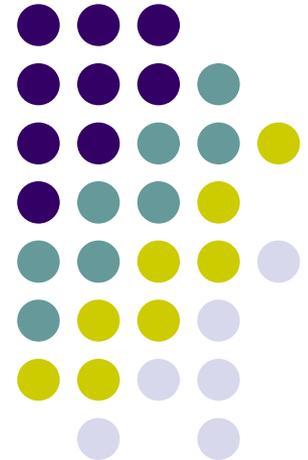
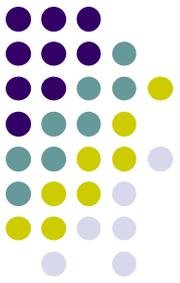


Introduction to Ethical Thinking for Trainee Chaplains

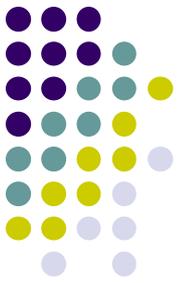
Rev Kevin McGovern,
Caroline Chisholm Centre for Health Ethics:
Multifaith Academy for Chaplaincy & Community Ministries,
14 July 2015





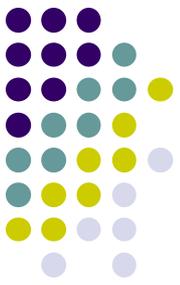
Outline

1. Our Moral Sense
2. Moral Development
3. Theories of Ethics
4. Moral Counselling



1. Our Moral Sense

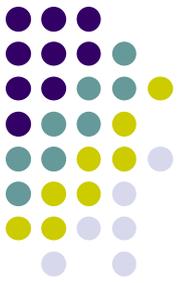
- Paul Bloom, “The Moral Life of Babies,” *New York Times* 9 May 2010, online at http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/09/magazine/09babies-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- Paul Bloom, *Just Babies: The Origin of Good and Evil* (2013)



“The Moral Life of Babies”

- Professor Bloom and his colleagues studied the moral life of babies →
- Human beings “have a rudimentary moral sense from the very start of life.” “Some sense of good and evil seems to be bred in the bone.”
- **Foundations of Our Moral Sense:**
 - Human beings cooperate to achieve important goals. It helps our survival if we are able to evaluate who is really helping and who is hindering.
 - Empathy
 - Altruism

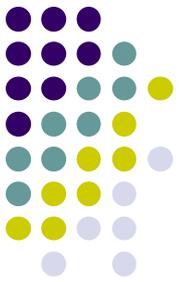
Experiments



1. Helpers and Hinderers

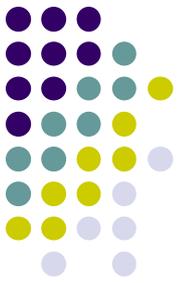
- 9-month-olds expect helping and are surprised by hindering. (6-month-olds don't yet have these expectations.)
- Almost without exception, 6-month-olds and 9-month-olds prefer helpers to hinderers.
- Almost without exception, 12-month-olds reward helpers and punish hinderers.
- Almost without exception, 18-month-olds say that helpers are nice and hinderers are mean.

Experiments (cont'd)



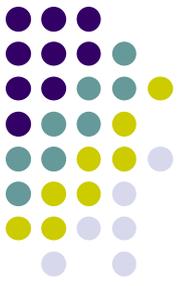
2. Those who reward/punish helpers/hinderers
 - A. Those who reward helpers vs. Those who punish helpers
 - Almost without exception, 8-month-olds prefer those who reward helpers.
 - B. Those who reward hinderers vs. Those who punish hinderers
 - Almost without exception, 8-month-olds prefer those who punish hinderers.

Limits of Infant Morality



- Parochialism (Us and Them)
 - “Once they are segregated into different groups – even under the most arbitrary schemes, like wearing different coloured T-shirts,” young children “eagerly favour their own groups.”

Adult Morality



- “Many of us care about strangers in faraway lands, sometimes to the extent that we give up resources that could be used for our family and friends.... We possess abstract moral notions of equality and freedom for all; we see racism and sexism as evil; we reject slavery and genocide; we try to love our enemies...”
- “It makes sense to marvel at the extent of our moral insight...”

