

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Lawrence Kohlberg was a moral philosopher and student of child development. He was director of Harvard's Center for Moral Education. His special area of interest is the moral development of children - how they develop a sense of right, wrong, and justice.

Kohlberg observed that growing children advance through definite stages of moral development in a manner similar to their progression through Piaget's well-known stages of cognitive development. His observations and testing of children and adults, led him to theorize that human beings progress consecutively from one stage to the next in an invariant sequence, not skipping any stage or going back to any previous stage. These are stages of thought processing, implying qualitatively different modes of thinking and of problem solving at each stage.

These conclusions have been verified in cross-cultural studies done in Turkey, Taiwan, Yucatan, Honduras, India, United States, Canada, Britain, and Israel.

An outline of these developmental stages follows:

A. PREMORAL OR PRECONVENTIONAL STAGES:

FOCUS: Self **AGES:** Up to 10-13 years of age, most prisoners
Behavior motivated by anticipation of pleasure or pain.

STAGE 1: PUNISHMENT AND OBEDIENCE: *Might Makes Right*

Avoidance of physical punishment and deference to power. Punishment is an automatic response of physical retaliation. The immediate physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness. The atrocities carried out by soldiers during the holocaust who were simply "carrying out orders" under threat of punishment, illustrate that adults as well as children may function at stage one level. "Might makes right."

QUESTIONS: What must I do to avoid punishment? What can I do to force my will upon others?

STAGE 2: INSTRUMENTAL EXCHANGE: *The Egoist*
Marketplace exchange of favors or blows. "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." Justice is: "Do unto others as they do unto you." Individual does what is necessary, makes concessions only as necessary to satisfy his own desires. Right action consists of what instrumentally satisfies one's own needs. Vengeance is considered a moral duty. People are valued in terms of their utility. "An eye for an eye."

QUESTIONS: What's in it for me? What must I do to avoid pain, gain pleasure?

B. CONVENTIONAL MORALITY:

FOCUS: Significant Others, "Tyranny of the They" (They say....) **AGES:** Beginning in middle school, up to middle age - most people end up here
Acceptance of the rules and standards of one's group.

STAGE 3: INTERPERSONAL (TRIBAL) CONFORMITY: *Good Boy/Good Girl*

Right is conformity to the stereotypical behavioral, values expectations of one's society or peers. Individual acts to gain approval of others. Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others within the group. Everybody is doing it." Majority understanding ("common sense") is seen as "natural." One earns approval by being conventionally "respectable" and "nice." Peer pressure makes being different the unforgivable sin. Self sacrifice to group demands is expected. Values based in conformity, loyalty to group.

Sin is a breach of the expectations of one's immediate social order (confuses sin with group, class norms). Retribution, however, at this stage is collective. Individual vengeance is not allowed. Forgiveness is preferable to revenge. Punishment is mainly for deterrence. Failure to punish is "unfair." "If he can get away with it, why can't I?" Many religious people end up here.

QUESTION: What must I do to be seen as a good boy/girl (socially acceptable)?

STAGE 4: LAW AND ORDER (SOCIETAL CONFORMITY): *The Good Citizen*

Respect for fixed rules, laws and properly constituted authority. Defense of the given social and institutional order for its own sake. Responsibility toward the welfare of others in the society. "Justice" normally refers to criminal justice. Justice demands that the wrongdoer be punished, that he "pay his debt to society," and that law abiders be rewarded. "A good day's pay for a good day's work." Injustice is failing to reward work or punish demerit. Right behavior consists of maintaining the social order for its own sake. Self-sacrifice to larger social order is expected. Authority figures are seldom questioned. "He must be right. He's the Pope (or the President, or the Judge, or God)." Consistency and precedent must be maintained. For most adults, this is the highest stage they will attain.

QUESTION: What if everyone did that?

