

# **JONATHAN HAIDT'S MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY AND THE INTERACTIVIST ONTOLOGY OF THE PERSON**

**ROBERT L. CAMPBELL**

**CAMPBER@CLEMSON.EDU**

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# **JONATHAN HAIDT**



# **HAIDT: BACKGROUND AND INFLUENCES**

## **Majored in philosophy at Yale**

- “I studied philosophy in college, hoping to figure out the meaning of life.” (2012, p. 4)

## **Ph. D. in psychology from the University of Pennsylvania (1992)**

- Came under the influence of “Pennsylvania nativism”
- Worked with Paul Rozin in research on disgust

## **Postdoctoral fellowship at University of Chicago**

- Under cultural anthropologist Richard Shweder
- Haidt spent time in Bhubaneswar; he credits the experience with making him appreciative of moral foundations

# **SHWEDER'S THREE ETHICAL SYSTEMS**

**Autonomy**

**Community**

**Divinity**

**Like Shweder, Haidt reacted sharply against Elliot Turiel's theory of moral, conventional, and personal domains**

**Haidt, Koller, and Dias (1993) used a Shwederian system to analyze participants' justifications**

**But Haidt still has more in common with Turiel than he may realize**

# CAREER

**Joined the Psychology Department at the University of Virginia in 1995**

- Like some present or former UVA colleagues—such as Daniel Wegner and Tim Wilson—emphasizes unconscious pattern recognition and deemphasizes conscious decision making

**Early research on negative moral emotions such as: disgust, shame, and vengeance**

- Under the influence of the Positive Psychology movement;

**Later research focused on positive moral emotions, such as: admiration, awe, and moral elevation**

**Now Moral Foundations Theory is his main focus**

**Moved to New York University in 2012**

# **TURIEL'S REACTION TO KOHLBERG**

**Moral issues are as Lawrence Kohlberg defines them: rights, justice, equality, reciprocity**

**Moral rules are (largely) as Kohlberg defines them—and as Kant defined them before him (minus duties to self)**

**But what's developing through stages is no longer moral reasoning**

# **STAGES OF THINKING ABOUT SOCIAL CONVENTIONS**

- 1. Describe uniform behavior (ages 6-7)**
- 2. Following conventions is arbitrary:  
“everyone does it” isn’t a good reason to  
do it (ages 8-9)**
- 3. Upholding the rule system (arbitrary,  
changeable, expected by authorities) (ages  
10-11)**
- 4. Reject conventions as rules: are just  
social expectations (ages 12-13)**

# **SOCIAL CONVENTION STAGES CONT.**

**5. Conventions are vital norms of a social system with fixed roles and a static hierarchy (ages 14-15)**

**6. Conventions are just societal standards that have become customary through use (ages 16-17)**

**7. Conventions are shared knowledge that serve the function of facilitating social interactions (ages 18-25)**

**Each even-numbered stage is a *negation* of the previous odd-numbered stage**



# **DOMAIN DISTINCTIONS**

**Turiel's view is usually called "*domain theory*"**

***Morality* is one social domain**

***Social convention* is another**

***Prudential or "personal"* concerns are another**

**Domains are distinct *early in development***

**There is *never heteronomy* (dependence on commandments from external authority) in the moral domain (as narrowly defined)**

**Getting rid of a heteronomous stages separates Turiel from Piaget and Kohlberg (but not from Kant)**

# **DOMAIN DISTINCTIONS SO EARLY?**

**Larry Nucci and Elliot Turiel (1978)**

**Observations in preschools**

**How do 3, 4, and 5-year-olds react to  
“moral” and “conventional”  
transgressions?**

# **VIOLATIONS OF MORAL RULES**

**Example: Tommy wants a toy Suzy is playing with. Suzy doesn't want to give the toy to Tommy. Tommy hits Suzy.**

**Act has “intrinsic consequences”; does harm to another person or is injurious to the person's welfare**

**Children usually react, sometimes try to intervene**

**Talk about consequences: “You hurt Suzy.”**

**Try to comfort the victim**

**Don't talk about hitting being against rules (no “rule contingency”)**

# **VIOLATIONS OF SOCIAL CONVENTIONS**

**For instance, Freddy doesn't answer when he comes in the door and the teacher says "Hi, Freddy"**

**Adults respond; children usually don't.**

**Teachers talk about rules and about order in the school.**

**Even young children often say such actions would be OK if there were no rule against them.**

# **PRUDENTIAL OR PERSONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

***Personal* matters: playing with a friend you're not supposed to play with; wearing long hair (if a boy); watching TV on a sunny day**

