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Ethics



The subject of moral codes and morality engaged the earnest attention of the world's greatest minds and scholars. Moral codes refer to the accepted standards of society. In Christianity, the Bible urges Christians to behave along with accepted codes of conduct, and this is outlined in The Ten Commandments. Preaching about moral codes appears to be easy, but the task is to explain to an individual about the foundations of these moral codes. The paper will focus on the foundation needed in the construction of moral codes, on the reasons of breaking moral codes, and on determining whether moral codes are relative or absolute.

How Do We Construct Moral Codes (Based On What Foundation)?

The moral foundation provides a basis and explanation, which justifies for an individual the reasons to behave morally. The study of moral foundations attempts to explain the basis and disparity of human moral reasoning. The theory proposes five moral foundations: fairness, care, loyalty, purity, and authority. The named five moral principles are the common attributes exhibited by many individuals. Scholars have attempted to assemble a yardstick to measure the development of moral codes. Focusing on all aspects that can cause moral variation among individuals, it is concluded that individual's morality is affected by the current state of emotions and feelings rather than situations they experience.



The first moral foundation of is the aspect of care. Care is a value that grows within an individual because of existing affiliation and affection towards other people. A duty to care prompts a person to avoid harming or hurting their fellow individuals in any interaction. An individual portrays elements of care by choosing to protect, defend, warn, and advise their fellow humans against any form of harm. The human species was created with attachment systems, which gives the ability to feel and dislike other peoples' pain. Such attribute makes humans sensitive, and that is the reason people display essential virtues like kindness, compassion, gentleness, and nurturance. When one practices these virtues, they will prefer helping individuals rather than subjecting them to pain and suffering. The human being knows killing is immoral and will avoid this at all costs.

The second moral foundation is about fairness. The act of being fair involves the practice of justice, equity, rights, and autonomy. The human is urged to be fair by treating others with equality and with utmost justice, and society will be contented in such way. Cheating of any kind is perceived as the lack of fairness, and the victims experience injustice and inequality. Fairness emanates from the process of evolution under mutual altruism. The human beings' practice of fairness is pushed by their tendency to treat their fellow beings in agreement with their actions by offering others what they deserve.

The third basic principle of moral conduct is loyalty, and it entails staying true, supporting, and allegiant towards someone or something. The human being should show devotion and faithfulness to their fellow individual, group, or country. For the sake of achieving progress, unity,



and integration within a group, individuals have to thrive by self-sacrifice and patriotism. The virtue of loyalty helps eliminate instances of betrayal and lack of commitment to any interaction within the society.

Authority marks the fourth moral foundation standard. Social interaction along with hierarchical ranks explains how authority provides a ground for leaders and followers to choose an appropriate code of conduct. When seeking authority, human beings look up to their leaders for protection and responsibility. On the other hand, leaders have the responsibility of treating their followers by the stipulated rules and regulations. When authority is effectively practiced, leaders and followers' interaction becomes morally guided.

The final moral foundation is the concept of purity. Purity underpins the fact that human beings need to overcome carnal pleasures. Purity entails staying clean and true to oneself at both literal and metaphorical levels. The element of purity encourages individuals to shun embarrassing vices like promiscuity and prohibited behavior in society.

What Makes People Break Moral Codes?

Human beings are prone to breaking moral codes when they are faced with a conflict of interest. The case arises when one ignores some of the basic moral foundations for another or disregards the entire five moral



foundations. Scholars have argued that the human consciousness cannot perceive and implement the five moral foundations. The failure to perceive them makes an individual unable to generate self-judgment and moral intuition, thereby developing a problem of distinguishing between right and wrong.

The distinction between right and wrong is can be influenced by the individual self-interest. People will violate the core moral foundations only to satisfy their personal aggrandizement. From the individual point of view, acting against their self-interest is immoral, and people will behave in any way that benefits them regardless of whether the action will victimize others in society or not. The aspect of self-interest stems from the concept of ethical egoism, which explains how humans tend to behave selfishly by nature. Ethical egoism prompts individuals to aim for better things to make their life good at the expense of any virtue. For instance, under the moral foundation of authority, some leaders are likely to abuse the authority with the aim of acquiring political success. Self-interest does not exclude helping others because an individual can choose to help others with hidden self-interest.

The conflict of interest also highly contributes to the violation of the moral codes of conduct. The principle of fairness is highly violated at both individual and group levels. Fairness demands justice and equity, but people fail to practice fairness because they are often torn between their self-interest and group interest. It is natural for an individual to act towards their personal interest, and this, consequently, makes them act contrary to the prescribed moral principles. Breaking the moral codes, individuals become corrupt and act unduly against their fellow humans



with an aim of maximizing their self-interest.

Individuals are expected to behave impartially when dealing with self-judgment while determining the appropriate code of conduct to adopt in a particular situation. For instance, a person can get into a situation that demands them to display care, authority, fairness, and purity, but he or she may choose to ignore all moral foundations and act conversely, thereby breaking the rules. According to their judgment, behaving morally in such situation will not improve their state of life.

Background and peer interaction contribute to individuals ending up violating the accepted moral codes. The moral foundation of purity becomes highly violated in such circumstances. For example, if an individual's cultural background perceives a particular act as moral, it can be immoral when practiced in other cultures. Additionally, shifting from one locality to another tends to cause a moral clash because different society shares different moral standards, excluding the universal one. Peer groups induce individuals to participate in acts that are immoral according to their self-judgment.

Are Moral Codes Relative Or Absolute?

Moral codes are always relative and never absolute. The choices of moral codes are relative, basing on factors such as cultural difference,



religious beliefs, psychological effects, and situations at hand. Morality is relative because it is a subjective concept rather than an objective concept. Humans normally incline to choose their act of conduct personally while paying attention to their self-interest, cultural beliefs, or religious teachings rather than acting universally by picking objective moral codes.

Moreover, from a biological perspective, moral codes are regarded as relative when humans act primarily for their convenience. Since humans are also animals, morality applies to only selected animals instead of being applied to all forms of life. When animals like tigers and lions prey and kill their fellow animals for food, the act of killing is not considered as immorality, but when a human being commits the same act, it qualifies to be an act of immorality.

The issue of morality is even more complex when the action performed by individuals is viewed as an act of morality and at the same time an immoral act. Under the moral foundation of care, morality is defined against harm, but the aspect of harm is also relative. For example, when an individual acts as a witness against a criminal in a court, the act is perceived as moral at one point. Simultaneously, the act can be termed as immoral because it inflicts harm on the criminal. Additionally, the nature of classifying the acts of immorality and morality poses confusion in that petty and massive crimes are both termed as immoral. For instance, acts like gossiping, killing, and raping are all termed as immoral regardless of the degree of their impact.



Conclusion

Humans are expected to behave along with the moral codes despite the fact that there is some aspect of relativity while choosing an act of morality. There are universal codes, which are underpinned by the five primary moral foundations. Human beings are bound to break the moral codes, and this is affected by factors such as peer pressure, the conflict of interest, and prejudice. Moral codes are always relative due to variations in culture and interpretation. What is moral in a particular society might be immoral in another society because moral codes are subjective.