What causes our moral development?



- Some say it is the intervention of God from heaven.
 - Bloom rejects this.
- Some say it is merely the natural development of our moral sense.
 - Bloom also rejects this: “The morality of contemporary humans really does outstrip what evolution could possibly have endowed us with...”
- Bloom holds that the efficient cause of our moral development is “culture” – the culture “that emerges within communities of intelligent, deliberating and negotiating human beings...”
 - Religious people like myself see God at work in these processes.

What causes our moral development? (cont'd)



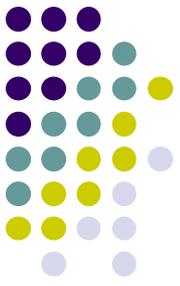
- “Morality, then, is a synthesis of the biological and the cultural, of the unlearned, the discovered and the invented.”
- “Babies possess certain moral foundations – the capacity and willingness to judge the actions of others, some sense of justice, gut reactions to altruism and nastiness.”
- “But our capacities as babies are sharply limited.”
- “It is the insights of rational individuals that make a truly universal and unselfish morality something that our species can aspire to.”



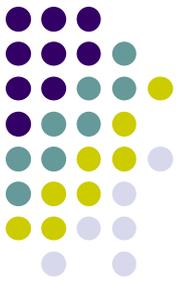
2. Moral Development

- Lawrence Kohlberg
 - a call to universality
- Carol Gilligan
 - a call to particularity

Lawrence Kohlberg



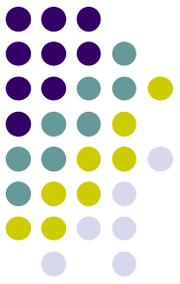
- studied people's responses to moral dilemmas, e.g.
 - In Europe, a woman was near death from a special kind of cancer. There was one drug that the doctors thought might save her. It was a form of radium that a druggist in the same town recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to make. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about \$1000, which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying, and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said, 'No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it.' So Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz steal the drug? Why or why not?



Lawrence Kohlberg (cont'd)

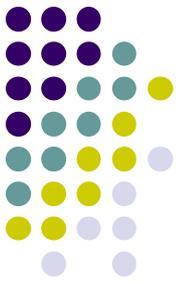
- identified 3 levels of moral reasoning:
 - Preconventional
 - Conventional
 - Postconventional
- also divided each level into 2 stages
 - we will not explore the stages in this unit

Preconventional



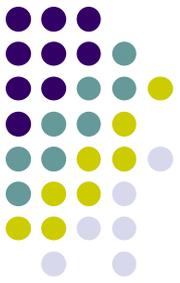
- the moral reasoning of young children – and many older people
- What is wrong = what is punished
- What is right = what is rewarded
- Right and wrong is determined by the external authority who rewards or punishes. I have no or little say.
- I can ‘internalise’ this external authority so that the voice of another in my mind tells me what to do and what to avoid.
- This is sometimes called the superego – the internalised voice of another which tells me (the ego) what to do.
- One of the rules of superego is ‘Never allow a single exception to the rule!’
- To the superego, even the smallest violation of the smallest of rules threatens the collapse of the entire moral universe.

Conventional



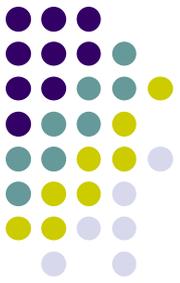
- the moral reasoning of most adolescents – and many older people
- We see ourselves as part of a group, and we want to obey the rules of the group.
- There is more understanding of the reasons for the rules, though this understanding is still limited.
- Unlike the superego, does allow legitimate exceptions to general rules.
- Tends to be legalistic.
- Tends to be parochial. Has difficulty in considering the moral claims of those who are outside the group.
 - For example, those at this level of moral reasoning would have difficulty in considering the moral claims of refugees and asylum seekers.