**Would not be “wrong in the absence of a rule”**

**Should be the person's own business**

***Prudential* matters include health or safety issues**

# **MORAL UNDERSTANDING *DOESN'T DEVELOP***

**Kids think that lying, hitting, and stealing are wrong at age 3**

**Core judgments of what would be wrong “without a rule” don’t change with age**

**Conventional and personal matters are categorized the same way from 2nd grade on up**

# **SOME PROBLEMS FOR DOMAINS THEORY**

**Are these three domains *the only ones*?**

**Is the theory *legalistic* (does it reduce moral issues to issues of rights or law?)**

**Do some people *include matters besides rights and justice* in the moral domain?**

# **A CROSS-CULTURAL COUNTEREXAMPLE**

**Shweder, Mahapatra, and Miller (1987)**

**Interviews in Bhubaneswar, India**

**Participants rated the sinfulness of 40  
actions**

**Some were morally relevant in Turiel's  
sense: committing murder, stealing,  
cheating customers (perhaps also, not  
helping the poor)**



# SINS

**Others are not considered moral issues by Turiel**

- Violating codes of behavior for people in mourning
- For widows
- For menstruating women, etc.

# **THE WORST SIN**

**An eldest son gets his hair cut and eats a chicken the day after his father dies**

## **WHY?**

**Eating meat is bad for other sentient beings  
and bad for your karma**

**Allowing hair to grow while in mourning  
absorbs spiritual pollution from the death  
in your family**

**The eldest son is his family's primary  
representative after the father dies**

# **WHAT DOMAIN IS THAT?**

**“Unearthly-belief-mediated”**

**“God’s word”**

## **OTHER ISSUES**

**Could you be sure that an action or practice is immoral but not believe there should be a law against it?**

**Turiel calls these cases “anomalous”**

**What might be “anomalous” for many Americans?**

## **STILL OTHER ISSUES**

**Turiel believes that “informational assumptions” about whether a fetus is a human being (etc.) play a role in people’s judgments**

**But moral judgments are entirely distinct from such factual judgments**

# EPICYCLES

**The moral domain can be defined the same for everyone in every culture without “moral variation”**

**But only if much of the weight is carried by *other domains* of consideration**

- And extra domains can be added to the theory as needed

**And only if *people’s own ideas* of what is a moral issue are discounted**

# ENTER MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY

**For about the last ten years, Haidt has been developing and testing a theory about the foundations of human morality**

- The number is subject to revision: presently there are six foundations
- Shweder's theory (and the theory implied by Haidt's dissertation work) proposed *three* moral systems
- For its first several years, MFT was a *five*-foundation theory
- Other possible foundations are under consideration



# **DESCRIPTIVE AIM OF MORAL FOUNDATIONS THEORY**

**Aims to explain how morality varies across cultures, within limits set by the humanly possible foundations for it**

- It also aims to explain how moral systems vary *within* cultures

**Haidt (2012) rejects “moral monism,” likening it to dining all the time at the “one taste restaurant”**

# **AFFECT, CULTURE, AND MORALITY, OR IS IT WRONG TO EAT YOUR DOG?**

**Haidt's dissertation research**

**Published as Haidt, Koller, & Dias (1993)**

- Appeared in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*
- This led to its being overlooked by moral developmentalists for several years

# UNDERLYING QUESTIONS

**What do people treat as *moral issues*?**

**Does the *domain of morality* vary across cultures?**

**Do concerns about *harm* exhaust the moral domain for all cultures?**

**Do some cultures regard disgusting or disrespectful actions as violations of moral rules, even though no one else is (or could plausibly be) harmed by them?**

