

Morality is the basis of understanding *It's a vital & permanent part of our lives*



It is generally recognised that intelligence is the commodity that gives humanity its power over all other creatures, but what is not generally understood is the dependence of this facility upon a necessary foundation of unquestioned values. To grasp the meaning of any event requires using reason to apply our set of values to arrive at an interpretation of what occurred. That is, was a man's death a good or a bad thing? Was the event an accident, a crime or the execution of justice? Our judgement must reflect our set of values. So all understanding arises from a basic set of values, or morality, which has to be part of every creature before they can understand anything.

Intelligence Allows Understanding But This Must Reflect A Morality

Because some values are supplied as part of all life, we forget that they are a value. *Survive, eat,* seem so obvious that such considerations seem part of the physical nature of life rather than a set of values, but this only emphasises the necessity of such values, for without them no life could exist. The combination of an ability to reason and a *morality* against which reason can be applied, is the essential requirements for perception.

Reason Needs Morality Like A Lever Needs A Fulcrum

Morality and reason are like a lever and a fulcrum; they can only function if they are both present. Just as a lever cannot be used to move anything unless there is a fulcrum to support the lever, reason cannot be applied unless there is a foundation of values to supply understanding. This makes the combination of reason and

morality an essential part of all living things, including bacteria, insects and people.

A definition of life —"I think therefore I am alive"

In other words all living things must have an understanding, which guides their behaviour, hence thinking is an essential part of being alive. The philosopher René Descartes (1596 - 1650) stated "*I think therefore I am*" which is not quite correct. If a person dies and hence stops thinking, they still are, even if it is just as a corpse, and it is clear that things exist even though they do not think. Descartes words should have been "*I think therefore I am alive*".

Morality Must Form Before Understanding

Morality must precede understanding because understanding can only develop after the underlying values have been formed. So the early values are the most important as they become the parent of all subsequent values; later additions though made with a more adult mind, must incorporate previous decisions as those prior decisions are beyond the force of reason. This arbitrary set of beliefs is the morality of the individual, beyond threat, promise or argument, and determines the way they see reality.

Morality Is Permanent

Morality cannot be changed by reason because to use your reason immediately means applying your values, which are your morality. This makes it impossible for people to change their founding morality. They may wish others to think they have changed their morality, but they are powerless to alter a single basic value, they cannot change their intentions, only their behaviour. A selfish person may wish to be thought unselfish but they can only form this desire if they are selfish, and nothing can reverse this crucial and early value.

Creating Human Values

In humans the set of values supplied at birth are extended by experience and upbringing; primitive instincts are built upon to form a sophisticated and complex set of beliefs. The strongest of these additions are formed in the first seven years of life and become the immutable foundations of personality.

Learnt Values Are Immutable

Imbuing values into children is like loading the software into a computer, however, unlike computers, with people it is an irreversible affair. Once the rules are set, they are set for life. Resulting behaviour may be changed, but not the driving motivations of the individual. Some people believe they can reverse a particular private value by reason or experience, but this is like claiming once the house is built the foundations can be changed; it is impossible but this myth is supported by the difficulty people have in realising their own basic values.

Our Own Basic Values Hard To Realise

My daughter was happy to inform me that a friend had just changed her mind about the death penalty. A sudden intimate association with violent crime had changed resistance into enthusiasm for capital punishment. Such a change in attitude, my offspring claimed, was experience moulding values, demonstrating that values could be altered. But in reality the initial declared value, opposing sentence of death, was incomplete. The girl had always believed that no one should be executed by the law *unless* private experience revealed crime posed a real threat to her *own* survival; the latter part of the belief being exposed only by events.

Simple Examples Of Immutable Values

An impression gained in early childhood that women cannot be trusted will not be changed by adult arguments that such a failing is only present in some women, or subsequent wide experience to the contrary. Mistrust will never be dispelled; the adult will merely expect their belief to be confirmed sooner or later. Much like being optimistic or pessimistic, the invariably random nature of events will have little lasting impact upon such attitudes; the optimist will keep expecting the best, and vice-versa. Just as those who buy lottery tickets cannot be dissuaded by rational explanation of the remoteness of success, nor by long experience of losing. They feel that next time they could well win. Personal beliefs—the morality of the individual—are not just the guiding forces of character and the interpreter of our experiences but they are immune to reason or experience.

Understanding Is Values + Reason

The combination of unchangeable values and reason are the mechanism of understanding for that is the way we recognise good and bad. Or as David Hume put it in his '*Treatise on Human Understanding*':

So that when you pronounce any action or character to be [virtuous or] vicious, you mean nothing, but that from the constitution of your nature you have a feeling or sentiment of [approval or] blame from the contemplation of it.—(Bk iii, pt I, sect. I.)

And this is true not just for individuals but groups. It is the set of values (morality) adopted during infancy that dictate the nature of the adult understanding — the individual's *character*; and the nature of the community's understanding —its *culture*.

Basic Values Dictate The Strength Of An Understanding

As understanding is values and reason, and reason is mainly the exercise of a facility to connect cause and effect, which is almost mechanical, so *reason must be considered the servant of values*. Hence it is the set of values that control an understanding and so decide its strength. The significant difference between the understanding of the early Romans and their neighbours (a subject that so fascinated Polybius (200-118 B.C.) a Greek statesman, that he wrote a book *The*

Rise Of The Roman Empire) was that of basic values (morality). The various peoples surrounding those ancient builders of civilization had the same ability to reason, access to the same technology and resources, but they became the vanquished as the Roman army conquered the world. The discipline and organisation allowed by Roman understanding created something that was superior to anything ever before seen in the world. The health, wealth and prosperity of humanity were hugely improved just by the appearance of the set of values making up Roman morality.

Roman Civilization Was Roman Understanding

Roman civilization was Roman understanding, which was founded upon Roman values. All civilizations are in effect a set of values, or morality. And like all civilizations, Ancient Rome thrived when it adhered to its basic values, it fell when it discarded them. Western Civilization is an understanding based upon the morality outlined in the bible, and it's our adherence to this morality that controls the strength of our civilization.

Morality Is A Set Of Values Which Form The Basis Of An Understanding

There can be no intelligence, artificial or organic, that can exist without a set of values. It is an essential part of every creature's mind, as it must be formed before that creature can use reason—understand. And this set of values is the *Morality* of the creature. Hence for us, Morality is not just a set of values, but a vital and permanent part of ourselves, formed in childhood before the age of reason, which dictates how we understand the world (www.ourcivilisation.com, accessed 11 October 2009).