HIERARCHICAL ETHICS
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The following paper explores a model of ethics that is stratified based on several factors. There are many reasons why it is necessary to approach ethics in such a hierarchical fashion. Many of the justifications of these reasons will be presented in an effort to show the importance of bringing this topic to greater awareness.

THE UNITED PARTY OF VIRTUE

Benjamin Franklin recounts in his autobiography his efforts at achieving moral perfection. Is this something that is achievable? Well, Ben certainly made a valiant effort at attaining such a lofty goal. His method of undertaking such a task was rather simple. He began by ranking thirteen virtues in an order, which by achieving the first would facilitate achieving the next. Next, he created a diary for recording his progress. Then, it was a matter of self-awareness. Ben made progress through his course, and soon he began to become quite the virtuous man.

There was, however, an unexpected result from his morally perfect lifestyle – people didn't like him as much. The fact of the matter is that people tend to resent those that are too good. This is not to say that Ben didn't find great benefit it his efforts. On the contrary, he continued throughout his life to be more self-aware of these virtues in himself and others. He also commented that when times were busy for him in business, travel, or government, that he was more distracted from his self-awareness and tended to let his diary entries slip. He was not being any less virtuous; he was just less cognizant of it.

But, really, Ben's reason for undertaking such a project – his motivation – is what I want to talk about. Virtues and vices can be listed in numerous ways and in numerous moral codes, but they are useless without a motivation to practice them. Let's look at Ben's motivation. His grander project was to construct what he called "The United Party of Virtue". Here is an outline of his logic for this:

1. Historically, parties affect the greatest change in the world.
2. The view of any party is its current general interest.
3. The different views of all of the parties give rise to confusion.
4. Even though the party is united under a common interest, the individual members of the party each have their own, private interests.
5. Once a party achieves its overall goal, each member becomes intent on achieving their own, private interest. This causes more confusion and the party breaks up into divisions, factions, and maybe even another party is formed.
6. Very few of the members of a party place the interests of their party or of their country higher in importance than their own, personal interest. It just so happens that in many circumstances the interests of the members happens to serve similar interests of the party or of their country.

7. Even fewer place the interests of mankind higher.
8. By forming the virtuous and good people of all nations into a United Party of Virtue that is governed by suitable good and wise rules, the interests of mankind will be served. The members of such a party are much more likely to follow the rules set forth than the average person is likely to follow common laws.
9. Any attempt to create a United Party of Virtue can't fail if executed in the right manner.

It would seem that Ben had already created a forerunner of *Rule Utilitarianism*! If you're not familiar with this form of ethics then that's O.K., I'm going to explain it in more detail later on. The point is that Benjamin Franklin, in 1731, was already trying to create a grassroots movement that would be sort of like the United Nations, but its focus would be more on ensuring that the nations of the world serve the interests of mankind in an ethical way.

One objection to this might be that this party would be an elitist group. It might seem like this on the surface but there is one major thing to consider. The focus of the party is on the interests of mankind. The party's interest is to the benefit of everyone's interests.

We talked about Ben's motivation to become a virtuous man, but let's go now into what motivates people to do…well, anything and everything.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

Abraham Maslow developed his Hierarchy of Needs over 50 years ago and it is still an often cited and well-accepted model of human motivation. The Hierarchy is commonly depicted as a pyramid with the more basic, important, and immediately satisfiable needs being at the base of the pyramid. The levels of needs from the bottom (most basic) to the top are:

1. Physiological Needs – hunger, thirst, homeostasis
2. Safety Needs – security, shelter, health
3. Love Needs – affection, belongingness, group involvement
4. Esteem Needs – self-respect, achievement, prestige
5. Self-Actualization – self-fulfillment, life's passion, achieving one's potential

My aim is not to go into detail about each level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but to address some common misunderstandings of the hierarchy as well as discuss an extension of the hierarchy.

It is strange to me that many who are familiar with Maslow's Hierarchy criticize it for reasons that Maslow himself addressed in his paper *A Theory of Human Motivation*. One such criticism is that needs don't necessarily have to be met 100% before the next higher need becomes a motivator for satiation. Maslow addressed this by stating that needs don't have to be met in a "step-wise, all-or-none" fashion. So it is not like all

physiological needs have to be met to 100% capacity and then, suddenly, all behavior focuses on safety needs. Higher needs emerge gradually as a relatively high degree of need satisfaction occurs at the lower level.