# **CULTURAL CONTRASTS**

**Three locations in the United States and Brazil  
(Philadelphia, Porto Alegre, and Recife)**

**All three cities are similar in size; Porto Alegre is  
wealthier and more “Westernized” than Recife**

**The key stories were chosen because they were  
likely to offend or “feel wrong” even when there  
was no victim**

**Who, if anyone, would respond by endorsing  
interference with the person’s actions and by  
judging the actions to be universally wrong?**

# **THE SAMPLE**

**In each of the three cities, four groups of 30 subjects were interviewed: high SES adults (college students); high SES children; low SES adults; low SES children.**

**Average age for children was 11; adults were in their early 20s**

**All groups were approximately balanced for gender**

**The racial composition of the groups reflected the demographics of race and class in each city**

## **STORIES THAT EXEMPLIFY TURIEL'S MORAL AND CONVENTIONAL DOMAINS**

**A girl wants to use a swing, so she pushes a boy off it and hurts him (Violation of a moral rule)**

**A boy wears regular clothes to school, even though the school requires students to wear a uniform (Violation of a social convention)**

**A man eats all his food with his hands, in public and in private—after washing them (Violation of a social convention)**

**These three stories were taken from Davidson, Turiel, and Black (1983)**

## **STORIES INVOLVING OFFENSE, BUT NOT HARM**

**An actor does something likely to be considered disrespectful, without intending harm or actually harming others**

- Cutting up an old flag and using the pieces to clean the bathroom
- Failing to keep a promise to visit his or her mother's grave

# **STORIES INVOLVING OFFENSE, BUT NOT HARM**

## **An actor eats something or engages in a sexual practice likely to elicit disgust**

- Cooking and eating the family dog after it was run over by a car
- A brother and sister secretly kissing (this was not given to low-SES kids in Philadelphia; replaced with story about a child bingeing and purging on candy)
- A man having sexual intercourse with a raw chicken before cooking and eating it
  - This item was not given to children anywhere



# **HARM AND OFFENSE CHECKS**

**Each participant was asked whether the stories involved *harm* to the actor, or to the others**

**Each participant was asked whether the actions described in the story *bothered* him or her**

**Some participants claimed to find harm in the stories intended to be offensive**

**Some claimed not to be bothered by stories intended to be offensive (e.g., cutting up a flag into rags)**

# “MORALIZING”

Haidt’s criteria for treating an issue as moral were derived from Elliot Turiel’s theory

*Universalizing*: is the action wrong, regardless of whether it’s considered OK in a given culture?

*Interference*: should the actor be stopped from doing the action, or punished for doing it/

*Consistent moralizing*: for Haidt, this is judging that it’s always wrong and the person should be stopped from doing it

# REACTIONS

**Most high-SES Philadelphians judged the harmless-offensive stories to involve nonmoral conventions, so the actions shouldn't be interfered with**

**Most low-SES Recifeans universalized their judgments and endorsed interference with the actions**

# **CHILDREN AND ADULTS**

**68% of children said they would not like it or would be bothered if they witnessed any of the harmless actions**

**Children were more likely than adults to find stories offensive and to call for punishment or interference**

**Children “universalized” 69% of the harmless offensive cases (saying the action would be wrong whether it was considered OK in that culture or not) while the adults universalized only 39%**

# **FOUR PATTERNS OF REACTION TO THE OFFENSIVE BUT HARMLESS STORIES**

- **Moralizing**
- **Enforceable-Conventional**
- **“Personal Morality”**
- **Permissive**

# PERMISSIVENESS AND MORALIZING

**High-SES adults** (college students in Philadelphia, Porto Alegre, and Recife) and **high-SES children in Philadelphia** tended to treat the offensive but harmless acts as “mere” violations of social conventions or exercises of personal choice

**All of the low-SES groups** (plus **high-SES children in Recife**) tended to treat the offensive but harmless acts as universally wrong and deserving of interference or punishment

In the Permissive groups, Harm was more highly correlated than Bother with universalizing and interference

In the Moralizing groups, *Bother was more highly correlated than Harm* with universalizing and interference

# WEIRDNESS

There was a huge effect of social class on moral judgment

- It was bigger than Haidt had anticipated

Brazilian college students had more in common with college students in Philadelphia than with their neighbors in Brazil

**WEIRD: Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic**

Haidt concludes that Turiel's theory of three domains *holds only for WEIRD people*