STAGE 4 ½: *The Cynic*

Between the conventional stages and the post-conventional Levels 5 and 6, there is a transitional stage. Some college-age students who come to see conventional morality as socially constructed, thus, relative and arbitrary, but have not yet discovered universal ethical principles, may drop into a hedonistic ethic of "do your own thing." This was well noted in the hippie culture of the 1960's. Disrespect for conventional morality was especially infuriating to the Stage 4 mentality, and indeed was calculated to be so. Kohlberg found that some people get "stuck" in this in-between stage marked by egoism and skepticism, never able to completely leave behind conventional reasoning even after recognizing its inadequacies. Such people are often marked by uncritical cynicism ("All politicians are crooks...nothing really matters anyway"), disillusionment and alienation. **QUESTION:** Why should I believe anything?

C. POSTCONVENTIONAL OR PRINCIPLED MORALITY:

FOCUS: Justice, Dignity for all life, Common Good **AGES:** Few reach this stage, most not prior to middle age

STAGE 5: PRIOR RIGHTS AND SOCIAL CONTRACT: *The Philosopher/King*

Moral action in a specific situation is not defined by reference to a checklist of rules, but from logical application of universal, abstract, moral principles. Individuals have natural or inalienable rights and liberties that are prior to society and must be protected by society. Retributive justice is repudiated as counterproductive, violative of notions of human rights. Justice distributed proportionate to circumstances and need. "Situation ethics." The statement, "Justice demands punishment," which is a self-evident truism to the Stage 4 mind, is just as self-evidently nonsense at Stage 5. Retributive punishment is neither rational nor just, because it does not promote the rights and welfare of the individual and inflicts further violence upon society. Only legal sanctions that fulfill that purpose are imposed-- protection of future victims, deterrence, and rehabilitation. Individual acts out of mutual obligation

and a sense of public good. Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights, and in terms of standards that have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society--e.g. the Constitution. The freedom of the individual should be limited by society only when it infringes upon someone else's freedom. Conventional authorities are increasingly rejected in favor of critical reasoning. Laws are challenged by questions of justice.

QUESTIONS: What is the just thing to do given all the circumstances? What will bring the most good to the largest number of people?

STAGE 6: UNIVERSAL ETHICAL PRINCIPLES: *The Prophet/Messiah* An individual who reaches this stage acts out of universal principles based upon the equality and worth of all living beings. Persons are never means to an end, but are ends in themselves. Having rights means more than individual liberties. It means that every individual is due consideration of his dignity interests in every situation, those interests being of equal importance with one's own. This is the "Golden Rule" model. A list of rules inscribed in stone is no longer necessary. At this level, God is understood to say what is right because it is right; His sayings are not right, just because it is God who said them. Abstract principles are the basis for moral decision making, not concrete rules. Stage 6 individuals are rare, often value their principles more than their own life, often seen as incarnating the highest human potential. Thus they are often martyred by those of lower stages shamed by seeing realized human potential compared with their own partially realized levels of development. (Stoning the prophets, killing the messenger). Examples: Mohandas Gandhi, Jesus of Nazareth, Gautamo Buddha, Martin Luther King, Jr., Dag Hamerskjold

QUESTIONS: What will foster life in its fullest for all living beings? What is justice for all?

THE FOLLOWING ARE OBSERVATIONS THAT WERE MADE BY KOHLBERG FURTHER EXPLAINING HUMAN DEVELOPMENT IN STAGES.

1. STAGE DEVELOPMENT IS INVARIANT AND SEQUENTIAL.

One must progress through the stages in order, and one cannot get to a higher stage without passing through the stage immediately preceding it. Higher stages incorporate the thinking and experience of all lower stages of reasoning into current levels of reasoning but transcends them for higher levels. (e.g, Stage Four reasoning will understand the reasoning of Stages 1-3 but will reason at a higher level) A belief that a leap into moral maturity is possible is in sharp contrast to the facts of developmental research. Moral development is growth, and like all growth, takes place according to a pre-determined sequence. To expect someone to grow into high moral maturity overnight would be like expecting someone to walk before he crawls.

2. IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT, SUBJECTS CANNOT COMPREHEND MORAL REASONING AT A STAGE MORE THAN ONE STAGE BEYOND THEIR OWN.

