8.1 Conclusions

The various perspectives with regard to integrity, as something which demands special attention and respect, serve in different ways to underline the central thesis of the present work. A focus on non-interference does not do justice to the needs and values which are at stake for the individual whose integrity must be respected. Individuals strive for, and assign a value both to a protected arena of their own – the private sphere – and simultaneously to the possibility of participating in an exchange with other individuals. For psychological research, ethics and legal science, there are several theoretical approaches in this book, which can serve as starting points for theoretical development, for the formulation of new research problems and for critical responses. In this chapter, I shall briefly present what I myself consider to be the central conclusions of my work in the form of answers to three questions.

8.1.1 What Is Integrity?

Integrity is first and foremost a property associated with all living individuals which is based on an interplay in the brain between three emotions, namely fear, embarrassment and pride. Through the interplay of these three emotions, an emotional territory is created which regulates and guides the individual in an interaction with the natural and social environment. Integrity has also an important role from an evolutionary viewpoint. By means of this territory individuals explore their social status, their vulnerability and their social strength. Through the interplay and balance which develops between the three emotions, mental prerequisites which are needed in order for the individual to act as a social self are fulfilled. In the interplay with other individuals the subject’s self-image is reinforced by adopting roles in terms of dominance and submission. The game constitutes probably one of the first teaching aids in moral education where individuals learn fair play, to take account of others and to establish themselves in a social order as a moral subject. The possibility of cognitively processing emotional reactions influences the way in which the territory is shaped and the function it acquires. As a result one can expect large variations between different individuals, not merely depending on the challenges they have
had to deal with in their natural and social environments, but also upon cognitive abilities. For individuals who live in complex cultures, social conventions probably play a role and, in the case of human beings, various ideological and moral views, as well as material and economic circumstances, play a crucial role in the development of their sphere of integrity. The evolutionary memory, which all individuals carry with them, should not be underestimated, if we want to explain variations which occur in integrity.

A territory always has a subject, in other words, someone who disposes over it. This individual personally seeks, in certain circumstances, to extend this territory or to defend it against attack. At the same time, the individual can also imagine giving it up in order to develop a relationship with other individuals, or to gain something else worth striving for. The territory provides a possibility for various types of relationship with other individuals. An individual with strong integrity is unwilling to allow anyone to enter his territory. In order to deal with the challenges in the socially complex world of human beings, great demands are placed on the capacity of individuals, both to protect their own perspective and also to protect their participation with others. Those who do not experience some form of ambivalence or doubt when their own views encounter questions and criticism, have built too strong a wall around their own domain. They risk being isolated and becoming social outcasts without homes or community. People with great integrity do not surrender their convictions and life projects in a casual, offhand manner, but are simultaneously susceptible to new arguments and insights, which they encounter through participation in a changeable society.

### 8.1.2 Why Ought One to Respect an Individual’s Integrity?

In order to determine what it means to respect an individual’s integrity, one may start with two of its fundamental characteristics, namely the fact that emotional territory is a necessary prerequisite for the possibility of living a social life together with other individuals, and secondly, the fact that it is individuals themselves who dispose over their territories. Just as one assigns a special moral protective value to individuals who are able to experience pain, so the existence of an emotional territory furnishes sufficient reason why others should respect this territory. Because of its social importance, this territory should be protected and entry into it should not take place without good reason. Consequently when confronted with another individual’s territory, one should halt. Both integrity and the capacity to experience pain are basic characteristics of all sentient beings. Of these two, as far as human beings are concerned, the protection of integrity is assigned priority since it grants individuals the possibility and right of themselves determining how to confront pain. Individuals can choose to tolerate pain in order to acquire some other socially significant value, for example the experience of social strength in a group.

Individuals personally dispose over their emotional territory. It is via this territory that the individual relates to, and communicates with the world around as an