

LAWRENCE KOHLBERG'S 6 STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Lawrence Kohlberg

– his theory claims that our development of moral reasoning happens in six stages.

3 LEVELS OF THE SIX STAGES

1. Preconventional Level

- morality is externally controlled.

- Rules imposed by authority figures are conformed to in order to avoid punishment or receive rewards.

- what is right is what one can get away with or what is personally satisfying

- Right and wrong are defined by **punishment and reward**. There is no real sense of "the greater good" or social order yet.

2. Conventional Level

- acceptance of society's conventions concerning right and wrong

- an individual obeys rules and follows society's norms even when there are no consequences for obedience or disobedience

- Right and wrong are defined by **social approval and duty**.

3. Post-Conventional Level

- people decide based on what they think is right rather than just following the rules.

- people at this level of morality have their own ethical principles and values and don't just do what society tells them to do

STAGE 1 – OBEDIENCE AND PUNISHMENT

- make moral judgments based on obedience and punishment

- The sense of good and bad is directly linked to whether he gets punished or not. Rules are followed strictly to avoid physical punishment. The physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness.

- How can I avoid punishment?

EX: A child's sense of good and bad is directly linked to whether he gets punished or not. The child sees what is happening to his friend and wants to help. He doesn't, however, because he is afraid the teacher may punish him if he gets caught fighting.

STAGE 2 – SELF INTEREST

- "right" as acting in one's own best interest while acknowledging that others will do the same, treating morality as a marketplace of fair exchanges and mutual benefits.

- What is in it for me?

EX: The girl decides to intervene and help the bullied child. She knows that she might get punished, but she also knows that she could become a victim herself, someday. If she helps the bullied child now, he might help her in the future.

STAGE 3 – INTERPERSONAL ACCORD AND CONFORMITY

- "right" behavior is defined by what pleases or is approved of by others. The individual is concerned with maintaining trust, gratitude, and loyalty within their immediate circle

- What do others think of me?

EX: Another girl sees the fight and wants to intervene, but when she realizes that all the others are just watching, she decides not to get involved. She wants others to see that she is a good girl, who is conforming with the ethics of the community

STAGE 4 - AUTHORITY AND MAINTAINING SOCIAL ORDER

- "right" behavior is defined by doing one's duty, showing respect for authority, and obeying laws to ensure that society functions smoothly.

- How can I maintain law and order?

EX: When the teacher sees the group fighting, he immediately steps in and shouts: "Stop, fighting at school is forbidden!". He feels that, above all, it is important to follow the rules, otherwise chaos breaks out and that it is his duty to uphold the rules that sustain a functioning society.

STAGE 5 – SOCIAL CONTRACT

- understand rules as a social contract as opposed to a strict order

- People recognize that while laws are necessary for social order, they should be based on a consensus that respects basic human rights.

- Does a rule truly serve all members of the community?

EX: Another teacher, who watches from afar, is not sure how she feels about this. To her, rules make sense only if they serve the right purpose. Obviously, the school rules prohibit fighting, but maybe the bully deserves to finally learn his lesson. Just yesterday he punched a young girl from the first grade.

STAGE 6- UNIVERSAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES

- absolute commitment to universal justice and human dignity as the highest moral authority, even when those principles conflict with established laws.

- What are the abstract ethical principles that serve many understandings of justice?

EX: All those involved now have to face the headmaster. He first explains the school rules, and why they exist. He then clarifies that rules are valid only if they are grounded in justice. The commitment to justice carries with it an obligation to disobey unjust rules. The headmaster's highest moral principle is compassion. He believes that all people should learn to understand each other's viewpoints and that they don't feel alone with their feelings.

MORAL THEORIES

- explains why a certain action is wrong

- tells us that we ought to act in certain ways

- a theory of how we determine right and wrong conduct

HOW WE OUGHT TO LIVE

Moral philosophy – branch of learning that deals with the nature of morality and the theories that are used to arrive at decisions about what one ought to do and why

IMPORTANCE OF MORAL THEORIES

1. Critically evaluates practices and attitudes

2. Reveal through argument what is wrong with existing social issues

3. Explains how moral concepts actually contribute to our personal experience

4. Bring to light various models and frameworks that govern the outlooks of human beings in different places and times

5. Helps in the cultivation of and enlargement of moral imagination

6. **Moral theorizing** is one of the key activities by means of which human beings give expression to their curiosity concerning where and how they fit into the universe

VIRTUE ETHICS by Aristotle

- helps us understand what it means to be a virtuous human being. It gives us a guide for living life without giving us specific rules for resolving ethical dilemmas

- it is the quest to understand and live a life of moral character

- this character-based approach to morality assumes that we acquire virtue through practice