The domain of morality *does* appear to vary cross-culturally

# **SIX MORAL FOUNDATIONS**

**Care/harm**

**Fairness/cheating**

**Liberty/oppression**

**Loyalty/betrayal**

**Authority/subversion**

**Sanctity/degradation**



# **CARE/HARM**

**In primate species offspring suffering can be detected by the mother**

**In humans this ability to detect has extended to all other human beings (and perhaps beyond)**

**Those who stop harm from being done reap approval**

**Hence the virtues of kindness and compassion**

# **FAIRNESS/CHEATING**

**Ultimately stems from alliance formation and cooperation in primates**

**Promotes the development of anger, guilt, gratitude**

**Leads to virtues of fairness and justice**

**Proportionality or the law of Karma is an instance of fairness**

**Haidt no longer classifies equality as fairness**

# **LIBERTY/OPPRESSION**

**The most recent addition to the theory**

**Haidt's recent work in political psychology led to this addition**

**Traces back to resistance among primates to excessive dominance or aggression**

**“Don't Tread on Me” is a conservative expression**

**“No Logo” is a Left-wing expression**

# **LOYALTY/BETRAYAL**

**From living in kin-based groups**

**Led to emotions of trusting, recognizing, and cooperating with members**

**Value accorded to those who sacrifice for the group**

**Cultures develop loyalty, patriotism, heroism**

# **AUTHORITY/ SUBVERSION**

**Hierarchical social structure**

**Dominant males and females get perquisites but are expected to provide protection**

**Respect and admiration toward authority figures**

**Virtues related to subordination**

# **SANCTITY/ DEGRADATION**

**Human disgust reactions reject potentially contaminated food**

**Disgust can extend to other human beings and their actions**

**Concerns with ritual purity develop**

# **HAIDT'S POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY (VERSION 1.0)**

**Asked to identify political views on 7-point scale**

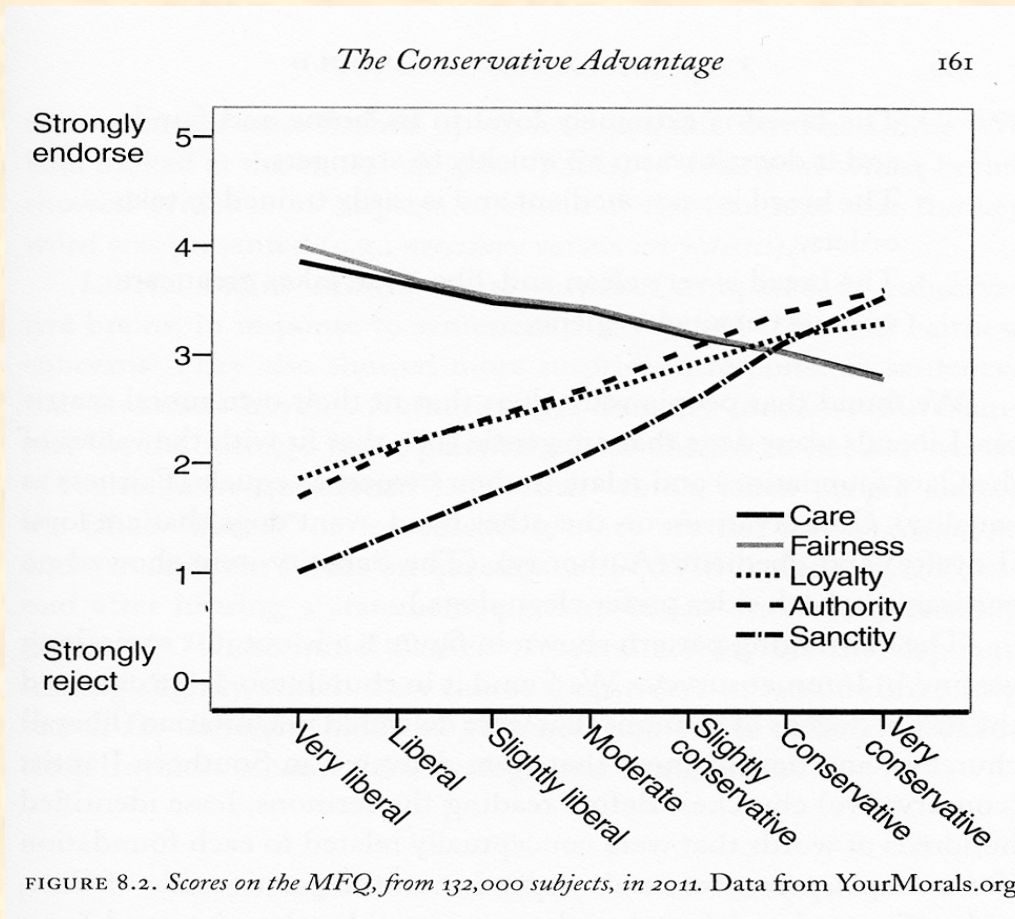
- “Strongly liberal” to “strongly conservative”