If Johnny is oriented to see good almost exclusively as that which brings him satisfaction, how will he understand a concept of good in which the "good" may bring him no tangible pleasure at all. The moral maxim "It is better to give than to receive" reflects a high level of development. The child who honestly asks you why it is better to give than to receive, does so because he does not and

cannot understand such thinking. To him, "better" means better for him. And how can it be better for him to give, than to get. Thus, higher stages can comprehend lower stages of reasoning though they find it less compelling. But lower stages cannot comprehend higher stages of reasoning.

3. IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT INDIVIDUALS ARE COGNITIVELY ATTRACTED TO REASONING ONE LEVEL ABOVE THEIR OWN PRESENT PREDOMINANT LEVEL.

The person has questions and problems the solutions for which are less satisfying at his present level. Since reasoning at one stage higher is intelligible and since it makes more sense and resolves more difficulties, it is more attractive. For example, two brothers both want the last piece of pie. The bigger, stronger brother will probably get it. The little brother suggests they share it. He is thinking at level two, rather than at level one. The solution for him is more attractive: getting some rather than none. An adult who functions at level one consistently will end up in prison or dead.

4. IN STAGE DEVELOPMENT, MOVEMENT THROUGH THE STAGES IS EFFECTED WHEN COGNITIVE DISEQUILIBRIUM IS CREATED, THAT IS, WHEN A PERSON'S COGNITIVE OUTLOOK IS NOT ADEQUATE TO COPE WITH A GIVEN MORAL DILEMMA.

The person who is growing, will look for more and more adequate ways of solving problems. If he has no problems, no dilemmas, he is not likely to look for solutions. He will not grow morally. (The Hero, prior to his calling, lives in comfortable stagnation. Small towns are notorious for their low level "provincial" reasoning). In the apple pie example. The big brother, who can just take the pie and get away with it, is less likely to look for a better solution than the younger brother who will get none and probably a beating in the struggle. Life crises often present opportunities for moral development. These include loss of one's job, moving to another location, death of a significant other, unforeseen tragedies and disasters.

5. IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE FOR A HUMAN BEING TO BE PHYSICALLY MATURE BUT NOT MORALLY MATURE

Development of moral reasoning is not automatic. It does not simply occur in tandem with chronological aging. If a child is spoiled, never having to accommodate for others needs, if he is raised in an environment where level two thinking by others gets the job done, he may never generate enough questions to propel him to a higher level of moral reasoning. People who live in small towns or enclaves within larger cities and never encounter those outside their tribal boundaries are unlikely to have cause to develop morally. One key factor in development of moral reasoning is the regularity with which one encounters moral dilemmas, even if only hypothetically. Kohlberg found that the vast majority of adults never develop past conventional moral reasoning, the bulk of them coming to rest in either Stage 3 Tribal or Stage 4 Social Conventional stages. This is partly because the reinforcement mechanisms of the "common sense" of everyday life provided little reason or opportunity to confront moral dilemmas and thus one's own moral reasoning.

CRITICISMS OF KOHLBERG'S THEORY:

A. Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice* - Women are socialized differently from men. - Concerns for the other (nurturing, serving behaviors connected to socially dictated female roles) prevent women from developing moral reasoning per Kohlberg's model

- Gilligan proposes three level of female development

A. FOCUS ON SELF TO EXCLUSION OF OTHER

B. FOCUS ON OTHER TO EXCLUSION, DETRIMENT OF SELF

C. FOCUS ON ALL WHICH INCLUDES SELF

- BUT, these levels seem to parallel Kohlberg's pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional levels - Gilligan also produced little data to support her critique of Kohlberg, her former mentor at Harvard

B. Charles Bailey, UCF

- Kohlberg's model is biased against conservative worldviews, values in favor of liberal worldviews - But Kohlberg's model does not consider content of reasoning, only process - Some conservatives reason at post-conventional levels, some radicals at pre-conventional levels - BUT, ongoing studies of Kohlberg's model by James Rest at University of Minnesota have documented both the regularity of more liberal worldviews found in higher levels of moral development as well as the potential for conservative content to be argued at post-conventional levels.

from Patient Teaching, Loose Leaf Library

Springhouse Corporation (1990)

Much of your teaching depends on cognitive abilities -- sharing information with your students and looking for signs that the information is understood. As a result, you should understand cognitive stages.