- it defines good actions as ones that display embody virtuous character traits, like courage, loyalty, or wisdom

- suggests treating our character as a **lifelong project**, one that has the capacity to truly change who we are. The goal is not to form virtues that mean we act ethically without thinking, but to form virtues that help us see the world clearly and make better judgments as a result

Virtue – generally agreed to be a character trait, such as a habitual action or settled sentiment

- a positive trait that makes its possessor a good human being

- a virtue such as honesty or generosity is not just a tendency to do what is honest or generous, nor is it to be helpfully specified as a “desirable” or “morally valuable” character trait. It is, indeed a character trait – that is, a disposition which is well entrenched in its possessor, something that, as we say “goes all the way down”, unlike a habit such as being a tea-drinker – but the disposition in question, far from being a single track disposition to do honest

actions, or even honest actions for certain reasons, is multi-track

- **Aristotle** describes **ethical virtue** as “hexis” (“state” “condition” “disposition”)

– a tendency or disposition, induced by our habits, to have appropriate feelings

KEY CONCEPTS IN VIRTUE ETHICS

Akrasia – a lack of self-control

- a phenomenon known as weakness of the will

- a disposition to act contrary to one’s own considered judgment about what is best to do

Arete – act of living to one’s full potential

- excellence, fulfillment, or virtue

Phronesis – a type of wisdom or intelligence relevant to practical action

- leads to breakthrough thinking and creativity and enables the individual to discern and make good judgments about what is the right thing to do in a situation

Eudaimonia – highest human good, the only human good that is desirable for its own sake, as an end, rather than for the sake of something else or as a means toward some other end

- the condition of human flourishing or of living well

- the ultimate goal of a human being

- According to Aristotle, every living or human-made thing, including its parts, has a unique or characteristic function or activity that distinguishes it from all other things. The highest good of a thing

consists of the good performance of its characteristic function, and the virtue or excellence of a thing consists of whatever traits or qualities enable it to perform that function well. (Thus, the virtue or excellence of a knife is whatever enables the good performance of cutting, that of an eye whatever enables the good performance of seeing, and so on.)

INTRODUCTION TO KANTIAN ETHICS

Immanuel Kant

- one of the central enlightenment thinkers

- in him were subsumed new trends that had begun with the **rationalism** (stressing reason) of **Rene Descartes** and the **empiricism** (stressing experience) of **Francis Bacon**. He thus inaugurated a new era in the development of philosophical thought

Deontological Normative Theory

- an ethical theory that says actions are good or bad according to a clear set of rules

“RULE-BASED ETHIC”

1. The Ten Commandments

2. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Categorical imperatives – Kant’s ethics are organized around the notion of this

- he defines this as commands or moral laws all person must follow, regardless of their desires or extenuating circumstances.

- as moral laws, these imperatives are binding on everyone

Universalizability Principle

- “act only in accordance with that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it become a universal law”

- in lay terms, this simply means that if you do an action, then everyone else should also be able to do it.

Kantian Philosophy – a truly good act is one that can become a universal law

“WHAT SHOULD I DO?”

- Kant replies that we should act rationally, in accordance with a universal moral law

Kant - argued that his ethical theory requires belief in free will, God, and the immortality of the soul. Although we cannot have knowledge of these things, reflection on the moral law leads to a justified belief in them, which amounts to a kind rational faith

“WHAT MAY I HOPE?”

Kant replies that we may hope that our souls are immortal and that there really is a God who designed the world in accordance with principles of justice

THOMAS AQUINAS' 4 TYPES OF LAW AND THE 4 CARDINAL VIRTUES

Thomas Aquinas – the greatest of the Scholastic philosophers. He produced a comprehensive synthesis of Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy that influenced Roman Catholic doctrine for centuries and was adopted as the official philosophy of the church in 1917.

SUMMA THEOLOGICA

- seeks to describe the relationship between God and man to explain how man's reconciliation with the Divine is made possible at all through Christ

- the 4 types of laws was mentioned in the **Summa Theologiae** or **Summa Theologica**. This book is often referred to simply as the **Summa**, is the best-known work of Thomas Aquinas, a scholastic theologian and Doctor of the Church

- as its title indicates, is a **“theological summary”**.

