

Consumer Moral Leadership

Sue L.T. McGregor



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Sue L.T. McGregor
Mount Saint Vincent University, Canada



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PREFACE

This book is intended to help people reframe their entire experience of what it means to be a citizen-consumer in the 21st century – to see themselves as moral leaders in the marketplace. It offers a collection of novel ways to re-conceptualize and envision consumption (consumers as moral leaders), thereby providing invigorating insights for future dialogue and intellectual and social action. Its major contribution is bringing to bear on consumption a synthesis of new lines of thinking from the vanguard of the new sciences, transdisciplinary inquiry, integral theory, the principles of a culture of peace, and moral development theory. It brings a new message, a new imperative. The very core of what it means to be a morally responsible member of the human family is challenged and reframed.

Readers will have the opportunity to shift paradigms; to try on new glasses designed to reveal altered perspectives on being a consumer. Consumption will be viewed through many new frames, never before applied to the phenomenon of consumption. The intent is to open new doors; to take research, scholarship, activism, policy, entrepreneurial and daily-lived experiences in new directions that privilege a new moral leadership imperative (as well as the conventional *management imperatives* of sustainability, ethics, simplicity and environmental integrity). The intent is to foster a new hope, leading to differently informed activism and to provocative research, policy, entrepreneurial and educational initiatives that favour the human condition, the collective human family and interconnected integrity. After reading 20 books about this topic, written during the past decade, it became apparent that the public keeps receiving the same message, just packaged differently. I think people *need a new message* and a new imperative, that consumers can be moral leaders in the marketplace, in addition to efficient managers. To do this, they need a new collection of ideas about how to reframe the act, culture and ideology of consuming so they can break out of the familiar intellectual cage comprising sustainable and ethical consumption, and sustainable development and fair trade.

This book is collectively informed by a deep respect for transdisciplinary inquiry, integral and integrative approaches, the principles of a culture of peace, the nuances and profound insights from the new sciences of quantum physics, chaos theory and living systems theory, participatory orientations, the human condition, moral development and consciousness, and the many layers of postmodernism. While never intended to be packaged into three parts, once completed, the collection of ideas fell comfortably into three sections (see Figure 1). Part One contains foundational theories and intellectual constructs central to the main tenet of the book - the morality of consumer behaviour and how this behaviour can be perceived as leadership instead of management. Part Two builds on the first section and sets the scene for the final section of the book. Part Two fleshes out three huge intellectual movements - integral theory, transdisciplinarity and biomimicry - and

PREFACE

applies them to inform consumer moral leadership. These two parts, comprising eight chapters, serve as the foundation for Part Three - a discussion of the profound unpeacefulness of consumption and what is entailed in holding consumers morally accountable.

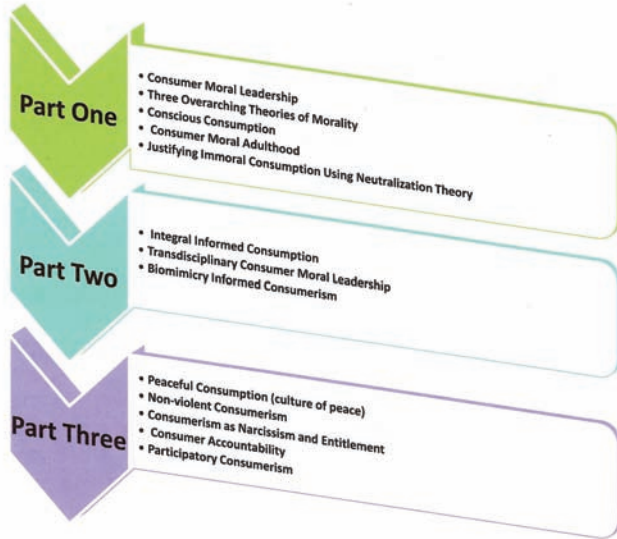


Figure 1. Overview of intellectual contributions and innovations.

PART I

The book begins with a chapter explaining the concept of *consumer moral leadership*, an intellectual construct developed especially for this publication. It reflects a synergistic weave of several longstanding morality-related concepts, including moral integrity, authority, courage, humility, intelligence and wisdom, intensity, and moral authority. This chapter also draws on the emerging literature on followership. It is followed by a very in-depth discussion of the construct of morality, in Chapter Two. There are three overarching theories of morality in the field of moral philosophy. Those advocating for consumer moral leadership must be aware of which notion of morality they are applying in their discourse. One strand of thinking focuses on the intentions behind the act. Another is concerned with the consequences of the act, and a third focuses on the character of the person performing the act. Vetted by a moral philosopher, Chapter Two provides solid grounding in the three main theories of morality. This chapter is included because I felt I had a moral obligation to ensure readers that the following content was conceptually robust.

A book about consumer moral leadership is more complete with a discussion of conscious consumption. Consumers need to be consciously aware of their actions in order to assume a moral stance in the marketplace. Because the idea of consciousness pervades most of the ideas shared in the book, Chapter Three provides an overview of both mindfulness and consciousness and how these theories and related concepts can be used to understand consumer behaviour from a moral imperative. With consciousness and mindfulness, people are better able to choose their intentions, understood to be anticipated outcomes. If we accept that social and market moral transformation is being blocked by the current level of human consciousness (discussed in more detail in Chapters Four and Five), we can argue that a shift in human consciousness is accelerated with the nurturance of consumer consciousness.

Because this book is about consumer moral leadership, Chapter Four contains a discussion of another new construct developed for this book, that of *consumer moral adulthood*. Drawing on Robert Kegan's well-established theory of five orders of moral consciousness, Chapter Four is predicated on the assumption that consumers cannot be held morally accountable for what is beyond their current mental capacity. Rather than blaming people for being unethical, Chapter Four provides a conceptual tool for gauging the degree to which people can actually be held accountable for the consequences of their consumer decisions. In the 21st century consumer culture, the mental demands of people in their consumer role are truly being challenged. If people are only mentally capable of placing their own self-interest first, they cannot engage in morally, socially responsible consumer behaviour. Said another way, people can only be morally responsible if they are mentally capable of recognizing a moral situation.

From a slightly different, yet complementary, tact, Chapter Five recognizes that when people feel guilty about harming others with their actions, they often resort to common claims or justifications for actions that have harmful consequences.

PART I

People's thought processes inform their moral agency, their capacity for making moral judgements. Drawing on *neutralization theory*, for the first time, Chapter Five applies 13 claims of moral defense to understand how people can knowingly engage in immoral (maybe amoral) consumer behaviour. Together, Chapters Four and Five appreciate that not all people are at the same level of moral mental complexity, nor are they immune to finding excuses to alleviate the guilt they feel when they find out their consumer actions have negative consequences on others and the planet.

CONSUMER MORAL LEADERSHIP

This chapter provides an overview of the new intellectual construct of consumer moral leadership (and to a lesser extent, consumer moral followership). It draws heavily from both the moral leadership and the followership literatures. The impetus for this intellectual innovation is the centuries-old assumption that consumers are supposed to be managers. They have not been conceptualized as leaders in the economy and society. Consumers are supposed to manage money, credit, debt, time, et cetera. Disciplines, degree programs, professional associations, journals and textbooks have evolved around this topic, namely, consumer economics, family economics, and family resource management (e.g., Goldsmith, 2005).

Covey (1992) makes a clear distinction between leadership and management. Fundamentally, leaders provide direction for transformation based on principles while managers provide control of resources used in transactions based on methods and procedures. Leaders adapt to situations, striving to share power while strengthening people. Managers react to situations, striving to maintain power while minimizing costs and maximizing benefits. Leaders work on changing the system and the infrastructures by looking at the lens and saying it is right for us. Managers work within the system and structures by looking through the lens, directing the producers to do the work.

If consumers are to be held accountable for the impact of their choices on themselves, others, future generations, those not born, other species and the earth, they must move from viewing themselves as managers to also being leaders. This is a huge paradigm shift necessitating a new intellectual construct. Although a fair amount of interesting material has been written about moral leadership, virtually nothing exists about *consumer moral leadership* (see Gordon's (2005) application of the concept to the mental health services industry). This chapter will recount the main ideas from the moral leadership and followership literatures and weave them together to develop the new notion of consumer moral leadership (see Figure 1.1).

MORAL LEADERSHIP AS A CONSTRUCT

Leadership is a concept by which people attempt to reattribute individual responsibility to actions. Morality is a concern for claims of unjust harm (Rozycki, 1993). Although leadership is irrevocably tied to morality (Safty, 2003), moral leadership is different from leadership in general (Sucher, 2007). A universally accepted definition of moral leadership is still evolving (Johnson, 2003) because little attention has been paid to the moral dimension of leadership (Gini, 1996;



Figure 1.1. Dimensions of consumer moral leadership.

Safty, 2003). Although it is hard to define moral leadership (Gini), it is well understood that moral leadership capabilities empower people to effectively exercise leadership in whatever activity they may endeavor (rather than on a particular profession or vocation). Furthermore, moral leadership involves serving others, rather than dominating over them, leading to personal empowerment to contribute to the transformation of a society in transition (Anello, 2006). Moral leadership strives to release the potential and initiatives of each individual and protect their rights and freedoms while safeguarding the well-being of the whole community. The intent is to preserve human honour leading to a deeply caring civilization by serving the needs and well-being of others (Anello, 1992; Gini, 1996).