[Child psychologist Jean Piaget](#) described the mechanism by which the mind processes new information. He said that a person understands whatever information fits into his established view of the world. When information does not fit, the person must reexamine and adjust his thinking to accommodate the new information. Piaget described four stages of cognitive development and relates them to a person's ability to understand and assimilate new information.

Sensorimotor: (*birth to about age 2*) During this stage, the child learns about himself and his environment through motor and reflex actions. Thought derives from sensation and movement. The child learns that he is separate from his environment and that aspects of his environment -- his parents or favorite toy -- continue to exist even though they may be outside the reach of his senses. Teaching for a child in this stage should be geared to the sensorimotor system. You can modify behavior by using the senses: a frown, a stern or soothing voice -- all serve as appropriate techniques.

Preoperational: (*begins about the time the child starts to talk to about age 7*) Applying his new knowledge of language, the child begins to use symbols to represent objects. Early in this stage he also personifies objects. He is now better able to think about things and events that aren't immediately present. Oriented to the present, the child has difficulty conceptualizing time. His thinking is influenced by fantasy -- the way he'd like things to be -- and he assumes that others see situations from his viewpoint. He takes in information and then changes it in his mind to fit his ideas. Teaching must take into account the child's vivid fantasies and undeveloped sense of time. Using neutral words, body outlines and equipment a child can touch gives him an active role in learning.

Concrete: (*about first grade to early adolescence*) During this stage, accommodation increases. The child develops an ability to think abstractly and to make rational judgements about concrete or observable phenomena, which in the past he needed to manipulate physically to understand. In teaching this child, giving him the opportunity to ask questions and to explain things back to you allows him to mentally manipulate information.

Formal Operations: (*adolescence*) This stage brings cognition to its final form. This person no longer requires concrete objects to make rational judgements. At his point, he is capable of hypothetical and deductive reasoning. Teaching for the adolescent may be wideranging because he'll be able to consider many possibilities from several perspectives.

Kohlberg's stages of moral development

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Kohlberg's stages of moral development constitute an adaptation of a psychological theory originally conceived of by the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget. Lawrence Kohlberg began work on this topic while a psychology postgraduate student at the University of Chicago,[1] and expanded and developed this theory throughout the course of his life.

The theory holds that moral reasoning, the basis for ethical behavior, has six identifiable developmental stages, each more adequate at responding to moral dilemmas than its predecessor.[2] Kohlberg followed the development of moral judgment far beyond the ages studied earlier by Piaget,[3] who also claimed that logic and morality develop through constructive stages.[2] Expanding on Piaget's work, Kohlberg determined that the process of moral development was principally concerned with justice, and that it continued throughout the individual's lifetime,[4] a notion that spawned dialogue on the philosophical implications of such research.[5][6]

Kohlberg relied for his studies on stories such as the Heinz dilemma, and was interested in how individuals would justify their actions if placed in similar moral dilemmas. He then analyzed the form of moral reasoning displayed, rather than its conclusion,[6] and classified it as belonging to one of six distinct stages.[7][8][9]

There have been critiques of the theory from several perspectives. Arguments include that it emphasizes justice to the exclusion of other moral values, such as caring:[10] that there is such an overlap between stages that they should more properly be regarded as separate domains; or that evaluations of the reasons for moral choices are mostly *post hoc* rationalizations (by both decision makers and psychologists studying them) of essentially intuitive decisions.