Motivations can be traced back to needs even when the motivation may be viewed as a want or desire. Let's say you are hungry. You need to satisfy your hunger but you want to eat at a restaurant with a health rating of 95 or better. This is really a safety need because you understand that eating at restaurants with low health ratings means an increased risk of eating food that can cause illness.

Maslow's theory has also been criticized for being too egocentric. Much of human motivation is concerned with our interpersonal relationships. This is one of the main areas I would like to focus on in regards to ethics. For now, let me just say that it is quite easy to apply Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to other people. We are not only concerned with our own needs satisfaction but also with the satisfaction of others' needs.

VROOM'S EXPECTANCY THEORY

In his book entitled *Work and Motivation*, Victor Vroom put forth his formula of expectancy. This formula basically states that a person is motivated to act on the satisfaction of a need only if, in the end, it will result it a pay-off to the person. And although Vroom was referring to work environments, we can apply the formula to any goal-oriented motivation. Here is the formula:

Motivation = Expectancy x Instrumentality x Valence

Expectancy refers to the individual's perceived probability that the need will be successfully met. *Instrumentality* refers to the reward gained should the goal be met. And, finally, *Valence* refers to how the reward will be of value to the person.

This formula is good because it introduces a probability factor into goal achievement. I would also like to draw attention to the last element – valence. This concept of value or what is of interest to the individual is what I would like to address in regards to ethics.

CATEGORIZING MOTIVATION

When we use the term "motivation", what exactly do we mean? And are needs the only motivators in humans? Motivation is a state or condition that activates behavior. Sources for motivation can either be *external* to the person or *internal* to the person. Usually we refer to motivation causing *goal-directed behavior*, but this isn't always the case. There also exist *expressive* and *autonomous* behaviors that aren't goal-directed. These behaviors aren't mutually exclusive, however. A single behavior may have elements of all three. But, for our purposes, we want to address the *goal-oriented* motivations. Motivations can be further categorized into *physical*, *mental*, and *spiritual* motivators. And we can also assign classifications of whether the motivation is *positive* or *negative*.

Needs and motivations are really just means to an end though. Now we must ask ourselves, what is the end(s) that they are a means to? What is the state that we need to achieve or are motivated to achieve? To answer this adequately, we must dive into the subject of ethics. For it is the merger of Motivation Theory with Ethics that we gain a better understanding of how a moral code should be constructed. The reason why this is so is because it just so happens that the things we tend to call virtues, unalienable rights, and proper social conduct are also the things which facilitate need satisfaction.   Once again I turn to Maslow's *A Theory of Human Motivation*. Maslow list such conditions as freedom of speech, freedom to act so long as others are not harmed, freedom of expression, freedom to seek information, freedom to defend one's self, justice, fairness, honesty, and orderliness in the group as facilitators of the satisfaction of our needs.

THE ARGUMENT FOR UTILITARIANSIM

The basic doctrine of Utilitarianism as formed by Jeremy Bentham is more or less Hedonistic in scope. It is John Stuart Mills who took this version of Bentham's and created the modern formulation. In his work entitled *Utilitarianism* Mills states the famous Utilitarian maxim:

> Actions are right to the degree that they tend to promote the greatest good for the greatest number.

Here we have the ends that motivations are a means to stated as "good". Other words that are sometimes equated with "good" in this context are "pleasure" and "happiness". Earlier I said that I wanted to take Vroom's idea of valence and apply it to ethics. This idea is of value or interest to an individual being the end that the means seeks. Let's see if we can equate "good" to "valuable" in order to determine if there is a correlation between Motivation Theory and Ethics here as well. We can try and restate the Utilitarian maxim as:

> Actions are right to the degree that they tend to promote the greatest value for the greatest number.

We can define "value" by dividing it into two sets of two categories. The first set is a distinction between *qualitative* and *quantitative* value. The second set is a distinction between *intrinsic* and *instrumental* value. Something can be instrumentally valuable in acquiring something else that has intrinsic value, e.g. money is instrumentally valuable in buying food. But, is food intrinsically or instrumentally valuable? We could say that food is instrumentally valuable in satisfying our hunger and that a satisfied need is what is intrinsically valuable. Why? Because when the need is satisfied we are content, happy, or simply no longer in need.