**Asked 15 questions concerning moral judgments**

**Strong liberals put most weight on care and fairness**

**Strong conservatives put roughly equal importance on all of the five foundations then in use**

# RESULTS





# HAIDT AND TURIEL

Like Shweder, Haidt does not accept Kohlberg and Turiel's dismissal of religion as morally irrelevant

About half of *The Righteous Mind* is concerned with human "groupishness" and religion's key role in it

"Religions are morality's exoskeletons" (p. 269)

Oddly, Émile Durkheim is the thinker most often cited in *The Righteous Mind*, ranked right up there with Charles Darwin, yet Haidt shows no recognition either of Piaget's positive interest in Durkheim—or of his reaction against Durkheim's prescriptions for moral education

# **DOMAINS IN HAIDT AND TURIEL**

**Haidt is prone to add domains—but these are all deemed relevant, so his additions are not epicyclic**

**However, Haidt considers Turiel the prime exponent of the “cognitive developmental point of view”**

**He uses assimilation and accommodation in his analysis of awe (p. 228), without any apparent awareness of the origin of these notions**

**Yet Turiel’s moral and personal domains are not subject to any significant qualitative change once established**

**Neither are Haidt’s care, fairness, liberty, loyalty, authority, and sanctity foundations**

# **MORALITY AND POLITICS**

**Haidt shares Turiel's assumption that morality translates directly into political attitudes: if you think it's immoral, you'll think it ought to be prohibited by law**

**He does waver in the direction of a two-layer theory, specifically involving utilitarianism at the political level:**

**“But when we talk about making laws and implementing public policies in Western democracies that contain some degree of ethnic and moral diversity, then I think there is no compelling alternative to utilitarianism.” (p. 272)**

**Having utterly trashed utilitarianism as a moral conception, how does Haidt propose to rehabilitate it as a legal or political conception?**

**If not, how will he deal with Turiel's “anomalous” cases?**

# **ANTI- DEVELOPMENTALISM**

**Turiel implies, through indifference to the developmental questions, that the moral domain is innate in human beings**

**Haidt explicitly treats all of his domains as innate**

**However, the moral weight given to each is a matter of acculturation and (presumably) also of individual development**

**Pennsylvania nativism in 22 words:**

**“But when developmental psychologists invented ways to look into infant minds, they found a great deal of writing already on that slate.” (p. 63)**

# **MASSIVELY MODULAR EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY**

**Haidt endorses a “massively modular” form of nativism**

**The ontology of this is unclear, though Haidt cautions that is not Fodorian, but Sperberian (the latter allowing for modules for acquiring modules)**

**Haidtian moral foundations can’t be “informationally encapsulated”—or more than one of them could not contribute to the same person’s moral judgments and reactions**

**Was there a single EEA, or are “moral matrices” subject to biological evolution?**

**“I don’t think evolution can create a new mental module from scratch in just 12,000 years, but I can see no reason why existing features—such as the six [moral] foundations ... or the tendency to feel shame—would not be tweaked if conditions changed and then stayed stable for a thousand years.” (p. 216)**

# **CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS**

**Haidt relies on a binary contrast between controlled and automatic, conscious and unconscious processes**

**And insists that unconscious processes are much more powerful**

**The unconscious is an elephant, the conscious mind is a rider**

**“And psychopaths have normal conscious, “strategic” mind; they lack normal unconscious reactions to need, suffering, or indignity in others” (2012, p. 63);  
psychopaths reason but don’t feel (p. 70)**