Moral leaders have a long-term commitment to moral ideals, including a respect for humanity. They are deeply certain about their moral beliefs and draw on a lifelong capacity to learn from others. They are scrupulous in their efforts to use morally justifiable means to pursue their moral goals. And, they demonstrate a humbleness and willingness to risk their own self-interest for the sake of their moral goals (Colby & Damon, 1992). Anello and Hernandez (1996) identify six essential elements of moral leadership: a service-orientation for the common good; the intent to ensure personal and social transformation; a moral responsibility to investigate and apply truth; a belief in the essential nobility of human nature; personal transcendence through vision (putting the welfare of others first); and, the development of 18 personal, interpersonal and societal transformation moral capabilities.

Moral leadership is inspirational, morally uplifting and it mobilizes people. It operates on ethical principles (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Gini, 1996). To that end, it requires a mutually rewarding vision of peace and justice for the entire human family, a vision that extends beyond national borders to benefit global citizens (Dear, 2005). If consumers lifted up this vision for all to see, everyone could be inspired to join the work at hand. In the meantime, it can be argued that the consumer culture of violence is a natural consequence of a failure of moral leadership (Dear). This failure should not be surprising, because consumers are asked to be good managers, not good leaders. A good manager knows how to plan, organize, prioritize, resource, direct and control people or an organization, including individuals living within a family unit. The intent is to fulfil needs by prudently using scarce resources in an efficient way. One can be a very good manager and not a leader. Indeed, the term leader contains normative connotations of a higher moral purpose, while management does not (Safty, 2003).

Moral authority and discipline

Generic discussions of leadership are always intertwined with issues of power and authority (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). The quest for *moral* leadership is the quest of reconciling power with moral authority (Rozycki, 1993). People use authority to protect rights, provide order and security, manage conflict and distribute the benefits and burdens of society. *Moral* authority originates from the collective beliefs, attitudes and values of citizens. It consists of the felt obligations and duties derived from shared community values, ideas and ideals. The greatest threat to a neglect of moral authority is internal, not external. Society is only as good, decent and moral as its citizens. Individual integrity, responsibility and accountability - *moral discipline* - are the best checks and balances against the lack of fulfilment of people's moral obligations to each other.

Moral discipline means using social norms, rules, customs and laws to develop moral reasoning, self-control and a general respect for each other (Denton, 1999). Successful leaders (even consumers) will inevitably be presented with moral and ethical choices. They have to learn how to confront these challenges by developing skills in moral reasoning, analysis and judgements (Sucher, 2007). This approach to social life helps increase the feeling of moral obligation and reinforces the need for moral leadership (Denton). Johnson (2003) concurs, asserting that moral leadership is no longer the duty, privilege or right of a select few, but of every human being, in every area of human interaction. "At one time or another, everyone must fulfil the role of moral leadership" (p. 11). Safty (2003) posits a similar idea that, increasingly, a critical source of moral leadership is the people themselves (rather than national or international political and corporate leaders).

Moral self-transcendence

Only self-transcendence leads to moral leadership (Carey, 1992; Jordan, 2005; Sanders, Hopkins & Geroy, 2003). When people transcend their self-interest, they become focused on *the other* (Cardona, 2000), a term he calls transcendent motivation. He defines this as a concern for others, a motivation to do things for

others and to contribute. When a leader has transcended, he or she reaches out to others and strives to meet their needs and ensure their well-being and development. This behaviour is exactly what is called for to ensure consumer moral leadership. People's genuine interest in the welfare of others creates a sense of responsibility where upon conscious choice emerges (Cardona), intimating a moral imperative to do no harm. People who have achieved self-transcendence have deep integrity and the capacity to sacrifice themselves, or some aspect of their lives, for others. In a consumer world, this would translate to moral consumer behaviour informed by justice, security, peace and equity. Cardona explains that people that have achieved self-transcendence learn to create habits of serving the needs of others, habits that ensure consistent behaviour. People that have gained the habit of consuming with others' interests at heart are truly able to contribute to a more sustainable and just world (Sanders et al.); they would be true consumer moral leaders.

Transcendent leaders are mindful leaders (see chapter on Conscious Consuming) who have learned to move beyond their unexamined inner dialogue by creating an informed self-conversation based on compassion, hope and self-knowledge (Downing, 2008). Consumer moral leaders that have achieved self-transcendence are better able to contribute richer and deeper understandings of the relationships and responsibilities to each other and the world. This *other-interest* involves altruism, benevolence and empathy as well as determined resolve and emotional and moral intelligence (Jordan, 2005). Borba (2001) defines moral intelligence as the capacity to understand right from wrong; it means to have strong ethical convictions and to act on them so that one behaves in the right and honorable way. Lennick and Kiel (2005) concur that it is the possession of a strong moral compass and the ability and inclination to follow it; this disposition is tantamount to integrity - to be able to walk the talk.

Moral integrity and authenticity

Because moral leadership is about the influence of individual character (Gini, 1996), moral integrity also plays into the notion of moral leadership. If people do not act from a position of integrity, their actions cannot be trusted (they are not authentic). Integrity is a consistency between values and beliefs and attendant actions: people walk their talk. It means standing for something, having a significant commitment and exemplifying this commitment in one's behaviour. The primary principles of moral leadership are courage (see below) and integrity while acting in accordance with one's beliefs (Quick & Normore, 2004). Moral leadership also necessitates a commitment to searching out moral excellence, leading to moral character. In moral leadership, character matters because moral leaders lead using a moral compass that reads true. The moral life, one of integrity, rests upon the foundations of virtuous individuals (a state of being of morally sound character) who transform others and their social environment for the good of humanity. A person becomes virtuous *within* a community and they become virtuous *for* the community (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999) (see section on moral community).

Moral courage

Moral courage involves moral discernment and then acting with responsibility for the consequences of actions (Costa, 1998). Moral courage and leadership do not always produce immediate benefits, because it is one thing to have values and another to live by values. As well, moral courage means acting with integrity in moments with moral consequences. It means “lifting values from the theoretical to the practical and carries us beyond ethical reasoning to principled action” (Kidder, 2005, p. 2). With moral courage and leadership, consumers can build a better world, one step-at-a-time. Rhode (2006) suggests that there are three major obstacles to people engaging in moral leadership: self-interest (and the inability to self-sacrifice), impaired ethical and moral judgement, and the psychology of power. These obstacles interfere with people acting with moral courage.

Kidder and Bracy (2001) describe moral courage as the quality of mind and spirit that enables one to face up to ethical dilemmas and moral wrongdoings firmly and confidently, to take persistent and firm actions without flinching or retreating in the face of persuasions and resistance. They claim that moral courage, a virtue that enables people to be effective when they face ethical challenges, works in conjunction with five core moral values: honesty, respect, responsibility, fairness and compassion. Bass and Steidlmeier (1999) agree. In order for leadership to be authentic, it must incorporate a central core of moral values. Moral courage seems a necessary element in the ethics equation and involves overcoming fear through practical actions. A sense of core moral values means little without the courage to see things through. Moral leadership is hard work, requiring constantly renewed commitment and conviction, a visionary determination to advance human development, and the common quest for life with dignity for all (Safty, 2003). Dignity for all intimates mutuality and moral involvement.

Moral involvement

Any discussion of consumer moral leadership entails a shift from the rhetoric of consumer participation. This shift involves a focus on *consumer involvement* at the macro level via their micro level consumption decisions. Such developments in consumer involvement have significant importance in terms of people’s future leadership capacities (Gordon, 2005). Happell and Roper (2006) explain that by identifying the existence of consumers as leaders, they, and the idea itself, will command more status and gain more currency. This increased stature fosters the possibility of consumer moral leaders to strive to meet Senge’s (1990) notion of leadership, that being the capacity of a human community to shape its future and to bring forth new realities in line with people’s deepest aspirations. This book is calling for no less than a universal transformation for the benefit of all humankind and the earth, and to do this via reframing consumerism from a consumer moral leadership perspective.

From an even more progressive stance, Gordon (2005) recognizes an emerging shift from consumer involvement to consumer leadership, and references the idea of consumers leading their own recovery. Although she was literally referring to mentally challenged patients consuming mental health services, the metaphor of

“consumers leading their own recovery” from immoral behaviours is compelling. Happell and Roper (2006) also challenge the currency of the myth of representation and make a case for consumer leadership. They argue that leadership can direct people’s attention to the systemic level rather than just to individual market sector levels (e.g., health, finances, transportation). Instead of representing the interests of particular groups of consumers, consumer leaders would have the capacity to shape the future and to sustain significant processes of change required in that shaping (see also Senge, 1990). Senge posits that leadership grows from the capacity to hold creative tension, the energy generated when people gravitate to an articulated vision and future reality. Happell and Roper suggest that consumer leadership requires the creativity and courage to expose others to ideas and concepts they have not previously considered or known - such as the idea of consumer moral leadership.

Moral intensity

Building on Jones’ (1991) idea, it can be argued that transactions of and among moral leaders and followers (to be discussed shortly) can be characterized as having high moral intensity (a concept developed in more detail in the chapter on neutralization theory applied to understand the morality of consumer decisions, see also McGregor, 2008). Izzo (1997) clarifies that moral intensity refers to the degree to which consumers perceive that a purchase demands the application of ethical principles. Their perception of moral intensity affects their evaluation of the ethical content of a purchase situation. The moral intensity of a consumer issue, linked with the ethical intentions of a person, truly influences that person’s ethical decision making process (Jones).