Postconventional



- the moral reasoning of a minority of adults
- Recognises **fundamental** and **universal** principles of morality which take priority over the rules of any group:
 - fundamental = the basis or grounding of morality
 - universal = extending (perhaps in different ways) to all people, all living things, and all of Creation
- If the rules of society conflict with these fundamental and universal principles of morality, someone at this level will refuse to obey an unjust law.
- *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*: "Safety does not come first," Miss Brodie advised her girls. "Goodness, Truth and Beauty come first. Follow me."
- Jesus Christ: "Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." (Mt 5:44)

Carol Gilligan



- observed differences in the moral reasoning of women and men
- argued that Kohlberg's theory articulates the moral reasoning of men
- published her own findings about another way of moral reasoning in *In a Different Voice* (1982)

Object Relations Theory



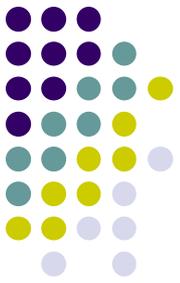
- Women are still mostly the primary carers of children
- By about age 3, boys work out that they are male and therefore different from Mummy. To understand maleness, they must distance and separate themselves from Mummy.
- Because of this separateness, they tend to think of separate individuals. Their style of moral reasoning is called **justice**. It is concerned with the moral claims of separate individuals.
- By about age 3, girls work out that they are female and therefore like Mummy. To understand femaleness, they need to stay close to and connected with Mummy. They therefore think not of separate individuals, but of connected individuals.
- Their style of moral reasoning is called **fidelity**. It is about faithfulness to those who are close to you and connected with you.

Moral Tasks of Adolescence/ Young Adulthood

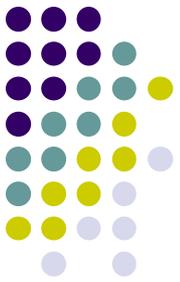


- Young men must discover that justice alone is not enough. Sometimes you cannot just treat everyone the same. Sometimes you must have a special concern for those who are closest to you. Justice must be tempered with **fidelity**.
- Young women must discover that fidelity alone is not enough. Looking after everyone else in the group can be an endless task. Fidelity must be tempered by **justice** – and especially that justice to oneself which is called **self-care**.

Observations



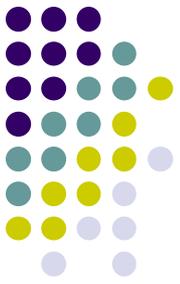
1. Kohlberg's universality *tends to be* associated with the moral reasoning of men. Gilligan's particularity *tends to be* associated with the moral reasoning of women.
2. Neither universality nor particularity are infallible moral guides.
3. We are called to grow both in our universality and our particularity – and to draw on the best insights of each.
4. If we are familiar with Kohlberg and Gilligan, we can help both ourselves and others to negotiate the next stage of moral growth.



3. Theories of Ethics

- *The Blind Men and the Elephant*, by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887)
- Twelve Theories of Ethics

The Blind Men and the Elephant



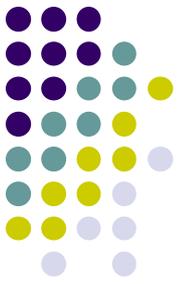
1. It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

2. The *First* approached the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a WALL!"

3. The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, "Ho, what have we here,
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a SPEAR!"

4. The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a SNAKE!"

The Blind Men and the Elephant

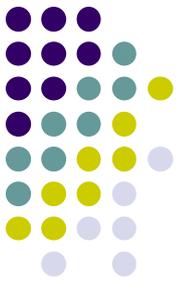


5. The *Fourth* reached out an eager hand,
And felt about the knee
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he:
"Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a TREE!"

6. The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a FAN!"

7. The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Than seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a ROPE!"