This tracing of value back to happiness or pleasure does have problems. The Hedonistic view is that pleasure is what is intrinsically good. But what if what makes one person happy has the effect of causing harm or pain to others? So there is usually the caveat

added onto the Hedonistic view that says "as long as it doesn't cause others displeasure". But this undermines Hedonism. Is it truly all about personal pleasure if you have to add caveats that could potentially lessen your pleasure? No, it would seem that Hedonism is flawed. Ultimately it is not all about pleasure – or even happiness. The value equation makes a distinction between the quality and quantity of the pleasures. Many quality pleasures can make you happy. And many happy times can make a happy life. A person tends to find value in many quality experiences that create a happy or good life. So it is not just a fleeting pleasure which has intrinsic value, it is a happy life.

Aristotle called this state of having a well-lived, happy life e*udaimonia*. A person who has eudaimonia is a person who is at the top of Maslow's Hierarchy. Not only are they concerned with passing pleasures, but also they seek quality happiness, are concerned with the well being of their fellow men, and seek self-fulfillment as well as want to contribute to a better society.

It is at this point that the traditional dispute between the two schools of *Consequentialism* diverges. Utilitarianism falls under the ethics of Consequentialism. The focus of Consequentialism is on the consequences of an action. The question of whether lying is wrong or not is answered by the Consequentialists as "it depends". In most situations lying is wrong but there are situations where lying will produce less problems than if you told the truth. We'll come back to this issue later, though.

The two main schools of Consequentialism are *Egoism* and *Utilitarianism*. The Egoists would say that it is a person's life that has intrinsic value and each person is encouraged to seek their own happiness. The Utilitarianists would say that a person's life is only instrumentally valuable as a means to a thriving society. It is a healthy society that has intrinsic value. If the Egoist view reeks of Hedonism to you then that is because you're right. But the Utilitarian view suffers from one major flaw itself. That flaw is the problem of justice.

The problem of justice as it relates to Utilitarianism says that there could be situations when individual lives could be sacrificed for the greater good of multiple people's eudaimonia. To remedy this we would have to add a caveat similar to the one we added to Hedonism. Wouldn't this undermine Utilitarianism also? Not really because Utilitarianism has a scope that is ever widening. Egoism's scope is restricted to only individuals. You can't condone a view that says to everyone to maximize your individual pleasure regardless of everyone else and then tack on the caveat about ignoring part of the original view. Utilitarianism's view states that other people's eudaimonia is of value right off the bat. I will address the rationale for the reformulated Utilitarian view next.

First I would like to address the ever-widening scope of Utilitarianism. Where does the scope end? Is a healthy and thriving society instrumentally good to a healthy and thriving ecosystem? I would say that the scope of Utilitarianism goes all the way to universal proportions and ends at reality itself. What has gone unsaid in our formulation of value is continued existence, or survival. What is intrinsically valuable is a happy,

healthy, continued existence. Even the word "happy", since it is such an emotionally charged word, could be replaced with "vibrant" or "positive".

This is where the Cognitive-Theoretic Model of the Universe (CTMU) has quite a bit to say about the scope of the reality we all inhabit and how utility is at play across the entire spectrum of reality, from the quantum world to the upper limit of the unity of all things at the global level.

The CTMU specifies that reality self-creates in a discrete manner, from one micromoment in superposition with a vast array of the myriad other objects that reality has made manifest, with a utility function at play. We, as higher orders of telors, i.e. inheritors of universal self-creative freedom, mirror both the global and quantum levels of reality in that meta-utility is preserved across all levels.

At the quantum level telic feedback is at play. This equates to the "collapse of the wave function" as reality models a multiplicity of potential future states and somehow selects the actual outcome as telors perceive and interpret their reality. The CTMU describes telic feedback as generalized utility in which reality selects from possible future states in order to maximize itself.

At the global level, telic feedback is brought together in Multiplex Unity (MU). This, again, describes reality in terms of utility and a connection that contains feedback. MU is the answer to the question of how come we all perceive the one reality out of so many observers? This question and the nature of MU has quite a bit of bearing on the ethics of numerous telors coexisting within a unitary reality.

It would seem that the CTMU subsumes Rule Utilitarianism by giving it a more comprehensive model within which to reside. It also explicates the relationship between people (in the most general sense) and the reality in which they infocognitively adhere. A reality that evolves coupled to utility.

In this regard, the CTMU has a meta-Darwinian component. The reality that we share in our "collective solipsism" evolves through self-replication and self-selection holologically. And, thus, we also must maximize utility for our shared existence.