**Unconscious processes are the dog, conscious processes are the tail**

# **LACK OF INTEREST IN MORAL REASONING**

**Haidt is uninterested in advances in moral reasoning**

**Turiel already deemphasized changes in moral reasoning, in favor of “coordination” among domains**

**Reasoning is peripheral to Haidt’s own conception of morality (Hume is his favorite moral philosopher; attributing a significant role to reason in morality is Platonic)**

**Haidt reduces moral reasoning to rationalization for “instinctual” reactions**

**“But for nonscientists, there is no such thing as a study you must believe.” (p. 85)**

**“The function of those [religious] beliefs and practices is to create a community. Often our beliefs are post hoc constructions designed to justify what we’ve just done, or to support the groups we belong to.” (pp. 250-251)**

# GLAUCON WAS RIGHT

**“I’ve argued that Glaucon was right and that we care more about *looking* good than about truly *being* good. Intuitions come first, *strategic* reasoning second. We lie, cheat, and cut ethical corners often when we think we can get away with it, and then we use our moral thinking to manage our reputations and justify ourselves to others. We believe our own post hoc reasoning so thoroughly that that we end up self-righteously convinced of our own virtue.” (p. 190)**



# **VALUE IS NOT A CENTRAL CONCEPT**

**Values are no more a part of Haidt's theory than they were of Kohlberg's or Turiel's**

# WHERE VALUE IS A CENTRAL CONCEPT: ONTOLOGY OF GOALS

Any goal-directed system operates according to this principle

While in state  $S$ , to move closer to goal  $G$ , under input conditions  $I$ : emit output  $O$ , and follow the transition to state  $S+1$

At root, goals have to be definable *internally*

# **PHYSICAL AND FUNCTIONAL**

**The second-level system (as physically instantiated) can know aspects of the first level**

**Once enough interesting stuff is known at the second level, a third level may emerge (functionally) from which aspects of the second level are known**

**The third level requires no special physical instantiation**

**Further functional emergence: once aspects of Level N-1 are in place, these may become known by Level N**

# REFLECTIVE ABSTRACTION, STAGES, NO FIXED UPPER LIMIT

***Reflective abstraction*** (roughly equivalent to Piaget's idea of *reflecting* abstraction) is what gets the knower from Level N-1 to Level N

***Major developmental stages*** can be defined in terms of levels of knowing

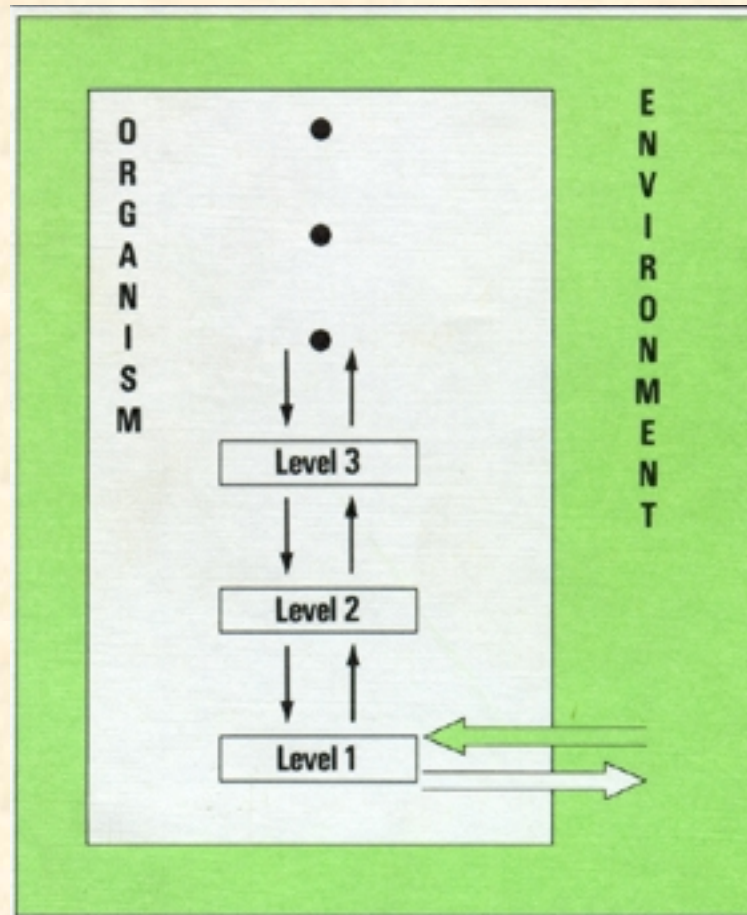
- Not subroutine hierarchies
- Not Piagetian groupings and lattices