Nevertheless, an entirely new field within psychology was created as a direct result of Kohlberg's theory, and according to Haggbloom et al.'s study of the most eminent psychologists of the 20th century, Kohlberg was the 16th most frequently cited psychologist in introductory psychology textbooks throughout the century, as well as the 30th most eminent overall.[11]

Kohlberg's scale is about how people justify behaviors and his stages are not a method of ranking how moral someone's behavior is. There should however be a correlation between how someone scores on the scale and how they behave and the general hypothesis is that moral behaviour is more responsible, consistent and predictable from people at higher levels.[12]

Stages

Kohlberg's six stages can be more generally grouped into three levels of two stages each: pre-conventional, conventional and post-conventional.[7][8][9] Following Piaget's constructivist requirements for a stage model, as described in his theory of cognitive development, it is extremely rare to regress backward in stages—to lose the use of higher stage abilities.[13][14] Stages cannot be skipped; each provides a new and necessary perspective, more comprehensive and differentiated than its predecessors but integrated with them.[13][14]

Level 1 (Pre-Conventional)

1. Obedience and punishment orientation

(How can I avoid punishment?)

2. Self-interest orientation

(What's in it for me?)

(Paying for a benefit)

Level 2 (Conventional)

3. Interpersonal accord and conformity

(Social norms)

(The good boy/good girl attitude)

4. Authority and social-order maintaining orientation

(Law and order morality)

Level 3 (Post-Conventional)

5. Social contract orientation

6. Universal ethical principles

(Principled conscience)

Pre-Conventional

The pre-conventional level of moral reasoning is especially common in children, although adults can also exhibit this level of reasoning. Reasoners at this level judge the morality of an action by its direct consequences. The pre-conventional level consists of the first and second stages of moral development, and is solely concerned with the self in an egocentric manner. A child with pre-conventional morality has not yet adopted or internalized society's conventions regarding what is right or wrong, but instead focuses largely on external consequences that certain actions may bring.[7][8][9]

In **Stage one** (obedience and punishment driven), individuals focus on the direct consequences of their actions on themselves. For example, an action is perceived as morally wrong because the perpetrator is punished. "The last time I did that I got spanked so I will not do it again." The worse the punishment for the act is, the more "bad" the act is perceived to be.[15] This can give rise to an inference that even innocent victims are guilty in proportion to their suffering. It is "egocentric", lacking recognition that others' points of view are different from one's own.[16] There is "deference to superior power or prestige".[16]

Stage two (self-interest driven) espouses the "what's in it for me" position, in which right behavior is defined by whatever is in the individual's best interest. Stage two reasoning shows a limited interest in the needs of others, but only to a point where it might further the individual's own interests. As a result, concern for others is not based on loyalty or intrinsic respect, but rather a "you scratch my back, and I'll scratch yours" mentality.[2] The lack of a societal perspective in the pre-conventional level is quite differ-

ent from the social contract (stage five), as all actions have the purpose of serving the individual's own needs or interests. For the stage two theorist, the world's perspective is often seen as morally relative.

Conventional

The conventional level of moral reasoning is typical of adolescents and adults. Those who reason in a conventional way judge the morality of actions by comparing them to society's views and expectations. The conventional level consists of the third and fourth stages of moral development. Conventional morality is characterized by an acceptance of society's conventions concerning right and wrong. At this level an individual obeys rules and follows society's norms even when there are no consequences for obedience or disobedience. Adherence to rules and conventions is somewhat rigid, however, and a rule's appropriateness or fairness is seldom questioned.[7][8][9]

In **Stage three** (interpersonal accord and conformity driven), the self enters society by filling social roles. Individuals are receptive to approval or disapproval from others as it reflects society's accordance with the perceived role. They try to be a "good boy" or "good girl" to live up to these expectations,[2] having learned that there is inherent value in doing so. Stage three reasoning may judge the morality of an action by evaluating its consequences in terms of a person's relationships, which now begin to include things like respect, gratitude and the "golden rule". "I want to be liked and thought well of; apparently, not being naughty makes people like me." Desire to maintain rules and authority exists only to further support these social roles. The intentions of actions play a more significant role in reasoning at this stage; "they mean well ...".[2]

