

- 4 A virtue theorist would try to develop the virtues that make a 'good' person. Identify five virtues and explain how they might become vices. (For example, excessive bravery might result in foolhardiness and unacceptable risk-taking).
- 5 Given that no single ethical theory is perfect, can ethical theory assist one to make an ethical decision? Explain your answer.
- 6 Do you agree that we have a moral obligation to care for those with whom we share some sort of relationship? What might be some of the benefits of doing so? What might be some of the disadvantages of not doing so?
- 7 Explain the concept of universal acceptability. What do you think constitutes 'a rational person'?
- 8 Do you agree that an individual with an 'ethical mindset' would maintain the necessary courage to transform the organisation to become more ethical or even sustainable despite the adverse conditions?

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### Keywords:

deontological (Kant ethics)	virtue ethics	ethical theory
moral responsibility	utilitarianism	egoism
Kant	human rights	virtue theory
consequentialist	non-consequentialist	normative theories
moral decision-making	ethical decision-making	duty of care

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## Case Studies

### CASE 2.1

#### Blood for sale

Sol Levin was a successful stockbroker in Tampa, Florida, when he recognised the potentially profitable market for safe and uncontaminated blood and, with some colleagues, founded Plasma International. Not everybody is willing to make money by selling his or her own blood, and in the beginning Plasma International bought blood from people addicted to drugs and alcohol. Although innovative marketing increased Plasma International's sales dramatically, several cases of hepatitis were reported in recipients. The company then began looking for new sources of blood.<sup>1</sup>

Plasma International searched worldwide and, with the advice of a qualified team of medical consultants, did extensive testing. Eventually they found that the blood profiles of several rural West African tribes made them ideal prospective donors. After negotiations with the local government, Plasma International signed an agreement with several tribal chieftains to purchase blood.

Business went smoothly and profitably for Plasma International until a Tampa paper charged that Plasma was purchasing blood for as little as 15 cents a pint and then reselling it to hospitals in the United States and South America for \$25 per pint. In one recent disaster, the newspaper alleged, Plasma International had sold 10 000 pints, netting nearly a quarter of a million dollars.

The newspaper story stirred up controversy in Tampa, but the existence of commercialised blood marketing systems in the United States is nothing new. Approximately half the blood and plasma obtained in the United States is bought and sold like any other commodity. By contrast, the health system in Australia,

New Zealand and the National Health Service in Great Britain relies entirely on a voluntary system of blood donation. Blood is neither bought nor sold. It is available to anyone who needs it without charge or obligation, and donors gain no preference over non-donors.

In an important study, economist Richard Titmuss showed that the British system works better than the American one in terms of economic and administrative efficiency, price, and blood quality. The commercialised blood market, Titmuss argued, is wasteful of blood and plagued by shortages. In the United States, bureaucratisation, paperwork and administrative overhead result in a cost per unit of blood that is five to 15 times higher than in Great Britain. Haemophiliacs, in particular, are disadvantaged by the US system and have enormous bills to pay. In addition, commercial markets are much more likely to distribute contaminated blood.

Titmuss also argued that the existence of a commercialised system discourages voluntary donors. People are less apt to give blood if they know that others are selling it. Psychologists have found similar conflicts between financial incentives and moral or altruistic conduct in other areas.<sup>2</sup> Philosopher Peter Singer has elaborated on this point in the case of blood:

If blood is a commodity with a price, to give blood means merely to save someone money. Blood has a cash value of a certain number of dollars, and the importance of the gift will vary with the wealth of the recipient. If blood cannot be bought, however, the gift's value depends upon the need of the recipient. Often, it will be worth life itself. Under these circumstances