**There is no fixed upper limit on levels of knowing**

- Roughly as with Piaget's *operations to the  $n^{\text{th}}$  power*

**Campbell and Bickhard, *Knowing levels and developmental stages* (1986)**

# GREEN AND WHITE BOXES



# **GOALS UP THROUGH THE LEVELS OF KNOWING**

**Simple goals at Level 1**

**Goals about goals (metagoals, values) at Level  
2**

**Values about values (metavalues) at Level 3**

**Metavalues about metavalues (e.g., evaluations  
of ethical systems) at Level 4**

# **THE SELF UP THROUGH THE LEVELS OF KNOWING**

**Being a self but not having a self at Level 1**

**Having a self but not an identity at Level 2**

**Having an identity (comparing possible ways  
our selves might be) at Level 3**

**Meta-identity or explicit constraints on identity  
at Level 4**

# **VICE UP THROUGH THE LEVELS**

**Harmful or maladaptive habits and practices at Level 1**

**Metahabits: Judgments about harmful practices (and practices for developing harmful practices) at Level 2**

**Metametahabits: Judgments about harmful metapactices (and practices for developing harmful metapactices) at Level 3**

**Judgments about harmful metametapactices (etc.) at Level 4**



# **LEVEL 1**

**Birth through age 4 in human beings**

**Interactive practice (much of which is social) and “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger)**

**Goals acquired and pursued (e.g., getting Mommy to laugh) are rich with implications**

**Most implications are not themselves known or represented (e.g., relaxing tension within the family system)**

**That is, most implications are implicit**

# **LEVEL 2**

**2nd level starts at age 3 ½ or 4 (judging from data on knowing about knowledge and belief)**

**Metagoals: goals about which goals to have**

**Values at Level 2 are instantiated in goals at Level 1**

# **LEVEL 2 METAGOALS**

**A child can recognize at Level 2 that she doesn't want to quit on a number problem until she gets the answer**

**Can formulate a metagoal of not quitting on a number problem until she gets it right**

**The metagoal subsumes existing goals**

**It directs the formation of further goals at Level 1**

# LEVEL 2 METAGOALS

Now it does make sense to say that the child *is conscientious*

It doesn't make sense to say that the child *values conscientiousness...*

# **LEVEL 3 METAVALUES**

**At Level 3, conscientiousness can be explicitly valued and made part of a person's identity**

**One person's conscientiousness can be compared against other possible ways to be**

**The person can seek to construct new Level 2 values to implement the metavalue**

**The person's identity incorporates or implies a system of metavalues**

## **LEVEL 4**

**Metavalues about (systems of) metavalues**

**Classifying and choosing between entire ethical systems**

**Judging the arguments for such systems**

**Moral *philosophy* is (nearly all) done at Level 4**

**Moral *decisions* are (virtually) never made at Level 4**

# **LEVEL 4**

## **METAMETAVALUES**

**Understanding and comparing ethical systems**

**Conscientiousness is regarded in some systems as a virtue, which is itself necessary for *eudaimonia***

**It may be considered morally irrelevant in other systems (or valued in these only if put in service of some other ends)**

**A Level 4 thinker may put forward a brief for conscientiousness as a virtue—and against views that don't accord it that status**