One other thing that should be noted is that something can be *both* instrumentally and intrinsically valuable. A person's eudaimonia is intrinsically valuable to that person and instrumentally valuable to a vibrant society. A vibrant society is intrinsically valuable to the human race and instrumentally valuable to the Earth's ecosystem.

THE PROBLEM OF JUSTICE AND RULE UTILITARIANISM

Deontological Theories of Ethics are concerned with duty. Usually these duties are formalized in rules or laws that, if followed, would create a better person or society. The most famous advocate of this view was Immanuel Kant. His Categorical Imperative states:

Act only on that maxim which you can will to become a universal law.

This sounds great on the surface but there are two major flaws. The first flaw is in deciding who makes the laws and how do we know that the laws that are decided on truly are beneficial to everyone. To answer this we have to justify the laws agreed upon by using the consequences of the actions. This places Deontological arguments right back in the realm of Consequentialism. The second problem was addressed earlier in regards to lying. The outcome of one situation might yield a worse ethical problem than the original one. Outcomes cannot be sacrificed.

The Categorical Imperative does solve Utilitarianism's problem of justice though. It does this because a society cannot be vibrant without guaranteeing the need facilitators we spoke of earlier by making them codes, laws, and rights. This type of Utilitarianism is called *Rule Utilitarianism*.

Rule Utilitarianism isn't just a caveat tacked onto Utilitarianism either. It points out that what might at first appear as a contradiction to Utilitarianism is in fact a higher Utilitarian ideal. If one individual's right to life were sacrificed in order to save ten other people, it would appear like Utilitarian values were upheld. But if we lived in a society where your right to life was in constant jeopardy of being sacrificed any time society deemed it necessary, it would have the effect of eroding society's value of life. The greater value is in having a society where the individual's right to life is respected.

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Just as the satiation of needs follows a hierarchical framework, so does the progression in morality and ethics. A person can't immediately embrace Rule Utilitarianism if they are not at the appropriate level of development. We now turn to the work of Lawrence Kohlberg and his stages of moral development as presented in *Essays in Moral Development (Vol. 1)*.

Kohlberg's basic premise is that people develop in their ethical outlook in stages. This is very similar to the manner in which people progress in Maslow's Hierarchy as needs are satisfied. Kohlberg divided this progression into 3 levels with 2 stages in each level. They are:

Level 1 – Pre-Conventional
1. Obedience and Punishment
2. Individualism, Instrumentalism, and Exchange

Level 2 – Conventional
3. Interpersonal Concordance
4. Law and Order

Level 3 – Post-Conventional

5. Social Contract
6. Universal Ethical Principles

Stage 1 corresponds to the "threat of punishment/promise of reward" application of motivation to comply with moral action. Stage 2 is the stage where a person is concerned solely with actions that are in their own best interest – other people's interests are completely disregarded unless the other's interests help to serve one's own interests. At Level 2 we see the outlook of the majority of society represented. Stage 3 is the stage where a person's actions are largely aimed at acceptance and social norms. At Stage 4 people understand that laws, rules, customs, and courtesies serve to create a just and equal society. At Level 3 we see the Utilitarian traits emerge. At Stage 5 people understand that laws, rules, and customs aren't just to create an egalitarian society, but they serve the greater purpose of promoting the greatest good to the greatest number of people. And finally, at Stage 6 we arrive at the view that Maslow's need facilitators and the principles of the Utilitarian maxim of the greatest value for the greatest number should be regarded as a Categorical Imperative.

You will notice that in both Maslow's model and Kohlberg's model there is a progression from a very egocentric, selfish view that evolves into an awareness of, and need to "fit-in-with", others. Eventually one would expect a person who is at the Self-Actualization level of needs satisfaction to adopt a Post-Conventional moral outlook. Once this happens there is a larger degree of altruism rather than a larger degree of egoism, which is displayed lower in the hierarchy. And it is this altruistic concern that is characterized in Utilitarianism. The degree to which this concern manifests in a person depends on many factors. Next I would like to present the CTMU formulation of how this concern for other people's interests exists in Hierarchical Ethics.

THE DISTRIBUTED SELF

Because the CTMU explicates our relationship to both lower and higher orders of a mutual existence, a person has a stronger alliance with those who share their interests and less of a concern with those who don't share similar interests with them. Abstractly, we can all pretty much agree that global thriving is a necessary interest if we are to continue to exist ourselves. In this way, our "self" is connected in many ways to many things and we might understand this connection in numerous expressions and at numerous levels of comprehension.

