limitations on their own capacity to effectuate those verities in the situations they face in their work. Compromise is required not only in deciding what to do, but also in characterizing what is being done. Jackall observes that members of a business organization require dexterity with symbols in order to verbalize the relationship between their actions as managers and imperatives of conventional morality.<sup>24</sup>

[T]he sheer difficulty of penetrating managerial circles other than one's own and finding out what actually happened on a given issue, let alone being able to assess its organizational significance, makes the use of oblique language imperative. . . . This leads to the use of an elaborate linguistic code marked by emotional neutrality, especially in group settings.<sup>25</sup>

Essentially, it is a continuous exercise in euphemism in intracorporate discourse.

There is a counterpart problem in communication directed outward. This involves the projection outward from the company of a positive impression of what is happening within—the matter of public relations. The chapter on this subject is charmingly entitled “The Magic Lantern.”<sup>26</sup> Jackall's essential point here is this: “Since the success of large commercial bureaucracies depends to a great extent on the goodwill of the consuming public, ambitious managers recognize that great organizational premiums are placed on the ability to explain expedient action convincingly.”<sup>27</sup> The term they use in Washington is Spin Control.

### III. Reflections

Professor Jackall's book is based upon research into the activity of business managers and is “about” business corporations. As such, it is worth close attention by those who are interested in business management and in the decisional process within business organizations. Better than any other

24. See ch. 6, “Dexterity with Symbols.”

25. P. 135.

26. Professor Jackall describes the lantern in this way:

The magic lantern produces both light and shadows. What matters on the screen are convincing impressions of reality, plausible representations, and a conformity to conventional manners, faces, and tastes. The images cast upon the screen do not so much displace substance, notions of truth, and principles as leave them in the dim periphery of the theater.

P. 189.

27. P. 162.

I have seen, his study reveals the normative reality of the manager's world, particularly the unstable and contingent basis of the manager's power and authority in making the decisions for which he is responsible. Professor Jackall's findings in this respect seem to me statements of simple fact. Nevertheless, they conflict with the conventional premises of both the business world and various segments of the community that are often hostile to business.

The business world wants to pretend that the managerial structure is stable and rational, and thus that the business corporation renders coherent and consistent managerial decisions. Deviations from this ideal are to be ignored if possible, minimized as aberrations when they cannot be ignored, and flatly denied if necessary. "You can't criticize a whole system for a single failure," goes the received wisdom. Dexterity with symbols permits this mindset to be perpetuated within the corporate culture. The same portrayal is projected outward into public consciousness through the magic lantern of public relations.

The myth of apolitical rationality is also projected forward in history through the curricula at the business schools. As far as I am aware, not a single business school course systematically addresses the topic of organizational politics in the business corporation by that name. Rather, problems of the kind described by Professor Jackall are considered either as management problems (where they are formulated as being insoluble) or ethics problems (where they are formulated as being incidental). In the business schools of America, "politics" is something bizarre and irrational that happens in the corporation's external environment, in such places as city hall, the state legislature, and Washington. Correlatively, discussion of "ethics" by businessmen or in the business schools usually focuses on conventional verities while disregarding the ambiguous power structures in which managers operate. This focus avoids confrontation with organizational politics as fastidiously as it was avoided by Professor Jackall's respondents. Since ethics and politics are in fact inseparable aspects of transactions in the real world of business, discourse on business ethics in business schools characteristically has the sterility of a Sunday School lesson.

Anti-business segments of the community are content to accept this business orthodoxy. Indeed, they are eager to do so. It is the corporation that presents itself as a supremely rational personality in the marketplace and in relations with "the community." If the structure of authority in the business corporation is as stable and coherent as business orthodoxy pretends it is, then a corporation may be taken as having knowingly willed its acts and being knowingly aware of its omissions. According to its own pretension, the corporation is devoted to the rational realization of eco-

nomically productive objectives, pursued according to "the rules of the game." The whole apparatus of Left criticism hinges on this premise, which business ideology continuously reaffirms. It is on this basis that the Left makes corporate actions and omissions morally and legally chargeable to the corporation in a personal sense.

The corporation claims to be unique in the human order for being an apolitical social mechanism. Claiming legitimacy on this basis may be rhetorically clean and unambiguous, but it is fundamentally implausible. No one really believes that the business corporation is free of office politics. Critics scoff at claims to the contrary, and Professor Jackall demonstrates that they have good reason to do so. Business can only lose an argument for its legitimacy that is based on the claim that the corporation is apolitical. Worse still, business puts itself in a difficult position to sell its more plausible claim. This is the claim that private business enterprise is relatively rational and efficient, as well as socially safe and politically controllable, compared with, say, worker's soviets.