# **INSTANTIATION**

**Relations of instantiation run down the knowing levels**

**A metametavalue at Level 4 is multiply instantiated in metavalues at Level 3**

**A metavalue at Level 3 is multiply instantiated in values at Level 2**



# **INSTANTIATIONS MAY CONFLICT**

**A value at Level 2 is multiply instantiated in goals at Level 1**

**Instantiations may conflict in varying degrees with what they instantiate**

**I may believe that I should always stand up for myself in social situations (Level 3)**

**Yet my Level 2 values include not offending certain kinds of people on certain issues**

# **INSTANTIATIONS MAY FURTHER CONFLICT**

**And my Level 1 goals may often include avoiding certain kinds of anticipated reactions from this person or that**

# OSCILLATING CONFLICT

Volition at one level may not be in harmony with volition at a higher level, and so *one may be moved to do X and simultaneously value someone's preventing the doing of X*. Indeed, the direction of desires can continue to oscillate at successively higher levels. Consider the prude who is troubled by his lascivious desires and wishes to quell them. Suppose that he becomes a recipient of the largesse of the Sexual Revolution such that he now wishes to put his prudery behind him, all the better to wallow in his instinctive desires. In such a case, a third-order desire attempts to countermand a second-order desire which itself wars against a first-order desire. It seems possible that the prude might then develop a fourth-order desire that goes against the third, and so on.

—Loren Lomasky, *Persons, Rights, and the Moral Community* (1987), p. 59 [my italics]

# **GOAL CONFLICT**

**Goal conflict is possible *between levels***

**The correct resolution of such a conflict is not necessarily in favor of the higher-level goal**

**Goal conflict is possible *within a level***

**Recognizing the implications of particular goal selections usually requires further development**

**There is no need to reify goal conflict into permanent warring subsystems, fractions of the self, or parts of the soul**

# VALUE, VIRTUE, AND SELF

**It isn't merely that goals/values, good habits/virtues, bad habits/vices, and self/identity develop through analogous stages**

**From an interactivist point of view, moral development *is* virtue and vice development *is* self development**

**Self-definitions that exclude or downgrade morality (such as an Eriksonian “negative identity”) are (severe) instances of goal conflict, overtly expressed at Level 3**

**Paralyzing self-condemnation after a serious moral lapse (Blasi calls this “self-inconsistency”) is a severe type of goal conflict, also overtly expressed at Level 3**

# TRAITS AND TRAIT TROUBLES

**Virtues and vices are widely thought to be *traits***

**The trait idea has had its ups and downs over the last 100 years**

- 1920s: Behaviorism rejected traits; “behavior is under the control of the stimulus”
- 1930s: Henry Murray’s “needs” (nAch; nInf; etc.)
- 1960s: Walter Mischel and other attribution theorists rejected traits again
- 1980s: Costa and McCrae’s 5 factor personality test and NEO-AC theory revived them
- 2000s: Values in Action classification uses traits while skirting the questions about them

**Traits are supposed to be *stable, domain-general, and context-independent***

# WHERE ARE THE TRAITS?

**What is empirical evidence for particular virtues or vices?**

**Is honesty a domain-general, context-independent, stable attribute of a person?**

- Courage?
- Benevolence?

**Is dishonesty a domain-general, context-independent, stable attribute of a person?**

- Cowardice?
- Malevolence?

**Hartshorne, May, Maller, and Shuttleworth (1928-1930) concluded that there are different patterns of cheating and not cheating under conditions where cheating is possible**

**Kohlberg accepted Hartshorne et al.'s critique, and derided non-rule-based moralities as a “bag of virtues”**

# **FROM TRAITS TO INVARIANTS**

**One level of response to Hartshorne and May (or to later skeptics about traits like Mischel) is to point out that there are moderate correlations (e.g., between generous behavior in one relevant situation and in another)**

**But this doesn't explain why the correlations aren't higher**

**And it doesn't explain what's going on underlyingly**

**To do that, psychologists need to replace substantial traits with process invariants of some kind**



# OK, WHERE ARE THE INVARIANTS?

A psychologically adequate conception of virtue and vice needs to be *process-oriented*

Needs to include *goals and values*

Needs to acknowledge the course of development

- Are traits of “temperament” in babies stable?
- Is there a direct path from the condition of your primary attachment to your personality later in life?

**The invariants may be across the person at a given time, or in the person over time**

# HAIDTIAN SOURCES

Haidt, J. (2012). *The righteous mind: Why good people are divided by politics and religion*. New York: Pantheon.

<http://righteousmind.com/>

<http://www.yourmorals.org/>

<http://people.virginia.edu/~jdh6n/postpartisan.html>