8. And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!



1. Ethical Relativism

- All so-called standards of right and wrong are simply made up.
- If I think it's right, it *is* right!
- This is called relativism because it holds that all morality is simply relative to someone's opinion. It is also called subjectivism because it focuses exclusively on the subjectivity of each person. It is also called emotivism because usually the standard is whatever the individual feels comfortable with.
- **There is a personal or subjective dimension to moral decision-making: what's right for me might not be right for you.**
- **This approach helps to keep the peace in a multicultural society with many different views about right and wrong.**
- **However, morality is more than subjective opinion. There are real standards of right and wrong, and these cannot simply be ignored.**

2. Objectivism



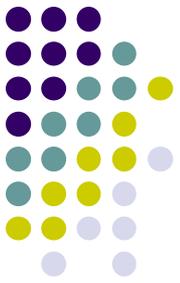
- There are real standards of right and wrong – and I know exactly what they are! I can look them up in a rule book, or I have some other source of moral certainty.
- This is called objectivism because it is too certain about moral truth. It is also called legalism because it is overly focussed on laws and rules. And it is called dogmatism because its adherents are too dogmatic about having all the answers.
- **Rules and the law are certainly part of moral discernment. When we are seeking to know what is right to do, the law often is a good starting point and a good guide.**
- **Without some rules which everyone is expected to keep, society would dissolve into chaos.**
- **However, morality is more than the law. There can be unjust laws which we should oppose. And there are many moral quandaries which are not addressed by the law.**



3. Divine Command Ethics

- This is a form of objectivism. Its adherents claim to have absolutely certain knowledge of what God wants.
- **The holy books of many religions do address right and wrong.**
- **Many people sense some connection between God/religion/spirituality and morality. Recognising a place for God in moral decision-making honours this intuition.**
- **However, we rarely have absolutely certain knowledge of what God wants.**
- **What do we do if our sense of what God wants is in conflict with other moral guides? For example, what do we say to a psychopath who says that God has told him to kill his mother?**

4. Principlism

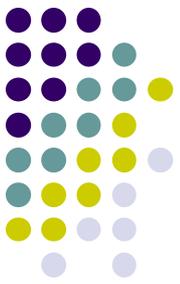


- Whether they are correct or not, when many people think of morality, they think firstly of moral principles.
- With this in mind, we call a morally upright person “principled.”
- For all these reasons, this approach focuses on moral principles as our best guide to right and wrong.
- **Moral principles are certainly a significant part of morality.**
- **When we are tempted to do the wrong thing, moral principles often do call us to account.**
- **When there is a difference of opinion, moral principles are often useful in resolving these differences.**
- **However, morality is more than principles.**
- **In new or bewildering cases, it is often difficult to discern which principles should be applied.**

5. Casuistry

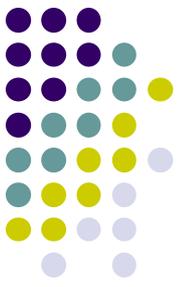


- We are often more certain about the right and wrong in particular cases than we are about grand ethical theories.
- For this reason, casuistry says that we should focus more on moral cases than on moral principles. It uses analogy to argue from cases which are clear and certain to other cases which are more ambiguous.
- **Especially when we face new or bewildering dilemmas, it is a good strategy to focus on case analysis and analogy.**
- **However, morality is more than case analysis. Moral principles do have something to teach us. Sometimes, reflection on moral principles causes us to revise our case analysis.**
- **When there are differences of opinion, casuistry is rarely much help in resolving these differences.**
- **If casuistry is used badly, it can be used to justify just about everything.**



6. Deontology

- This approach seeks to ground ethics in reason and in duty.
- Kant's Categorical Imperative: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim become a universal law." "One must act to treat every person as an end and never as a means only."
- **This approach often makes clear and significant demands on us – as we suspect a true morality should.**
- **It calls us to consistency in our moral lives.**
- **The Categorical Imperative is very abstract. This makes it difficult to apply.**
- **This call to do our duty offers little help when we face conflicting demands.**



7. Natural Law

- Reasoned philosophical reflection allows us to understand the nature of things. (e.g. killing, truth-telling, marriage)
- With this knowledge, we are able to discern our ethical obligations.
- **One of the primary focii of the ethical tradition at the heart of Western civilisation has been the natural law.**
- **Reflection on the nature of things does guide us in moral decision-making.**
- **Perhaps without realising it, many people do make natural law arguments.**
- **The concept of natural law is often questioned nowadays (though less so than it was a few decades ago).**
- **Not too useful in resolving disputes (e.g. one person claims that something is part of the natural law, but another person denies this.)**