In **Stage four** (authority and social order obedience driven), it is important to obey laws, dictums and social conventions because of their importance in maintaining a functioning society. Moral reasoning in stage four is thus beyond the need for individual approval exhibited in stage three; society must learn to transcend individual needs. A central ideal or ideals often prescribe what is right and wrong, such as in the case of fundamentalism. If one person violates a law, perhaps everyone would—thus there is an obligation and a duty to uphold laws and rules. When someone does violate a law, it is morally wrong; culpability is thus a significant factor in this stage as it separates the bad domains from the good ones. Most active members of society remain at stage four, where morality is still predominantly dictated by an outside force.[2]

Post-Conventional

The post-conventional level, also known as the principled level, consists of stages five and six of moral development. There is a growing realization that individuals are separate entities from society, and that the individual's own perspective may take precedence over society's view; they may disobey rules inconsistent with their own principles. These people live by their own abstract principles about right and wrong—principles that typically include such basic human rights as life, liberty, and justice. Because of this level's "nature of self before others", the behavior of post-conventional individuals, especially those at stage six, can be confused with that of those at the pre-conventional level.

People who exhibit postconventional morality view rules as useful but changeable mechanisms—ideally rules can maintain the general social order and protect human rights. Rules are not absolute dictates that must be obeyed without question. Contemporary the-

orists often speculate that many people may never reach this level of abstract moral reasoning.[7][8][9]

In **Stage five** (social contract driven), the world is viewed as holding different opinions, rights and values. Such perspectives should be mutually respected as unique to each person or community. Laws are regarded as social contracts rather than rigid edicts. Those that do not promote the general welfare should be changed when necessary to meet "the greatest good for the greatest number of people".[8] This is achieved through majority decision, and inevitable compromise. Democratic government is ostensibly based on stage five reasoning.

In **Stage six** (universal ethical principles driven), moral reasoning is based on abstract reasoning using universal ethical principles. Laws are valid only insofar as they are grounded in justice, and a commitment to justice carries with it an obligation to disobey unjust laws. Rights are unnecessary, as social contracts are not essential for deontic moral action. Decisions are not reached hypothetically in a conditional way but rather categorically in an absolute way, as in the philosophy of Immanuel Kant.[17] This involves an individual imagining what they would do in another's shoes, if they believed what that other person imagines to be true.[18] The resulting consensus is the action taken. In this way action is never a means but always an end in itself; the individual acts because it is right, and not because it is instrumental, expected, legal, or previously agreed upon. Although Kohlberg insisted that stage six exists, he found it difficult to identify individuals who consistently operated at that level.[14]

Further stages

In Kohlberg's empirical studies of individuals throughout their life Kohlberg observed that some had apparently undergone moral stage regression. This could be resolved either by allowing for moral regression or by extending the theory. Kohlberg chose the latter, postulating the existence of sub-stages in which the emerging stage has not yet been fully integrated into the personality.[8] In particular Kohlberg noted a stage 4½ or 4+, a transition from stage four to stage five, that shared characteristics of both.[8] In this stage the individual is disaffected with the arbitrary nature of law and order reasoning; culpability is frequently turned from being defined by society to viewing society itself as culpable. This stage is often mistaken for the moral relativism of stage two, as the individual views those interests of society that conflict with their own as being relatively and morally wrong.[8] Kohlberg noted that this was often observed in students entering college.[8][14]

Kohlberg suggested that there may be a seventh stage—Transcendental Morality, or Morality of Cosmic Orientation—which linked religion with moral reasoning.[19] Kohlberg's difficulties in obtaining empirical evidence for even a sixth stage,[14] however, led him to emphasize the speculative nature of his seventh stage.[5]

Theoretical assumptions (philosophy)

The picture of human nature Kohlberg begins with is that humans are inherently communicative and capable of reason. They also possess a desire to understand others and the world around them. The stages of Kohlberg's model relate to the qualitative moral *reasonings* adopted by individuals, and so do not translate directly into praise or blame of any individual's actions or character. Arguing that his theory measures moral reasoning and not particular moral conclusions, Kohlberg insists that the *form and structure* of moral arguments is independent of the *content* of those argu-

ments, a position he calls "formalism".[6][7]

Kohlberg's theory centers on the notion that justice is the essential characteristic of moral reasoning. Justice itself relies heavily upon the notion of sound reasoning based on principles. Despite being a justice-centered theory of morality, Kohlberg considered it to be compatible with plausible formulations of deontology[17] and eudaimonia.