Given the magnitude of the consequences of moral lapses of citizens consuming in the 21st century, it is imperative that people have a deeper understanding of what it means to be a moral consumer and how morally intense most of their consumption decisions really are. Moral leaders have the option and the obligation to live by moral principles. Once learned, moral leadership capabilities empower people to lead with moral imperative. This approach involves self-discipline, systems thinking, self-reflection, perseverance, taking initiative and self-evaluation. Such moral leaders will respect the moral virtues of patience, diligence, courage, trustworthiness, compassion and justice (Mona Foundation, 2009, see also Sanders et al., 2003).

Universal morality

On a final note, Pinker (2008) proposes that moralization is a distinctive mind set that needs to be nurtured so it can be accessed for moral deliberations. He holds that a moral sense is an innate part of being human, that people may actually have a moral gene. More compelling is his suggestion that moralization is a psychological state that can be turned on and off like a switch, using this moral gene. Bolstering his argument that all humans hold this gene, he references a proven collection of human universal moral concepts and emotions including those identified by the Mona Foundation (2009) as well as a distinction between right and wrong, empathy, fairness, and a sense of rights and obligations. Despite the voracity of this

theory, people must appreciate that moral judgements differ from other kinds of opinions, thereby necessitating training and socialization into their import during consumer decisions. If humanity holds universal moral concepts, if there really is “a universal morality” (Pinker, p. 5), it is not farfetched to assume anyone can be a consumer moral leader *or* follower, and that people can be socialized into these roles and responsibilities. The final section of the chapter takes up the topic of consumer moral followership because leadership always happens in context with others, in dynamic relationships with followers (Gini, 1997).

CONSUMER MORAL FOLLOWERSHIP

This section provides an overview of the notion of followership, in particular *moral followers*. Followership is rarely discussed when people seek to better themselves or gauge the effectiveness of their actions (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson & Morris, 2006; Kellerman, 2008). Although the premise of this book is that people can assume the role of consumer moral leaders, it is unrealistic to assume that everyone is ready or willing to assume this role. It is not necessary that leadership be representative or inclusive of everyone (Happell & Roper, 2006). As well, Kelley (1992) recognizes that people will find themselves in followership roles more times than they are in leadership roles. For this reason, it is imperative that people become aware of the power they have as followers. It is incumbent to imbue this discussion of leadership with what it means to follow, appreciating that followership is a good thing and a necessary part of moral consumption.

Followership is defined as intentionally coordinating one’s actions and goals with others (Van Vugt & Kurzban, 2006). Gini (1997) posits that leaders emerge out of the needs and opportunities of a specific time and place. For consumer moral leaders, that time and place is consumerism in the 21st century. Important to the argument in this chapter is that consumer moral leaders *and* moral followers take part in a common enterprise; they are dependent on each other (see also Baker, 2007). Their futures, and that of the entire planet, rise and fall together. More significantly, if society hopes to reframe consumption and transform the consumer culture from a moral imperative, leaders and followers have to *intend* that real change will happen and actively pursue this intent. Gardner (1990) asserts that ultimately and ethically, a moral commitment and effort to effect change (the intent) are as important as any outcome, and that followers are central to all outcomes.

Followers distinguish themselves with courage, a capacity for self-management and strong commitment (Kelley, 1992). Chaleff (1995) agrees that followers need to have the courage to assume responsibility, serve others, challenge the status quo, and to take moral action. Kelley (2008) extends his notion of courageous followership with the idea of courageous conscience. This idea is especially germane to consumer moral followers. Conscientious followers are in a good position to deal with dysfunctional systems (e.g., the current global marketplace) because they see day-to-day events in their consuming behaviour. They are aware that their consumer decisions are having disastrous consequences.

From this position of awareness and mindfulness (see chapter on Conscious Consumption), they are able to combat group-think and avoid the dispersion of responsibilities to other people (see chapter on Consumer Accountability). They have the personal courage to exercise their courageous conscience and to support others with the same aspirations. These followers have deep potential to become consumer moral leaders, because they are comfortable taking proactive steps to stand up against unethical and immoral consumer behaviour of other people, a definite position of courage.

These followership traits entail a commitment to self-management, defined as the ability to determine one's goals with a much larger context (e.g., the global village) and to decide what role to take on at any given time (Kelley, 1992). Baker (2007) confirms that followership is indeed a role instead of a character trait, but that assuming this role necessitates certain characteristics conducive to being an active party (see also Dixon and Westbrook (2003)). Baker coins this ability the *follower-centric lens*, meaning people are able to assume the role of being a moral follower. And, followers are now perceived as much more than *non-leaders*; the followership base is now seen as *the* resource for change. Followership is a powerful phenomenon that can be as important as leadership. The same goes for moral followership in a consumer society. Followers act with intelligence, initiative, integrity, independence and a strong sense of ethics and morality (Kelley). Regarding integrity, consumer moral followers are willing to seek the truth, are accountable and exercise selfless service *to others* (see also Anello & Hernandez, 1996). The next section discusses followership in moral communities.

Moral Communities

A change in any culture can occur when people understand their own power to effect change, to tap into their courage to take a stand and hold people themselves and others accountable for the consequences of their actions (Chaleff, 1995). Kellerman (2008) agrees that followers do not disengage from society. They help create the change needed to rectify immoral and ineffective situations. This idea is readily extrapolated to changing the consumer culture.

Moral followers have a responsibility to inform and influence consumer moral leaders. This responsibility stems from the leaders' obligation to engage the followers in the cause, helping them become collaborators and reciprocally co-responsible in the joint pursuit of their common enterprise (Gini, 1997), in this case, morally responsible consumption. This chapter embraces Zaleznik's (1990) notion that "leadership is based on a compact that binds those who lead with those who follow into the same moral, intellectual and emotional commitment" (p. 12). Indeed, Di Norcia (2002) offers the concept of a *moral community*, understood to be people engaged in reciprocal and positive social interactions. During their interaction, people contemplate a moral minimum of care, trust and integrity, traits of a moral community. People within this moral community (leaders and followers) are intrinsically motivated and self-regulated, and they behave ethically and morally rather than for self-interest (see also Cardona, 2000). Members of this

moral community harbor *moral intelligence*, which ensures that both leaders and followers consistently engage in responsible moral conduct towards the collective (Sama & Shoaf, 2008), taken in mean other people, species and the earth. Leadership transforms individual potential into collective performance (Kofman, 2006; Quick & Normore, 2004).

Moral Collectives and Balanced Systems

Leadership is always about self and others; it is a necessary requirement of communal existence (Gini, 1996). So, in addition to acting from a position of authentic integrity, moral leaders and followers need to know how to balance the ethics of care, justice and critique and they need to embrace systems thinking (Quick & Normore, 2004). Regarding balanced ethics, moral leaders and followers make a conscious choice to find a balanced between three ethics: (a) an ethic of justice (with its focus on oppression, marginalization and inequalities), (b) an ethic of care (practice sensitivity to others and relationships leading to resilient connections), and (c) an ethic of critique (speaking out against unjust and uncaring social arrangements, on behalf of the common humanity). This balancing task is easier done if people embrace systems thinking, thereby relying on others and affirming the interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all people. Quick and Normore maintain that a systems mental model of ‘the way the world works’ influences people’s actions, which in turn influences the actions of the system. They argue that the system-world can overwhelm the personal-world if moral leaders and followers do not guard against power-over mental models of the world. Consumer moral leadership and followership involves combining the systems perspective with authenticity, integrity, and balanced ethics.

CONSUMER MORAL LEADERSHIP AS A CONSTRUCT

This chapter developed a new intellectual construct - consumer moral leadership. It wove together theoretically-related concepts to provide a rich and deep notion of moral leadership for consumers (see Figure 1.1). This construct, in tandem with consumer moral followership, provides insights into how to see consumers as leaders in the global marketplace in addition to being managers within their local and micro contexts (i.e., home and family). Endowing people with consumer moral leadership responsibilities empowers them to view themselves as power brokers in the global market. Leadership is always about self and others; it is a necessary requirement of communal existence. *Moral* leadership operates on ethical principles and requires a mutually rewarding vision of peace and justice for the entire human family, a vision that extends beyond national borders to benefit global citizens and the earth.

Consumer moral leadership involves self-transcendent individuals acting from a stance of moral integrity and courage as they engage with morally intense, ethical consumer decisions. From a position of authentic moral authority, these individuals operate for the common good and within the context of moral communities, all the

while embracing holistic, deeply complex systemic thinking. Respecting the universal constants of a collection of moral virtues and values, they are ready to embrace both followership and leadership for the good of humanity and the earth. Consumer moral leaders will function from a position of humility, moral discipline and moral obligation. They will concern themselves with *other-interests* and strive to contribute to the future of humanity and the earth by mediating consumer decision processes through a moral imperative. Instead of representing the interests of particular groups, consumer moral leaders will have the capacity to shape the future of humanity and the earth, and to sustain significant change processes required in that future-shaping. Küng (1996) explains that the resultant global ethic will “happen in a very complex and long-drawn-out process of change in consciousness” (p. 3). This change will happen much faster and benefit more of humanity if it is shaped by consumer moral leaders and followers.