8. Human Rights

- Because of human dignity, each and every person should be given at least the basic necessities for living a decent human life.
- Documents like the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights seek to set out our rights.
- **No other form of moral discourse has done more to protect and advance the legitimate interests of people around the world.**
- **Rights talk can be overly individualistic. It can ignore communal rights or the rights of peoples.**
- **The notion of rights is often misunderstood. Just because I want something does not mean that I have a right to it!**
- **Rights talk can be unnecessarily adversarial.**
- **Nowadays, there is probably too much talk about our rights, and not enough about our duties.**

9. Utilitarianism or Consequentialism

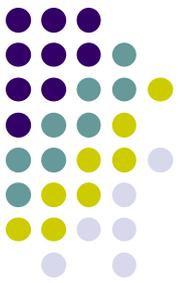


- Measure both pleasure and pain/benefit and burden, and choose those acts which either maximise pleasure/benefit or minimise pain/burden.
- **When we are making moral decisions, we surely must consider the foreseeable consequences of our actions.**
- **Public policy is often based on an analysis of the foreseeable benefits and burdens.**
- **There must surely be other moral considerations apart from the consequences of actions.**
- **The greatest net benefit might involve considerable burden especially for the most disadvantaged groups.**
- **Another problem is called the incommensurability of goods. There are many different types of benefit, and many different types of burden. We are probably deluding ourselves if we claim that we can compare or balance them.**
- **Do we focus on what makes us happy, or on what gives meaning and purpose to our lives?**

10. Ethic of Care

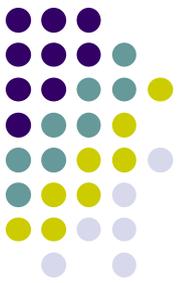


- Following on from the work of Carol Gilligan, this approach to ethics focuses on relationships, care, and fidelity.
- While some of the other theories focus mainly on reason, this theory puts great emphasis on the emotions as a source of moral wisdom.
- We discern what to do in the context of our relationships primarily through our emotions.
- **Many people – women and men – find this approach to ethics attractive, inspiring and challenging.**
- **The theory behind this approach is still underdeveloped: in our relationships and informed by our emotions, how do we discern what we really should do and what we perhaps should not do?**
- **Some feminists express concern that this ethic can lead women in particular into too much self-sacrifice.**



11. Virtue Ethics

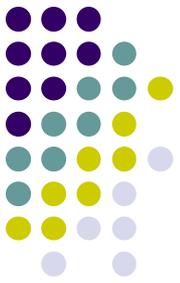
- While many ethical theories focus on what we should do, virtue ethics focuses on our character: who we should be or who we should strive to become.
- If we form people of good character, they will be the sort of people who will make right decisions about what to do.
- One of the primary focii of the ethical tradition at the heart of Western civilisation has been on forming people of good character (virtuous people).
- **Many people find the virtues attractive, inspiring and challenging. Why would we ignore an approach to ethics with so many strengths?**
- **Ethics is incomplete if we focus only on who we should be. Often, we also need to consider what we should do. (People of genuinely good character appreciate this guidance.)**



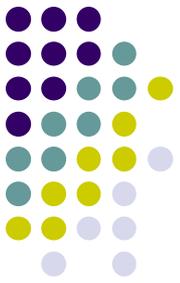
12. Communitarianism

- Ethics is complex! Theories that focus predominately on principles or cases, on duty, natural law, human rights or consequences do not do justice to this complexity.
- Drawing on these and other ethical theories, ultimately the community establishes its own standards in various situations.
- **This approach does rightly recognise the complexity of ethics.**
- **Community standards certainly do have a place in ethical discernment.**
- **However, ethics must be more than community standards.**
- **What do we do if community standards are wrong? (e.g. Australia's current treatment of refugees and asylum seekers)**
- **Community standards often privilege mainstream members of the community while disadvantaging marginalised groups.**