- Aquinas came to think that one should believe only what is self-evident (e.g., human beings use reason)

- Aquinas wrote his own commentaries on Aristotle, which included reasoned propositions based on certainties revealed by God. He also wrote summaries of Catholic doctrine that also attempted to combine reason and faith

THOMAS AQUINAS' 4 TYPES OF LAW

1. Eternal Law

- God's perfect plan

- things and animals behave in such a way as they should

- identical to the mind of God as seen by God himself

- God's rational purpose and plan for all things. And because the Eternal Law is part of God's mind then it has always, and will always, exist. The Eternal Law is not simply something that God decided at some point to write

2. Human law

- the more particular determinations of certain matters devised by human reason

- reason reveals particular natural laws that are good for humans such as self-preservation, marriage and family, and the desire to know God

- the promotion of virtue is necessary for the common good, and human laws are instruments in the promotions of virtue

3. Divine law

- appears historically to humans, especially through revelation

DIVINE COMMANDS

Old Law – Ten Commandments

New Law – The Teachings of Jesus

4. Natural Law

- the rational creature's participation in the eternal law

- participation as being imprinted on them

- when reason rules in the human soul, we choose what accords with nature

ETHICS IN NATURAL LAW

- morality is inherent in human nature and discernable through reasoning

- human beings use reason to lead their lives, this helps guides human towards their fulfillment through basic inclination such as self-preservation and living in society.

HUMAN VIRTUES

- acquired by education, by deliberate acts, and by a perseverance ever-renewed in repeated efforts are purified and elevated by divine grace

- with God's help, they forge character and give facility in the practice of the good. The virtuous man is happy to practice them

THE 4 CARDINAL VIRTUES OF ST. THOMAS AQUINAS

1. Prudence – disposes the practical reason to discern, in every circumstance, our true good and to choose the right means for achieving it

- the virtue that utilized practical reason to choose the right thing

- **“prudence is right reason in action”**

2. Justice

- the moral virtue that consists the constant and firm will to give their due to God and neighbor

- towards men disposes one to respect the rights of each and to establish in human relationship the harmony that promotes equity

- **“justice is the virtue of religion”**

3. Temperance

- moderate the attraction of pleasures and provides balance in the use of created goods

- ensures the will’s mastery over instincts and keeps desires within the limit of what is honorable

- **“temperance helps us live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world”**

4. Fortitude

- ensures firmness in difficulties and consistency in the pursuit of the good

- enables one to conquer fear, even fear of death, and to face trials and persecutions

- **“in this world ye shall have tribulations; but he of good cheer, I have overcome the world”**

“He who is not angry when there is just cause for anger is immoral. Why? Because anger looks to the good of justice. And if you can live amid injustice without anger, you are immoral as well as unjust”

J.S. MILL UTILITARIANISM

John Stuart Mill – had a lifelong goal of reforming the world in the interest of human well-being

WHAT TO EVALUATE WHEN ASKING WHAT IS RIGHT/WRONG MORALLY?

Person	Action	Consequences
Intention, motive	What act was done?	What resulted from the act?
Habitual disposition	What was done habitually?	What usually results from this kind of act?

Consequentialism

- whether an act is morally right depends only on consequences (as opposed to the intrinsic nature of the act or anything that happens before the act)

Utilitarianism – there ought either to be some one fundamental principle or law, at the root of all morality, or if there be several, there should be a determinate order of precedence among them

SIMPLIFIED OVERVIEW OF MILL’S UTILITARIANISM

We can judge the moral value of actions by the degree of happiness they tend to produce

UTILITARIANISM & JUSTICE

Two questions addressed:

1. What differentiates justice from the rest of morality?

2. Would utilitarianism allow people to act unjustly if that would promote more happiness overall?

SURVEY OF THINGS CONSIDERED JUST/UNJUST

RIGHTS

- Violating legal rights
- Violating moral rights
- Violating human rights
- Breaking faith
- Being partial

ACT VS RULE UTILITARIANISM

A distinction that didn’t exist when Mill was writing

Act Utilitarianism – moral value of acts judged by utility of consequences of those kinds of acts

Rule Utilitarianism – moral value of acts judged by whether they follow rules; rules judged by utility of their consequences if generally accepted and/or followed

Greatest Happiness Principle

- actions are morally right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, morally wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness

Happiness – defined in terms of pleasure and reduction or absence of pain

SUPPORT FOR GREATEST HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE

- pleasure and freedom from pain are the only things desirable as ends

- Mill on the highest good

- the “end of human action is necessarily also the standard of morality”

ARGUMENT FOR USING GREATEST HAPPINESS PRINCIPLE FOR MORAL JUDGMENTS

1. Pleasure is the only intrinsic value
2. We should use happiness, measured in pleasure & reduction of pain, to evaluate actions morally
3. What matters in evaluating actions is their consequences for happiness

Therefore, we should use the GHP to evaluate actions morally

SUMMARY FOR HAPPINESS

We should judge what is morally right/wrong based on consequences: how much happiness is produced for the sentient beings involved

- Consider usual consequences for that kind of act
- Consider amount of happiness (measured as pleasure) but also kind (intellectual & sensual)

Rules of justice - are crucial for human happiness