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THREE OVERARCHING THEORIES OF CONSUMER MORALITY

The import of the emergence and consolidation of a consumer society is working its way through our moral sensibilities as global citizens (Plumb, 2000). People now appreciate that society has a *moral duty* to deal with the intentional and accidental consequences of consumption to ensure a safe and healthy environment for current and future generations. This duty involves a focus on ethics that strives for a moral consumptive order (Dauvergne, 2005). For clarification, to conform with popular usage in the consumer ethics literature, this discussion acknowledges the slippage between *more* (Ancient Greek for laws and customs) and *ethos* (Ancient Greek for ‘a way of being’ shaped by character and manners). Morality answers the question, “How *ought* we live at the individual level?” It stems from the Latin *moralitas*, meaning manner, character, proper behavior. Consumer ethics research draws heavily on moral philosophy and normative ethics, a branch of ethics that deals with what people *should* believe is right and wrong, good and bad (Brinkmann & Peattie, 2008; Hunt & Vitell, 2006; McGregor, 2006, 2008). “The more individuals are aware of moral philosophies for ethical decision making, the more influence these philosophies will have on their ethical decisions” (Ferrell & Gresham, 1985, p. 93).

Normative ethics holds that morals are basic guidelines for behaviour intended to reduce suffering in living populations, to promote people living together in peace and harmony, and to care for and help each other (Gert, 2008; Haines, 2008). The premise of this chapter is that those advocating for consumer morality and moral leadership also have a duty to clarify which of three notions of morality is at play: (a) deontological ethics (Immanuel Kant), with its focus on the *intentions* behind the *act* of consuming (the moral consciousness); (b) teleological ethics (consequentialism/utilitarianism, Jeremy Bentham, John Stuart Mill), with its focus on the *consequences* of that act; and, (c) virtue ethics (Aristotle), with its focus on the *character of the person* being formed by taking up the habit of certain actions, the consumer (see Table 2.1).

Succinctly, in a deontological moral system, in order to make correct moral choices, people have to understand their moral duty and what correct rules exist to regulate those duties. When people follow their duty, they are behaving morally. In a teleological moral system, in order to make correct moral choices, people have to have some understanding of what will result from their choices. When they make choices that result in correct consequences, they are acting morally. In a virtue ethics moral system, in order to make correct moral choices, people who have developed good character traits (and few vices), and consistently base their actions

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on those character traits, are acting morally (Cline, 2007a). Each of these ethics is described in detail in this chapter, because each deeply informs notions of moral consumption.

Table 2.1. Comparison of three types of normative ethics

| Three Types of Normative Ethics | | | |
|---|--|--|--|
| Morality: Latin <i>virtūus</i>, manliness, courage, excellence, and goodness | | | |
| | <i>Deontological Ethics</i> | <i>Teleological Ethics</i> | <i>Virtue Ethics</i> |
| Etymology | Greek <i>deon</i> (binding duty or moral obligation) | Greek <i>telos</i> (end, goal or purpose) | Greek <i>Eudaimonia</i> (happiness, flourishing, well-being) Greek <i>Aretē</i> (excellence, virtue) Greek <i>Phronesis</i> (practical or moral wisdom) |
| Rightness of action | Rightness of the Act (moral <i>consciousness</i> , moral <i>motives</i> and moral <i>intentions</i>) Rightness of action depends on what goes on inside the person's mind | Rightness of the Outcome (<i>consequences</i>) Rightness of action does not depend on anything inside the person's mind | Righteousness of the Person (morally sound <i>character</i>) Rightness of action depends on what goes on inside the person's mind |
| Guiding question | What kind of choices ought we make, using what rules? | What kind of outcomes ought we seek? | What kind of person ought we be? |
| Structure of action | Doing - the nature of the action, <i>the means to the end</i> | Ends - things obtained by the actions | Being - what/who a person <i>is</i> |
| What makes an act moral? | People have to be motivated to not shirk a moral duty - choices are morally required, forbidden or permitted (stuck to one's duty, regardless of the consequences) Obey rules that impact people The Right duty has priority over the Good | Morally right choices increase <i>the Good</i> (valuable <i>states of affairs</i> that everyone has reason to achieve) Bring about states of affairs (the Good) The Good has priority over the Right duty. | Undertaken by a virtuous person, consistently across situations, whose character is being tested Consistently act virtuously |

THREE OVERARCHING THEORIES

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| Main theories | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Divine Command - Kantian Categorical Imperative - Pluralist Deontology - Contractualism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Classic Utilitarianism - Consequentialism | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aristotlean Ethics - Situational Ethics |
| Main Constructs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absolute values - Constraints (restrict permitted actions) - Categorical Imperative (do, regardless of the consequences) - Treat people as ends not means (human rights are inviolable) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Good - Utility principle - Consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Goodness of the character of the person (virtue) - happiness, well-being and human flourishing - practical, moral wisdom |
| Sources for moral systems | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - rules and duties established by God (organized religions) - actions that have been demonstrated over long periods of time to have the best consequences (moderate deontology) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - overall utility (people do not need to know the total consequences before making a decision - they just have to apply the principle of overall utility (consequences) as the sole criterion for morality/rightness) - duty is to take actions that make the world better because of positive consequences | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Religious teachings - recognized lists of virtues - Character Education |
| Framing of focus | <p>Duties/obligations are often expressed in terms of prohibition of acts people would otherwise be inclined to do (often stated negatively - thou shalt <i>not</i> lie, despite the good that might come from the lie)</p> | <p>Only consequences can be used to justify an act (produce greater benefit for <i>others</i>). Choices are moral (right) if they bring about (cause) a better state of affairs; they maximize or increase the overall, Total, societal Good (rather than benefit one person or group) (moderates will accept <i>satisficing</i> the Good)</p> | <p>List of virtues (and sometimes vices)</p> <p>What does failure to follow a virtue say about the character of the person?</p> |

Table 2.1. (continued)

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| What binds person's moral choice? | Bound by constraints but also given options and permissions | Bound by results of cost benefit analysis of alternatives (anticipated consequences) - which outcome is <i>best</i> (good consequences)? | Bound to act in accordance with by character traits (e.g., what does a decision to lie say about the person?) |
| Popular Axioms | The ends can never justify the means. The means matter. | <i>The ends justify the means.</i> The greatest good for the greatest number. | What is the good life, and how do I go about living it? |

CAVEATS

Several caveats inform the contents of this chapter. The study of ethics is imprecise and constantly evolving. There are substantial and complicated differences among and within the various three types of normative ethics (especially with recent theoretical innovations). Also, people sometimes take one of these three notions to be more basic than the others (Harman, 1999). However, Etzioni (1989) asserts that people can draw on the *basic* perspectives without subscribing to all theoretical positions and innovations. The first caveat is that these sentiments inform this discussion.

Because people often use a combination of these ethics to evaluate the morality of their consumer behaviour, rather than subscribing to just one ethic (Brinkmann & Peattie, 2008; Cohn & Vaccaro, 2006; Hunt & Vitell, 2006), it is imperative that this chapter strive for conceptual clarity. This second caveat is followed, if for no other reason than to minimize talking at cross purposes, a common occurrence when people engage in discussions about moral issues. There is a reason for this cross communication. While morality is generally defined as the human quality of conforming with reigning social traditions of right or wrong and good or bad conduct, the three different schools of morality within normative ethics set different *standards*: rules, consequences or virtues (character). Although scholars agree that these three ethics inform each other as concepts and that they can be integrated into useful theories to understand ethical and moral consumer decisions (Hunt & Vitell, 2006), it is still necessary that people understand each philosophical approach before such integration occurs.

A third caveat is that no attempt is made in this chapter to critique each of the three theories of morality nor to engage in any comparative analysis of one against the other, save for the overview shared in Table 1. Scholars fully steeped in the discipline of philosophy continually undertake this challenging exercise, especially in regards to how each of the three theories deal with moral dilemmas and actions that create dire circumstances (e.g., Alexander & Moore, 2007; Ashford, 2007; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006, whose works inform this chapter).

A fourth caveat is that a concerted effort is made to minimize theoretical muddiness while respecting some semblance of theoretical comprehensiveness. There are many different accounts of each of the three types of morality, and there are large fields of emergent writers developing and contrasting various theories of deontology, teleology and virtue ethics. All have ethical insights to offer. The ideas comprising this chapter have developed over long periods of time, having changed and improved in response to criticisms and questions from scholars challenging each other's notions of morality. The assumption is that they are representative of the field, sufficient to illustrate a degree of comfort with the theory to allay any concerns of conceptual slippage.

Finally, unlike the other chapters in this book, this discussion of moral theories does not apply each theory to consumption activities of world citizens. The intent, instead, is to share an overview of the main tenets of each theory to ensure readers that the book is mindfully informed by different normative theories of morality - a sort of theoretical transparency that ensures the book's integrity.

DEONTOLOGICAL ETHICS

The word deontology derives from two Greek words: *deon* and *logos*. *Deon* literally means duty or that which is obligatory, right, proper, or needful. *Logos* means science or study, and refers to word, argument, story or logic. Hence, deontological means the science of duty (Alexander & Moore, 2007; Ross, 2003). Deontological norms require certain choices, give people permission for other choices, and forbid certain other conduct (Ferrell & Ferrell, 2008). To act in a morally right way, people must act according to duty (*deon*). It is not the consequences that make an action right or wrong but the *motives* of the person who carries out the action (Kant, 1780). Their intent should be to meet an obligation to adhere to a rule, principle or duty. Whether a situation is good or bad depends on whether the action that brought it about was right or wrong. Duty-bound actions should yield morally good situations or states of affairs (Broad, 1930). Even if the acts do not have good results, duty-bound acts are still moral.