Theories of Ethics



1. Ethical Relativism
2. Objectivism
3. Divine Command Ethics
4. Principlism
5. Casuistry
6. Deontology
7. Natural Law
8. Human Rights
9. Utilitarianism/Consequentialism
10. Ethic of Care
11. Virtue Ethics
12. Communitarianism



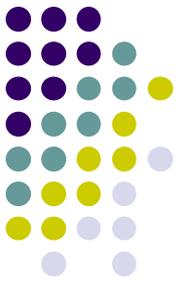
4. Moral Counselling

A legitimate expectation of those we serve



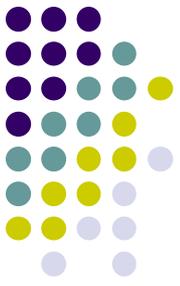
- Many people sense some connection between spirituality/religion and morality.
- For this reason, they have a legitimate expectation that pastoral practitioners or spiritual care practitioners will assist them in moral decision-making.
- They expect this particularly when they are confronting issues of life and death.
- Most do not expect that we will simply tell them what to do. Instead, they hope that we will help *them* to decide.

The Goals of Moral Counselling



- We strive to assist people to make decisions which are
 - subjectively sincere, and
 - objectively right.
- To do our job well, we sometimes have to challenge people if we sense that they are not subjectively sincere about the decisions they are making.
- We sometimes also have to challenge people if we sense that the decisions they are making are not objectively right.

The Skills of Moral Counselling



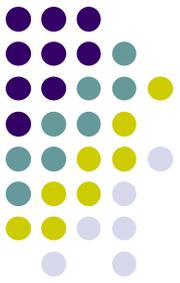
- There are many skills (e.g. effective communication, attending to both reason and emotion, calming those who are troubled, etc.)
- Two important skills:
 - ***parrhesia*** (frankness of speech)
 - challenge
 - ***hypomone*** (patient endurance)
 - acceptance of real limitations
 - at least for now – and perhaps for a long time or even forever
 - willingness to hang in there with people in ongoing difficulties
- Getting the balance right:
 - If we do not challenge, we are not doing our job. But we can challenge too much!
 - We need patient endurance. But we should not use this as an excuse not to challenge people when this is appropriate.



Law of Gradualness

- This law offers guidance when someone
 - knows what they should do, but
 - cannot do what they should.
- It calls us to incremental change over a period of time.
- Pope John Paul II called this “step-by-step advance.”
(*Familiaris Consortio*, #34)

Law of Respect for Subjective Good Faith



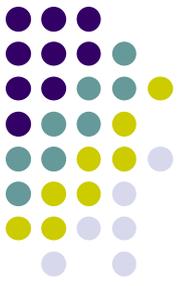
- This law offers guidance when someone
 - really is doing the wrong thing, but
 - honestly cannot see this.
- Bernard Häring, *Free and Faithful in Christ*, Vol I, p 289:
- “One should never try to impose what the other person cannot sincerely internalize, except the case of preventing grave injustice towards a third person.”

Law of Respect for Subjective Good Faith (cont'd)



- Pontifical Council for the Family's *Vademecum for Confessors Concerning Some Aspects of the Morality of the Conjugal Life*, #9:
- “The principle, according to which it is preferable to let penitents remain in good faith in cases of error due to subjectively invincible ignorance, is certainly to be considered always valid, even in matters of conjugal chastity.”

Law of Respect for Subjective Good Faith (cont'd)



- Ashley, deBlois & O'Rourke's *Health Care Ethics* 5th ed, pp 242-243:
- “The reason that the counsellor first should be concerned to help a client come to a subjectively honest decision is twofold: because a person always retains primary responsibility for health decisions and because the proximate norm of all moral decisions is the conscience of the agent. Ethically it is more important that persons do what they sincerely believe to be right at a given stage of their moral development than that they do what is objectively right.... What is most essential is that we keep moving forward, even if our steps are frequently missteps. For those who make mistakes in good faith, experience is self-correcting.”
- “On the other hand, if the counsellor sees that the counselee’s decision may in fact be clearly injurious to the counselee or to others,... the counsellor has to do what is possible to prevent this harm...”

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