Kohlberg's theory understands values as a critical component of the right. Whatever the right is, for Kohlberg, it must be universally valid across societies (a position known as "moral universalism"): [7] there can be no relativism. Moreover, morals are not natural features of the world; they are prescriptive. Nevertheless, moral judgments can be evaluated in logical terms of truth and falsity.

According to Kohlberg: someone progressing to a higher stage of moral reasoning cannot skip stages. For example, an individual cannot jump from being concerned mostly with peer judgments (stage three) to being a proponent of social contracts (stage five).[14] On encountering a moral dilemma and finding their current level of moral reasoning unsatisfactory, however, an individual will look to the next level. Realizing the limitations of the current stage of thinking is the driving force behind moral development, as each progressive stage is more adequate than the last.[14] The process is therefore considered to be constructive, as it is initiated by the conscious construction of the individual, and is not in any meaningful sense a component of the individual's innate dispositions, or a result of past inductions.

Formal elements

Progress through Kohlberg's stages happens as a result of the individual's increasing competence, both psychologically and in balancing conflicting social-value claims. The process of resolving conflicting claims to reach an equilibrium is called "justice operation". Kohlberg identifies two of these justice operations: "equality," which involves an impartial regard for persons, and "reciprocity," which means a regard for the role of personal merit. For Kohlberg, the most adequate result of both operations is "reversibility," in which a moral or dutiful act within a particular situation is evaluated in terms of whether or not the act would be satisfactory even if particular persons were to switch roles within that situation (also known colloquially as "moral musical chairs").[6]

Knowledge and learning contribute to moral development. Specifically important are the individual's "view of persons" and their "social perspective level", each of which becomes more complex and mature with each advancing stage. The "view of persons" can be understood as the individual's grasp of the psychology of other persons; it may be pictured as a spectrum, with stage one having no view of other persons at all, and stage six being entirely socio-centric.[6] Similarly, the social perspective level involves the understanding of the social universe, differing from the view of persons in that it involves an appreciation of social norms.

Examples of applied moral dilemmas

Kohlberg established the *Moral Judgment Interview* in his original 1958 dissertation.[4] During the roughly 45-minute tape recorded semi-structured interview, the interviewer uses moral dilemmas to determine which stage of moral reasoning a person uses. The dilemmas are fictional short stories that describe situations in which a person has to make a moral decision. The participant is asked a systemic series of open-ended questions, like what they

think the right course of action is, as well as justifications as to why certain actions are right or wrong. The form and structure of these replies are scored and not the content; over a set of multiple moral dilemmas an overall score is derived.[4][9]

Heinz dilemma

A dilemma that Kohlberg used in his original research was the druggist's dilemma: *Heinz Steals the Drug In Europe*. [5]

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 had recently discovered. The drug was expensive to make, but the druggist was charging ten times what the drug cost him to produce. He paid \$200 for the radium and charged \$2,000 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 \$ 1,000, 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 got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug for his wife. Should Heinz have broken into the laboratory to steal the drug for his wife? Why or why not? [5]

From a theoretical point of view, it is not important what the participant thinks that Heinz should *do*. Kohlberg's theory holds that the justification the participant offers is what is significant, the *form* of their response. [7] Below are some of many examples of possible arguments that belong to the six stages: [5][15]

Stage one (obedience): Heinz should not steal the medicine because he would consequently be put in prison, which would mean he is a bad person. Or: Heinz should steal the medicine because it is only worth \$200, not how much the druggist wanted for it. Heinz had even offered to pay for it and was not stealing anything else.