There are four main lines of thinking that inform deontological ethics: the Divine Command theory, Immanuel Kant's Categorical Imperative, pluralistic deontology (e.g., W.D. Ross (1930)), and social contract theory. Although all four theories place the locus of right and wrong actions on the adherence to moral laws or duties, they differ on what counts as the right action, respectively: (a) the act was decreed by God; (b) the act conformed to principles or maxims; (c) the act depends on the particular case, with obligation to only one of competing basic duties; and, (d) people can justify the act to each other. For clarification, deontological moral absolutists hold people must follow their duty no matter what the consequences (i.e., Kant's - it is always wrong to lie even if a murderer is asking for the location of a potential victim). Moral relativists hold that one is able to eschew following one's duty if the consequences are too dire (Ross' - it is OK to lie to the murderer to save the potential victim).

Divine command theory

Ethical rules bind people to their duties. For many Christians, for example, an action is morally correct if it is in agreement with the rules and duties established or decreed by God (e.g., the Ten Commandments). These are called Duties by Divine Command, and are the most common deontological moral theory. Divine command theories take God's will to be the foundation of ethics; things are morally good or bad, or morally obligatory, permissible, or prohibited, solely because of God's will or commands. God is claimed to be the creator of all things; therefore, God is the creator of people's moral obligations. God is claimed to be sovereign, to have the authority to tell people how they are to live their lives. The rightness (morality) of a person's action depends on that action being performed because it is a duty decreed by God (Austin, 2006).

Kantian categorical imperative

Kant (1780) holds that while people have moral duties to themselves and others, there is a more foundational principle of duty that encompasses people's particular duties than God's will: *the categorical imperative* (CI). Categorical means that people have to perform the duty regardless of the circumstances, relative to a hypothetical imperative, which is conditional on personal likes and dislikes, abilities and opportunities (Kay, 1997). Hypothetical imperatives represent a practical necessity of a possible action as a means of achieving something else that one desires (Kant). The Categorical Imperative is a single, self-evident, rational principle of reason - a single duty that emphasizes the respect for persons. He provides four versions of this imperative, with the most direct one being 'treat people as the end and never as a means to an end'. The ends can never justify the means, especially if it means exploiting people's bodies, labour and talents without their consent (Alexander & Moore, 2007). In Kantian deontological ethics, human rights are acknowledged and are inviolable (Kay).

Two other formulations of the imperative are worth noting: (a) always act in such a way that you can also will that this particular maxim should become a universal law, and (b) act as though you were, through your maxims, a law-making member of a kingdom of ends. Moral principles are justified because they are universalizable, meaning everyone could act on them in similar circumstances (this is not the same thing as the notion of universality, which means existing everywhere) (Johnson, 2008; Kay, 1997). If everyone could do that action under similar circumstances, it would be morally defensible, and morally acceptable.

Because the Categorical Imperative serves to ground all other ethical judgements, there is no grey area with the Imperative when judging the morality of actions: they either pass or they fail. Lying is always wrong (Kay, 1997). A categorical imperative commands a certain line of conduct that does not assume, and is not conditional on, any further goal or end (Kant, 1780); the duty is an end in itself. Categorical

imperatives are the most reasonable course of action for rational beings; hence, it is irrational to be immoral (Johnson, 2008). To be irrational means someone acts illogically; that is, with no purpose, no good reason. Hence, the fundamental principle of Kantian morality is the law of the autonomous will, of self-governing reason. Kay explains that Kant's point is not that people would all agree on some rule if it were moral; rather, people must be able to *will* that it be made universal - if people cannot will that everyone follow the same rule, the rule is not a moral one.

Pluralist deontology

An adequate moral theory should account for primary moral reasons and concerns held by the person acting (Ross, 1930). He holds that an action is morally right if it is informed by one of seven duties, the most *basic* morally relevant features of a right action. When people are deciding how to act, they must take each of these duties into consideration. When one or more of these duties applies to the person in some situation, only one duty should be acted upon:

- Duty of beneficence (help others, improve conditions of others, improve their character);
- Duty of non-maleficence (avoid harming, injuring or killing others);
- Duty of justice (ensure people get what they deserve, recognize merit);
- Duty of self-improvement (improve our own virtue and intelligence);
- Duty of reparation (recompense people if we act wrongly towards them);
- Duty of gratitude (thank people who help us); and,
- Duty of promise-keeping (fidelity).

Ross (1930) claims people will intuitively know which is their *actual* duty and which are their apparent *prima facie* duties, meaning the matter seems obvious and self-explanatory. A popular example of this principle follows. "I have a *prima facie* obligation to keep my promise and meet my friend" means that I am under an *obligation*, but this may yield to a more pressing duty. Indeed, on the way to visit my friend, I witness a car accident and the guilty person says she is innocent. I seem pretty obvious (*prima facie*) that I now have a duty to wait at the crime scene until the police arrive, meaning I would break my promise to my friend. What is my duty? Does the justice duty trump the promise-keeping duty or the other way around? Which duty is more pressing? Ross holds that duties do not bind people absolutely; rather, people should use their intuitive judgement in each situation. Depending on the circumstances, it may be more important to honor the promise than to stay at the crime scene.

Ross (1930) holds that a particular moral response may be called for by various features of a situation, and the right action will be the act that constitutes the most suitable response to all the factors in that situation, taken as a whole. He holds that, in all but the most trivial cases, whether an action is right will depend on the way that conflicting moral considerations bear on the particular case. There is no mechanical method, no algorithm, for calculating which of these duties is the weightiest in some specific case. In most cases, there will be just one action that is the right one, but deciding which one that is calls for judgment

and practical wisdom. People can never be certain of that they should do in any *particular case*; they only have better or worse founded opinions based on their knowledge of the case (rather than some moral principle). While normally there is no room in deontological moral systems for subjectivity and relativism, Toulmin (1950) suggests that when faced with more than one duty, people should weigh up, as well as they can, the risks involved in ignoring either duty, and choose the lesser of two evils (leaning towards consequentialism, to be discussed shortly).

Contractualism

A more recent deontological ethical theory, contractualism, appeals to the idea of a social contract. It attempts to derive the content of morality (and, in some versions, also the justification for holding that people are obligated to follow morality) from the notion of an agreement between all those in the moral domain (Ashford, 2007). It has to deal with what people owe to each other as members of a social group (Scanlon, 1998). Wrong acts cannot be justified to others (Ashford). Morally wrong acts are those which would be forbidden by principles that people in a suitably described social contract would accept or would be forbidden by principles that people could not *reasonably reject*. Contractualism has at its core those norms of action that people can justify to each other because of a *social contract* to live together (Alexander & Moore, 2007).

Contractualism is concerned with what it is for one person to have been wronged by another. The content of morality is derived from the notion of an agreement between all those people in the moral domain. Instead of assuming that people cannot be treated as means to an end (Kantian), contractualism treats people according to principles they could not reasonably reject. They may all agree that it is alright for people to be treated as means to an end. Contractualism covers only the realm of what people owe to each other, rather than every area of morality. It does not regard personal well-being as a basic moral concept; instead, it allows for a variety of personal reasons that enable people to be responsive to the situation of others (Ashford, 2007).

Also, contractualism does not aggregate to the group but focuses on the standpoints of individual persons and what they might individually reject on moral grounds. Each situation is considered from the perspective of each single individual involved. Contractualism recognizes that each person has a unique life to live and her own point of view. Each person is motivated by her own interests (own self-regard) *and* by respect for others. Part of what people owe others is to promote the latter's interests. People's challenge is to explain why what they did is wrong, because their actions must show respect for other people. Each person is supposed to focus on the burden that a principle guiding an action imposes on her and others, leading to a decision about withdrawing the burden if respect for another is not ensured. If people seek to act in ways that they can justify to others, they must adopt principles that no-one can reasonably reject (Ashford, 2007; Scanlon, 1998).

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Contractualism is not concerned with minimizing what is morally undesirable, but with considering what moral principles no-one could reasonably reject. Also, it is concerned with what people *could reasonably reject* not with *does* reject. If some action provides the grounds for reasonable rejection, it is intrinsically wrong. Moral principles are grounded in the idea of living with others on terms of mutual respect. By moving straight to the moral heart of the matter, contractualism offers a more satisfying explanation of why certain behaviour is wrong. Principles can be rejected if they fail to respect people's status as a person and if they fail to balance the interests of different people against one another. Principles can also be rejected if they fail to account for obligations to future generations (although not all contractualists agree with this, arguing that it is not possible to interact with people in a social contract if they do not yet exist). The counterpoint is that moral agents are motivated by a desire to justify themselves to others and there is no reason why these others must be currently existing people - they might well reasonably reject a principle permitting someone's actions today if these actions will harm them. After all, contractualistic morality is an agreement for mutual advantage predicated on adequate respect for people, present and future (Ashford, 2007; Rawls, 1993; Scanlon, 1998).

