

Stages of Moral Reasoning

I Punishment

You see a hundred dollar bill hanging half way out of a woman's purse. You can swipe it, but might get caught. Others might see you and call the police. The only reason you don't steal it is your fear of going to jail.

II Self-interest

You tell a friend about the hundred dollar bill. He says he will cover you if you give him \$50. He promises he won't tell. You decide to steal the bill. [Or the oil if you are a CEO of a large corporation.]

III Peer pressure

You're hanging with a group of friends who think it's wrong to steal. Because you want their approval you decide to forget about stealing that bill.

IV Law and order

You pledge allegiance to the flag. My country right or wrong! You obey most laws because they are the laws of your country. You risk your life to fight in Iraq and kill civilians because your country asks you to. Your Christian leaders do not follow the teachings of Christ while loudly proclaiming that they do.

V Social Contract

You realize that feeding starving people works better than killing or enslaving them. You realize, too, that contracts among people should consider the greatest good for the greatest number, and that power must be shared. The U.S. Constitution was conceived by people reasoning on stage V

VI Universal ethical principles

Your thinking at this stage is based on the concept that if it is wrong to kill, it is universally wrong. Your power comes from relinquishing all force. You refuse to use force. You see that attempting to control nature by force, kills nature, that killing nature kills mankind. Awakening to the fact and consequences of Global Warming is pushing more and more of us up the stages of moral reasoning.

Very few people so far have reached this stage: Jesus, Buddha, Ghandi and Martin Luther King are among those few who did..

These stages exemplify the abstraction ladder. True intelligence is the ability to perceive relationships at high levels of abstraction., such as how ants and eucalyptus trees are alike.