When I use the term "interests" I am referring to the connotations explained earlier in Maslow's "needs", Vroom's "valence", and Utilitarian's "value". And depending on the individual's current level of moral development and needs satisfaction, their interests can run the entire gamut of the hierarchical spectrum.

The term "alliance" refers to the relationship in which people's interests are in alliance, or related by common ground. People will tend to have a greater concern for others if they share an alliance of interests. People will also have a greater concern for another person's needs, even if their interests aren't necessarily in alliance, if they share a close

relationship. This relationship can manifest itself in ever expanding relationships, e.g. immediate family, extended family, friends, neighbors, community, city, county, state, region, country, etc. (of course my example is based on the United States of America's terminology. Even though terms may change, the concept doesn't.). Thus, people aren't only concerned with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs as it applies to them, but also how it applies to others.

This might seem like common sense but it really needs to be stated in these terms and in this model of Hierarchical Ethics because it is very important to understand that, ultimately, all of our interests converge. This convergence isn't frequently respected because the majority of people are stifled in their eudaimonia at lower levels in the hierarchy in trying to satisfy lower needs and exhibiting lower stages of moral development. But it is worth noting that at the upper levels of the hierarchy, a self-actualized person would be expected to think about global issues affecting the entire planet and on outward to the limits of the real universe. Issues such as Global Warming, world poverty, world hunger, environmental conservation, global energy consumption, overpopulation, wild life conservation, etc. are issues that concern not only a self-actualized person, but a flourishing society of self-actualized people.

VIRTUE ETHICS

Since we have discussed Deontological Ethics and Consequentialism, we should round out our discussion with the third school of ethics – Value Ethics. Deontological Ethics is concerned with the actions of people. Consequentialism is concerned with the outcomes or goals of those actions. Virtue Ethics is concerned with adopting certain virtuous behaviors and the motivation (as we have already discussed) to adopt virtues that society deems as valuable. Many philosophers of ethics will quibble over which is the better ethical school to adopt, but it's actually better to understand that all three are intertwined and must be merged into a hierarchical framework with ethical motives driving virtuous behavior with the goal to be a vibrant outcome that respects the individual and benefits society and ultimately reality at large.

CONCLUSION

Based on this synthesis of ideas, a hierarchical approach to ethics emerges based on the motivating factors of the individual, their level of moral development, and their relationship to other individual's interests and needs. From this we can determine that it is unrealistic to expect all people to understand, much less adopt, a higher ethical value if they are trying to meet lower level needs or not of the appropriate moral maturity.

Another and far more important conclusion to be drawn from available models of motivation and ethics is that this hierarchical approach does point the way to the highest ideal of ethics, morality, and virtue. Namely, it is that the values of Rule Utilitarianism as understood within the CTMU – embodied in a vibrant, healthy existence that contribute to the self-actualization of reality and all of its constituent parts – should be treated as sacred and as inviolate as the laws of nature itself. Since value should be

maximized to the fullest possible extent, there is implied a respect and caring for, not only of other people, but also of other creatures, the environment, and ultimately the world.

Just how many of us are self-actualized enough to be at the upper tier of the hierarchy? Kohlberg noted himself that very few of our species resides in the Post-Conventional level. And this brings us full circle to Ben Franklin's ideal of a United Party of Virtue. We cannot expect those who wield the power of controlling the future of mankind – our world leaders – to go on without answering to the highest of moral virtues and expect our planet to emerge unscathed. For this very reason we can imagine the great benefits to our planet and all its inhabitants if the world governments adopted a council of moral elders as envisioned by Benjamin Franklin with a comprehensive understanding of the correct model of reality as envisioned by Christopher Langan. For such a party to hold any real power it would have to either be an extension of the government with appropriate balancing functionality (such as veto power) or be composed of a sufficiently representative body of powerful officials (but this runs the risk of letting personal interests interfere in public interests).

For such a thing to be instituted on a global scale might be a pipe dream. A realistic approach is a highly organized movement conducted, not by emotional zealots, but by rational, freethinking, intelligent people. There are many ideal candidates that fit the bill. Let's just hope, for the sake of mankind, that we will meet Ben Franklin's challenge and eventually create a United Party of Virtue before it is too late.

SOURCES

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