In summary, deontological theories of ethics hold that ethical rules or principles bind people to their duty (*deon*). Morality is intensely personal, in the sense that each person is enjoined to get his or her own moral house in order. What makes a choice right is its conformity with a moral norm¹ (an indication of how humans *ought* to exercise their freedom, Leininger, 2006). Acts are neither morally right nor morally wrong, but are morally praiseworthy. There are degrees of wrongness. These theories allow people to complain about, and hold to account, those who breach their moral duties. Also, they accommodate people doing more than morality demands. Duties are to particular *people* (persons) rather than to states of affairs. Deontological theories leave space for moral agents to give special concern to their families, friends and projects while respecting others. The principles informing people's actions must be accepted by everyone, else their action is not morally praiseworthy (e.g., categorical imperative, able to reasonably reject) (Alexander & Moore, 2007). Also, deontological moral systems focus on the nature of the action - people must have the correct motivations; even though they break a moral rule, their actions may not be immoral if they were motivated to adhere to some correct moral duty. Deontologically speaking, it is the means to the end that counts (the motivation and the intent, not the actual consequences) (Ross, 2003).

TELEOLOGICAL ETHICS

It is common for people to determine their moral responsibility by weighting the consequences of their actions. Correct moral conduct is determined solely by a cost-benefit analysis of an action's consequences. This is called teleological ethics,

stemming from the Greek word *telos*, meaning end (also goal, purpose or final cause). The consequences of an action determine its moral worth. If the *intention* motivating the action is good (favourable ends or consequences), then the action itself is ethical and moral; the moral focus is on the goal (intentional end) rather than the action itself (Fieser, 2006). This form of morality abandons any claim of moral certainty, meaning people act with a very high degree of probability, sufficient for action, but short of absolute certainty (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006). To be practical, people must be content with some degree of skepticism and doubt but confident enough to take action (Aristotle, 350 BC).

As a caveat, a full account of an action's results means not only careful analysis of the immediate consequences to all involved and astute discernment of the quality and comparative value of the sensations experienced, but an uncovering of the subtle, indirect, far-reaching and long-term results as well. An accurate teleological analysis requires great patience, impressive powers of observation and a keen understanding of how people actually respond to various experiences (White, 1993). Indeed, teleological decision processes (separating consequences) seem to be more relevant to those who end up performing unethical acts (Cohn & Vaccaro, 2006).

The teleological approach was originally advocated by Jeremy Bentham, and modified by his godson, John Stuart Mill (White, 1993). It is a results oriented ethic, focused on the extent to which actions hurt or harm people. Whereas deontological ethics judges actions on their intrinsic rightness, teleological ethics judges actions on the extent to which they advance the goals pursued by the individual, with the goal or end result being least harm or pain. It is noteworthy that adherents to teleological ethics disagree on which *end* or goal ought to be promoted; they do not all agree that the purpose is to ensure a greater balance of pain over pleasure (to be discussed shortly). Eudaemonist theorists hold that the end should be enhanced virtue and excellence of the agent. Utilitarian-type theorists believe the end should consist of an experience or feeling produced by the action. Evolutionary ethics holds that the end should be survival and growth. Despotism holds that the end should be power. Existentialism holds that the end should be freedom. Pragmatism holds that the end should be satisfaction and adjustments (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2008b).

The two main teleological ethics theories are utilitarianism and consequentialism. Sinnott-Armstrong (2006, pp. 2–3) explains that classic utilitarianism is a complex combination of eleven distinct claims about the moral rightness of acts. These claims are logically independent, meaning moral theorists can accept some but not all of them; however, classic utilitarians accept them *all* and any advocates of theories created by dropping or modifying any of these claims about consequences are called consequentialists (see Table 2.2). “In actual usage, the term ‘consequentialism’ seems to be used as a family resemblance term to refer to any descendent of classic utilitarianism that remains close enough to its ancestor in the important respects [with no agreement among theorists on which respects are most important]” (p. 3).

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Table 2.2. Eleven claims of Classic Utilitarianism and Consequentialist counter theories (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006)

| <i>Claim</i> | <i>Whether an act is morally right depends on ...</i> | <i>as opposed to... (and evident in consequentialist theories)</i> |
|--|--|--|
| Basic | the consequences | circumstances, the intrinsic nature of the act, or anything that happens before the act |
| Actual | the <i>actual</i> consequences | foreseen, foreseeable, intended or likely consequences, as well as a concern for proximate causation (how close is the actor to the outcome - did anything/one intervene?) |
| Direct | the <i>act</i> itself | the agent's motive, or of a rule of practice that covers other acts of the same kind |
| Evaluative | the <i>total set of values</i> of the consequences (the <i>world that results</i> from the actions or the <i>state of affairs</i> that results) (see below) | other features of the consequences (such as other values aside from pain and pleasure, others outcomes such as satisfaction of desires or preferences, a concern for individual welfare, even a respect for rights or non-violation of rights) |
| Hedonism | the value of the particular effects of acts (the consequences) depends <i>only</i> on the pleasures (being pleased, happiness) and pains (sadness) created by the consequences (life stance or quality of life) | other notions of <i>the good</i> (values) such as love, life, freedom, opportunities, friendships, knowledge, achievements allowing fairness, desertion and equitable distribution to be tie breakers in tests of which outcome is best, and doing so by looking for patterns between values rather than aggregating values |
| Maximizing | which consequences are <i>best</i> or <i>better</i> than others (see below) | satisfactory, satisficing or an improvement over the status quo |
| Aggregative (add individual pleasures and pains together -what matters is the total amount, not who gets it) | which consequences are <i>best</i> (or better than others) is determined by adding up the values within each <i>part</i> of the consequences to determine which total set of consequences (particular effects) has the most value in it (lump everyone together and allow individual's rights to be trampled to provide greater aggregate benefits to others, e.g., five deaths is a <i>worse</i> result than one death) | holistic rankings of the whole world or whole sets of consequences relative to the world that would result if the actions had <i>not</i> been taken (be responsive to the situation of others); recognize that each person has a unique life to live thereby employing principles that benefit each, individually |

Table 2.2. (continued)

| | | |
|------------------|---|---|
| Total | the total net good to society in the consequences | average net good per person |
| Universal | the consequences for all people or sentient beings | only an individual agent, present people or any other limited group |
| Equal | all who count, counting equally (everybody's interests should be considered equally when making decisions; benefits to one person matter <i>just as much</i> as similar benefits to any other person); <i>what matters is the total amount, not who gets it</i> (see below) | unequal consideration of all people's interests (giving some group or individual's interests more weight in the decision process) |
| Agent-neutrality | whether the consequences are <i>better</i> than others does not depend on the agent's perspective of what is valuable | an observer's perspective of what is valuable |

Utilitarianism

As evident in Tables 2.1 and 2.2, the claims about consequences held by utilitarians make reference to states of affairs, pain and pleasure (the Utility Principle), *best* consequences, consequences for everyone, and all who count, count equally. The common axioms include do whatever it takes to get the state of affairs you want (*the ends justify the means*) while striving for the greatest happiness for the greatest number, even if individuals get hurt in the process. The intent is to choose one action over another (via a cost/benefit analysis) using the criterion of ensuring more benefit than harm - the more benefit, the more moral the act. For utilitarians, the merit of an action is evaluated by considering the total benefits and the total costs created by the action for human society (everyone). They almost always concern themselves with lessening harm as essential to producing the greatest good and almost all of their examples involve avoiding, preventing or relieving harms (Gert, 2008).

The concept of pain and pleasure is central to teleological theory, both utilitarianism and consequentialism. It was developed by Jeremy Bentham (1961, originally published in 1781) who maintains that pain and pleasure govern people's lives; hence, it is for pain and pleasure alone to point out what people *ought* to do, as well as determine what people *shall* do. He introduces the notion of *utility* (the Utility Principle), explaining that it refers to the property of any object that lets it produce pleasure, benefits, advantages, good or happiness. Conversely, if an object has utility, it *prevents* pain, mischief, disadvantages, evil or unhappiness. A morally good action will produce a greater balance of, for example, happiness over unhappiness among all those involved in the situation.

In measuring pain and pleasure, Bentham (1961, originally published in 1781) uses the following criteria: intensity, duration, certainty (or uncertainty), nearness (or fairness) and extent (number of people affected). He also maintains that pleasure and pain should be pure, meaning it is not necessary that pain follow

pleasure or vice versa. His is a very hedonistic approach (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006). Bentham's godson, John Stuart Mill (2004, originally published in 1861), revised his theory, shifting the focus from pleasure to happiness. Mill introduces the idea that some pleasures (advantages, benefits et cetera) are more desirable and more valuable than others. He maintains that it is not the quantity of pleasure but the quality of *happiness*, and that there is a distinction between higher and lower pleasures. The former are more superior and include intelligence, education, sensitivity to others, a sense of morality, and physical health. The latter are inferior pleasures, and include indolence, sensual indulgence, stupidity, selfishness and ignorance. He introduces the Greatest Happiness Principle, which refers to promoting the capability of people to achieve happiness for the most amount of people. Mill maintains that a small amount of high quality pleasure or happiness can outweigh a larger amount of low quality pleasure.

Both Bentham and Mill provide valuable ways to identify and judge the consequences of acts. Their principle of utility can be applied to either a general action or to particular rules, referred to as act utilitarianism and rule utilitarianism, respectively. The former requires that a social rule be followed if the action *provides the greatest good for the greatest number* (net utility). The latter requires that the act must *also* conform to publically advocated moral rules. Act utilitarianism weighs the consequences of each particular action, concluding that the moral choice is the action that brings about the best results (or the least amount of bad results). Rule utilitarianism weighs the morality of the rule guiding the action. A rule becomes morally binding when it produces favourable consequences for everyone (i.e., a rule against theft - stealing is wrong). This approach is used to determine the validity of the rules of conduct (moral principles) leading to a world or state of affairs where people regularly adhere to validated moral principles (Cavalier, 2002; Fieser, 2006). Under utilitarianism, social policies, for example, are pursued if net utility is increased regardless of how gains and losses are distributed amongst citizens (Sen, 1987).