Very much the same kind of difficulty is involved in contemporary argument about the legal system and its legitimacy. The professional proprietors of the legal system are the lawyers and the judges, and their codisciplinarians in the law schools. The traditionalists claim that the legal system is stable and rational within itself in the same way that the business corporation claims to be stable and rational within itself. The legal system's pretention was disturbed by Legal Realism a century ago. However, most Legal Realists did not quite go to the bottom and state flatly that any legal system is necessarily political in fundamental and pervasive respects. They merely suggested that the legal system as it exists is not consistently the rational and apolitical system that it pretends to be, and that further reformist striving would be necessary for its perfection. Today the Critical Legal Studies movement has made the more penetrating thrust: The whole apparatus—judges, lawyers, law—is fundamentally political in the sense that is revealed by Professor Jackall in his study of the corporation. Judicial decisions are an exercise in "Dexterity with Symbols" in much the same way language is used by corporate managers. Likewise, it is through a "Magic Lantern" of traditional legal scholarship that the process is presented as involving a peculiarly apolitical normative discourse.

Professor Jackall says of the corporate manager's normative world:

In the welter of practical affairs in the corporate world, morality does not emerge from some set of internally held convictions or principles, but rather from ongoing albeit changing relationships with some person, some coterie, some social network, some clique that

matters to a person. Since these relationships are always multiple, contingent, and in flux, managerial moralities are always situational, always relative.<sup>28</sup>

The same is true of the way in which legality emerges in the “welter of practical affairs” in the world of law and government. The serious question—the question for a person seriously interested in either morals or politics—is whether the human condition ever involves anything else. Professor Jackall makes clear that substantive managerial judgments having important ethical significance are shaped, sometimes radically so, by the structure of power in which they are made. It seems clear that this is true of the decisionmaking process in other organizations, such as government bureaus and academic departments. In my observation it is true of the decisionmaking process in such organizations as legislatures, courts, regulatory agencies, and bar associations. There is every reason to believe it is true of organizations not only in our society, but also in the Eastern Bloc; not only of organizations within the industrialized world, but also of those in primitive society, pastoral society, and even those in the Third World.

It seems no less true of small organizations than of large ones. Has anyone who expounds upon these things ever worked in a small business or with a small committee? And what about the home? Feminists, among others, now call our attention to the politics of interspousal and other male-female relationships. What about sibling rivalry? What was *Oedipus Rex* all about, or *Lear* or *Hamlet*? Is it not true that when decisions are made about getting up with a crying baby or taking out the trash, “morality does not emerge from some set of internally held convictions or principles, but rather from ongoing albeit changing relationships. . . .”<sup>29</sup>

Having refreshingly opened these possibilities, however, Professor Jackall retreats to rhetorical flourishes: “The ethos that [corporate managers] fashion turns principles into guidelines, ethics into etiquette, values into tastes, personal responsibility into an adroitness at public relations, and notions of truth into credibility.”<sup>30</sup> It is hard to quarrel with this assessment, although Professor Jackall’s considerable rhetorical power seems to have somewhat overborne his objectivity. Be that as it may, this peroration seems to me equally descriptive of the legal system, government, the local school board, neighborhood meetings about zoning changes, and faculty meetings. Professor Jackall finds that conventional sources of ethical and political tutelage provide little that is useful or even intelligible for the managers living in the corporate moral maze. But are those sources any

28. P. 101.

29. *Id.*

30. P. 204.

more help to those of us who became lawyers? Shopkeepers or artisans? Spouses and parents?

Do not all we moderns, at least in this country, enter life's moral mazes ill-equipped intellectually, emotionally, and morally? Our heads are filled with childish catechisms preached at home, in school, in the popular news media, and by the politicians, as well as in the official doctrine of the places where we work. Conventional morality consists of homilies about the essential goodness of people and their continuous redemption from the taint of sin; about the openness of opportunity for those who are energetic and virtuous; about the rationality of the life of work according to the precepts of honesty, trustworthiness, and loyalty; about the simple promise of American life. Those of us who are of working class origins may be taught, instead or at the same time, a different credo—that the system is monolithic, impenetrable, and irrational. Most working class people believe that success in striving—achieving the good life—is unlikely and in any event will be a matter of luck and pull. However, this dark version is in fact the mirror image of conventional morality. Both portray the System as coherent, stable, predictable, and ethical according to its own terms. The difference in images is simply whether the viewpoint of the System is from the inside or the outside.

Professor Jackall's report is a useful contribution to a deeper understanding of both ethics and politics, and their inseparable relationship. My only disappointment is that his closing chapter takes us right back to Sunday School:

The ethic that emerges in bureaucratic contexts contrasts sharply in many respects with the original Protestant ethic. The Protestant ethic was a social construction of reality of a self-confident and independent propertied social class.<sup>31</sup>

We need to advance beyond that stage of our moral development.<sup>32</sup>

31. P. 191.

32. See L. KOHLBERG, *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT* 625 (1984) (describing stages of moral development; Stage One is naive moral realism, where the moral significance of an action is seen as a real, inherent, and unchanging quality of the act; Stage Two is characterized by a concrete individualistic perspective, etc.); *cf.*, *e.g.*, C. GILLIGAN, *IN A DIFFERENT VOICE* 105 (1982) (suggesting that women impose a distinctive construction on moral problems, seeing moral dilemmas in terms of conflicting responsibilities).