In the ensuing years, many philosophers augmented the theory with other types of utilitarianism. Adams (1976) offers *motive utilitarianism*, a hybrid of act and rule utilitarianism. It proposes that people's initial moral task is to inculcate motives within themselves, motives that will be generally useful across the spectrum of the actual situations they are likely to encounter. These motives serve to help people engage in a larger number of activities that benefit people. Hare (1981) suggests that while most people can normally rely on their intuitive moral thinking (accept utility based on rule utilitarianism), there are times when they have to ascend to higher level critical reflection to determine what to do (act utilitarianism), something he calls *two-level utilitarianism*.

Popper (1945) offers the idea of *negative utilitarianism* whereby people minimize the bad consequences by choosing actions that lead to the least amount of evil or harm or prevent the greatest amount of suffering for the greatest number (versus the greatest happiness for the greatest number). The greatest harms are far more consequential than the greatest goods. Finally, Singer (1981) argues that decisions about which actions are moral should take into account the consequences

on the well-being (pleasure) of all sentient beings (including animals because they are conscious beings who feel pain, and because suffering in animals often causes suffering in humans, hence, its cause is immoral). He holds that intrinsic value is attached to all forms of life and nature, and refers to this as animal welfarism (akin to human welfarism, Sen, 1987).

Consequentialism

To reiterate, any descendants of classic utilitarianism that remain close enough to their ancestor are called consequentialists. Every choice rule must still ultimately be evaluated by the goodness of the consequent state of affairs (Sen, 1987). More particular versions of this theory vary on which consequences matter the most. Ethical egoism (i.e., all actions are selfishly motivated) holds that the action is morally right if the consequences are in favour of the agent making the choice. Ethical altruism holds that the action is morally right if the consequences are in favour of everyone except the agent making the choice. Utilitarianism holds that an action is morally right if the consequences are in favour of everyone (Fieser, 2006; Sidgwick, 1907).

Consequentialist innovations to classic utilitarianism are reflected in the right column of Table 2.2. They eschew the claims of hedonism for plurality, expanding their notions of the good and what is a valuable consequence, beyond pain and pleasure. They strive to accommodate: circumstances, consequences other than the intended, the agent's motives (agent relative rather than agent neutral), less than optimal consequences (satisficing, improving the status quo), and instances when unequal distribution of results leads to inequities (e.g., Alexander & Moore, 2007; Ashford, 2007; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006).

The basic tenets are still: consequences, probability of consequences and desirability of consequences, with the addition of the importance of each stakeholder group affected by the choice - ideally leading to favourable state of affairs. Ferrell and Ferrell (2008) propose that a teleological evaluation of the morality of a decision requires that the importance of the stakeholder be determined in conjunction with determining the probability, desirability or undesirability of any consequences. In addition to the act, the outcomes of action or the actor, this approach pays attention to those *affected* by the act.

In general, consequentialist theories hold that an action is morally right if the consequences of that action are more favourable than unfavourable. First, people tally both the good and the bad. Then, they determine whether the good outcomes outweigh the bad. If yes, the action is moral. This approach to gauging the morality of an act is different from intuition or adhering to a list of duties; instead, it appeals to people's experiences and to publically observable results (intended or not) (Fieser, 2006; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006).

Indeed, a particularly useful innovation is the ability of theory to account for foreseen, foreseeable, intended and likely circumstances. Classic utilitarianism holds that the choice is morally right if the agent applied the criterion of consequences and decided to act because she determined that the greatest good would result for

the greatest number. The act is moral because her motives or intentions were good. Consequentialist also propose that the moral rightness of the act depends on consequences that unfold other than those the agent intended (the actual), things that happened outside of her head. Related to this is the notion of *proximate causation*, which says that people's actions are still morally right if their intentions had been moral but things or people intervened to mitigate their intended outcome (Haines, 2008; Sinnott-Armstrong).

Consequentialists also claim that people should be able to give up on maximizing utility (greatest good would result for the greatest number) and do what creates *enough* utility (*satisficing* consequentialism). Related to this idea is *progressive* consequentialism. This idea holds that people morally ought to improve the world or make it better than it would be if they did nothing, but they do not have to improve it as much as they can in order to engage in morally right actions. This is in contrast to classic utilitarianism, which holds people are morally required to change their lives so as to always do a lot more to increase overall happiness and well-being for everyone, all the time. The principle of utility is intended as only a criterion of rightness not as a decision procedure. There is no way that everyone could assess the consequences of every alternative option, meaning they will never have perfect information; indeed, certainty of knowledge is impossible because consequences are in the future. But, it is realistic that they be required to apply consequences as a criterion for moral rightness (rather than character or some set of rules and principles), doing their best to estimate the consequences (Haines, 2008; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006).

In summary, teleological theories begin with the premise that what ever people do, they do in order to produce some sort of good result, some benefit. They assess this benefit by applying the criterion of consequences as they gauge the rightness or wrongness of their action. The action is justifiably moral if the person's intent was to create the greatest goodness for the greatest number (Utilitarianism) or to produce the right kinds of overall consequences, including the action itself and everything that action brought about (Consequentialism). Both theories hold that consequences are all that matter - not the character of the actor (virtue ethics) nor the duties, rules or principles used to determine the moral rightness of the action (deontological ethics). Non-teleological theorists hold that teleological theories are controversial because "morality is all about doing one's duty, respecting rights, obeying nature, obeying God, obeying one's own heart, actualizing one's own potential, being reasonable, respecting all people, or not interfering with others - no matter the consequences" (Haines, 2008, p. 1). Yet, the defining feature of teleological theories continues to be the weight given to the consequences in evaluating the rightness and wrongness of actions; consequences *always outweigh* other considerations of moral rightness.

VIRTUE ETHICS

Virtue stems from Latin *vir*, meaning man and from Latin *virtūus*, manliness, courage, excellence and goodness. These two Latin terms stem from the Ancient Greek *arete aristeia*, meaning the feast of a hero, any great heroic action, a noble

way of being. A virtue is an operative habit of character, a character trait valued as being good because it helps people better regulate their emotions and their reason. It is something practiced at all times, leading to habitual excellence. The opposite of a virtue is a vice, a habit or practice considered by society to be immoral. Vice comes from the Latin word *vitium*, meaning failing or defect. Vices stand in the way of becoming a good person. A virtuous person has an appropriate inner state that has developed over time and the disposition to consistently act in accordance with that moral inner state (Athanasoulis, 2006). Once people are successful at becoming the sort of person they want to be, arriving at correct moral decisions will come naturally (Cline, 2007b). Virtue ethics is informed by three central concepts: virtue, practical wisdom and *eudaimonia*, and these are woven into this discussion (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2008a) (see Figure 2.1).

As well, Aristotle (350 BC) distinguishes between moral virtues and intellectual virtues. Moral virtue is taken to be a mean (appropriate behaviour or amount of emotion to display given the situation) between an excess and a deficiency (vice). A virtuous person feels neither more nor less than what the situation calls for. As well, this behaviour has to be determined by the right reason and the right desire. To act from the wrong reason is to act viciously (Spanish for vice), rather than virtuously (Harman, 1999). For example, the moral virtue of courage is the appropriate behaviour or emotional response between the excess of rashness and the deficiency of cowardice (Athanasoulis, 2006). She asserts, “[t]he virtuous agent acts effortlessly, perceives the right reason, has the harmonious right desire, and has the inner state of virtue that flows smoothly into action” (p. 5). People acquire moral virtue by practice (acting virtuously) in such a way that what is learned earlier in life helps them make consistent moral choices later in life (Cline, 2007a).

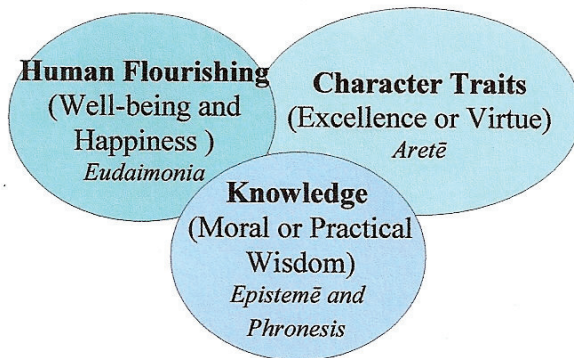


Figure 2.1. Three dimensions of virtue ethics (Hursthouse, 2007).

Intellectual virtue is the highest virtue because virtue is what distinguishes human beings from animals (Aristotle, 350 BC). It consists of philosophical contemplation - excellence of thought. Intellectual virtues are character traits necessary for right action and correct thinking: a sense of justice, perseverance, integrity, humility, empathy, intellectual courage, confidence in reason, and autonomy (Aristotle). He identifies five intellectual virtues and groups them into three classes (see also DePaul & Zagzebski, 2003). This discussion concerns itself with *Phronesis* (practical wisdom and prudence) (see Figure 2.1):

1. Theoretical: *Sophia* (internal, philosophical wisdom)
Epistime (scientific knowledge)
Nous (intuitive understanding)
2. Practical: *Phronesis* (practical wisdom/prudence)
3. Productive: *Techne* (craft knowledge, art, skill)

Kupperman (1991) defines *character* as people's standard patterns of thought and action with respect to their own and other's well-being and other major concerns and commitments. It includes virtues and vices, values and emotions, natural dispositions as well as acts. People's character is essential to their personal identity. Hursthouse (2007) explains there are three lines of thinking about what makes a *character trait* a virtue, contributing to the *good life*. It benefits people by enabling them to: (a) flourish as humans (be *eudaimon*); (b) respond to the demands of the world so they can live a morally meritorious life; or, (c) be considered (*qua*) an excellent specimen of human kind (a good human being).

Most moral philosophers maintain that the central question of virtue ethics is not what sort of action to *do* but what sort of person to *be*. Virtue ethics emphasizes the constitution or the character of the actors. The moral rightness of acts is based on the virtuous character of the agents (Hursthouse, 2007; Slote, 2001). If people possess virtues, they are expected to consistently act according to these virtue across a full range of situations where it is ethically appropriate to do so, despite the presence of inducements to behave otherwise. Because virtues should be resistant to contrary social pressures, virtuous people should stand firm in the midst of a contrary climate of social expectations (Doris & Stich, 2006). More recent thinking posits that virtue ethics can also provide guidance for *what to do* (in addition to what kind of person do be). To that end, the field created rich lists of virtues/vices, generating invaluable guidance for avoiding actions that display a vice or character deficiency (i.e., irresponsible, intolerant, self-indulgent, materialistic, short-sighted) (Cafaro, 1998; Hursthouse, 1999).

The appeal of virtue ethics or character ethics is the promise that people cultivating robust character traits can make a real difference in their ethical behaviour, through good times and bad. The virtuous person is admirable because she sticks to her guns (Doris & Stich, 2006). These robust character traits include the Western virtues of: wisdom, courage, temperance, empathy, compassion, conscience, justice, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness. A recent version of a Wikipedia Encyclopedia (2008c) article notes the virtues held by various faiths and cultures. Some moral philosophers hold that different cultures

embody different virtues (cultural relativism) while others maintain that the virtues are not relative to a culture but that local understandings of the virtues differ (e.g., what counts as loyalty or justice) (Hursthouse, 2007).

When two virtues seem to be in conflict with each other (a moral dilemma), virtue ethics explains that the conflict is only apparent. People who are able to draw on *practical wisdom* (wiseness about human beings and human life) will be able to assess the situation, drawing on their experience with *situational appreciation*. They will be able to discern which aspects of the situation are morally salient because *practically-wise* moral agents have the capacity to recognize that some features of a situation are more morally relevant than others, thereby eliminating the apparent conflict (Hursthouse, 2007). An example of a moral dilemma (conflict of virtues) might be a situation where honesty prompts someone to tell a hurtful truth while kindness and compassion prompt her to remain silent, or even to lie. Because practical wisdom is life knowledge or understanding that enables its possessor to *do the right thing* in any given situation, people with this wisdom will know what to do when they encounter a conflict of virtues.

Hursthouse (2007) explains that youth and teens do not have enough life experience to employ practical, moral wisdom, although adults can be described as *fairly virtuous* people who do have their blind spots, areas where they act for reasons one would not expect. The *fully or perfectly virtuous* do what they should without an internal struggle against contrary desires or apparent conflicts; again, this is very rare. She further explains there is something admirable about people who manage to act well when it is especially hard to do so. But, what counts as “makes it hard”? For example, Jane sees someone drop a purse. Is it admirable that she return it? Hursthouse clarifies this admiration should be reserved for the person who does the right thing even when it goes against her natural character (e.g., tempted to keep what is not hers or being indifferent to the suffering of others) rather than if she makes the hard decision based on the circumstances (e.g., Jane is poor and could use the money but still gives back the purse).

Virtuous people act as they do because they believe someone’s suffering will be averted, someone will benefit, a truth will be established. The result will be *eudaimon*: human flourishing, well-being, excellence and happiness - the good life (Wikipedia Encyclopedia, 2008a). All moral philosophers agree that “The good life is a virtuous life” (Hursthouse, 2007, p. 7). But, they do not all agree on what constitutes the good life. Cafaro (1998) posits that virtue ethics is more than character ethics. It also includes judgements of the people we are and the lives we lead. It critically evaluates lifestyles, careers, roles and achievements (as well as individual actions and character). Along the same line of thinking, Sreenivasan (2002) characterizes virtues as *multi-track dispositions*, explaining that, for example, an honest person is more than someone who regularly tells the truth or never cheats. This person embodies a mind set that wholeheartedly accepts a demanding range of considerations as reasons for his or her actions. To that end, virtue ethicists caution against attributing a virtue to someone based on a single observed behaviour or even a series of similar actions. Instead, they would have us appreciate that people subscribing to any particular virtue (for example, honesty) will manifest this virtue in

all aspects of their life including choices and emotional reactions pertinent to work and to employment, friendships and relationships, child rearing, community involvement - the whole range of considerations. If someone possesses the virtue of honesty, that person is expected to consistently behave honestly across the full range of situations (Doris & Stich, 2006).

Situational ethics

While globalist moral psychologists adhere to the notion that virtue ethics entails behaving consistently within a framework of *robust character traits*, new thinking in the field of virtue ethics holds that this is not necessary for virtue because the difference between good conduct and bad conduct depends on the *situation* more than the person (Arjoon, 2007; Doris & Stich, 2006). It is not that people do not adhere to standards of moral conduct but that they can be induced to ignore these moral standards with such ease. And, it does not take much for a person to encounter moral failure. Arjoon (2007) and Doris and Stich (2006) report research that found: (a) people who are *not* in a hurry are six times more likely to help an unfortunate person; (b) people who found a dime on the street were 22 times more likely to help a woman who had dropped her papers; (c) people were five times more likely to help an apparently injured man when there was low ambient noise (no lawnmower running near by); and, (d) people primed by searching for plural pronouns (e.g., *we, us, ours*) in writing samples were more likely to report that belonging, friendship and family security were important values in their life than if they searched for singular pronouns (e.g., *I, me, mine*). Apparently, what *morally* matters to people can be influenced by things that do not matter very much (ambient noise, pace of the day, chance or luck); yet, encountering these influences can derail people's inclination to adhere to moral standards. Arjoon provides a discussion of each of these studies, affirming or refuting their merit, citing Webber (2006).

This theoretical stance holds that *robust character traits* are rarely instantiated in human beings, meaning instances of human behaviour rarely reflect virtue. There are few concrete examples of this abstract, theoretical construct (Doris, 2002). Based on the assumption that *virtue*, being morally sound, is very rare in humans (Hursthouse, 2007; Merritt, 2000), this new line of thinking about virtue ethics - that it is the situation that matters, not the person's character - is quite compelling. First, variations in the situations people encounter in their daily life are a pervasive feature of human behaviour. Second, people's processes of reasoning when they encounter an ethical situation (i.e., someone can be harmed) are susceptible to situational flux. Third, even if people do have a well developed sense of practical reasoning, they are not skilled at transferring that ability from one situation to another. Fourth, people's ability to perceive a situation as an occasion for ethical decision making shapes what they respond to when it is encountered. What they respond to affects how they code their environment (is it ethical or not). These empirical findings are telling (see Arjoon, 2007; Doris & Stich, 2006; Merritt, 2000). Reliable human behaviour in ethical situations is mediated by the nature of the situation rather than being assured because the person holds rigorously to robust character traits.

THE END (PUN INTENDED)

Morality is very demanding (Ashford, 2007; Scanlon, 1998). It is also permanently controversial and mysterious (Haines, 2008). All three main theories of morality are meant to offer guidance through this existential maze (none is foolproof) and all remain live options for making decisions about the morality of an act, outcome or character because they cannot be disproved (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006). When people commit to any of these orientations, it means they agree that some behaviour is immoral, perhaps even behaviour they are tempted to perform (Gert, 2008). In summary, anytime a discussion of consumer moral leadership centers on the consequences to others of a consumer's decision or action, the overarching norm is teleological. When the discussion references the intentions or motives behind a person's decision to consume, the overarching norm is deontological. Discussions that focus on the moral character of, and virtues held by, the consumer are being informed by virtue ethics.

One thing is for certain - it is time for the consumer society to stop minimizing or denying the moral agency of consumers and start to appreciate the moral, relational aspects of their consumer power - people are connected to each other, other species and the earth (Dauvergne, 2005; Dolan, 2002). Human nature leans decidedly towards an awareness of good, and a preference for it over evil and injustice (Puka, 2005). While the moral self can never reach the certainty it aims at, it is only while seeking such certainty that the self can become and stay moral (Bauman, 1998). Familiarity and sensitivity to different notions of morality better ensures that people can strive for and actually reach moral maturity.

NOTES

- ¹ There are four ways to conceptualize moral norms. (a) They can be moral standards, criteria or measures for guiding people's conscience in making moral judgements and taking action. They are used to measure human freedom and to construct morally good character and right actions. (b) Moral norms can focus people's attention on what is morally important by serving as guides to being and doing. They are like road signs, serving as indicators or directions for types of actions that are right versus wrong, obligatory versus permitted. (c) Moral norms can serve as models, patterns or ideals of whom people ought to become and what people ought to do by helping them concretize their values and realize their ideals. Norms also help people prioritize their values and help them fit them into their circumstances. Finally, (d) moral norms can be blueprints or sets of instructions and expectations for the moral life. They teach moral wisdom of a community and serve as moral reminders of communal wisdom. In this way, they set moral expectations that shape how people see and act (Leininger, 2006).

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