Stage two (self-interest): Heinz should steal the medicine because he will be much happier if he saves his wife, even if he will have to serve a prison sentence. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine because prison is an awful place, and he would probably experience anguish over a jail cell more than his wife's death.

Stage three (conformity): Heinz should steal the medicine because his wife expects it; he wants to be a good husband. Or: Heinz should not steal the drug because stealing is bad and he is not a criminal; he tried to do everything he could without breaking the law, you cannot blame him.

Stage four (law-and-order): Heinz should not steal the medicine because the law prohibits stealing, making it illegal. Or: Heinz should steal the drug for his wife but also take the prescribed punishment for the crime as well as paying the druggist what he is owed. Criminals cannot just run around without regard for the law; actions have consequences.

Stage five (human rights): Heinz should steal the medicine because everyone has a right to choose life, regardless of the law. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine because the scientist has a right to fair compensation. Even if his wife is sick, it does not make his actions right.

Stage six (universal human ethics): Heinz should steal the medicine, because saving a human life is a more fundamental value than the property rights of another person. Or: Heinz should not steal the medicine, because others may need the medicine just as badly, and their lives are equally significant.

Criticisms

One criticism of Kohlberg's theory is that it emphasizes justice to the exclusion of other values, and so may not adequately address the arguments of those who value other moral aspects of actions. Carol Gilligan has argued that Kohlberg's theory is overly androcentric. [10] Kohlberg's theory was initially developed based on empirical research using only male participants; Gilligan argued that it did not adequately describe the concerns of women. Although research has generally found no significant pattern of differences in moral development between sexes, [13][14] Gilligan's theory of moral development does not focus on the value of justice. She developed an alternative theory of moral reasoning based on the ethics of caring. [10] Critics such as Christina Hoff Sommers, however, argued that Gilligan's research is ill-founded, and that no evidence exists to support her conclusion. [20]

Kohlberg's stages are not culturally neutral, as demonstrated by its application to a number of different cultures. [1] Although they progress through the stages in the same order, individuals in different cultures seem to do so at different rates. [21] Kohlberg has responded by saying that although different cultures do indeed inculcate different beliefs, his stages correspond to underlying modes of reasoning, rather than to those beliefs. [1][22]

Other psychologists have questioned the assumption that moral action is primarily a result of formal reasoning. Social intuitionists such as Jonathan Haidt, for example, argue that individuals often make moral judgments without weighing concerns such as fairness, law, human rights, or abstract ethical values. Thus the arguments analyzed by Kohlberg and other rationalist psychologists could be considered *post hoc* rationalizations of intuitive decisions; moral reasoning may be less relevant to moral action than Kohlberg's theory suggests. [23]

Continued relevance

Kohlberg's body of work on the stages of moral development has been utilized by others working in the field. One example is the *Defining Issues Test (DIT)* created in 1979 by James Rest, [24] originally as a pencil-and-paper alternative to the Moral Judgment Interview. [25] Heavily influenced by the six-stage model, it made efforts to improve the validity criteria by using a quantitative test, the Likert scale, to rate moral dilemmas similar to Kohlberg's. [26] It also used a large body of Kohlbergian theory such as the idea of "post-conventional thinking". [27][28] In 1999 the *DIT* was revised as the *DIT-2*; [25] the test continues to be used in many areas where moral testing is required, [29] such as divinity, politics, and medicine. [30][31][32]

W.C. Crain. (1985). *Theories of Development*. Prentice-Hall. pp. 118-136.

CHAPTER SEVEN

KOHLBERG'S STAGES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

An outstanding example of research in the Piagetian tradition is the work of Lawrence Kohlberg. Kohlberg has focused on moral development and has proposed a stage theory of moral thinking which goes well beyond Piaget's initial formulations.

Kohlberg, who was born in 1927, grew up in Bronxville, New York, and attended the Andover Academy in Massachusetts, a private high school for bright and usually wealthy students. He did not go immediately to college, but instead went to help the

Israeli cause, in which he was made the Second Engineer on an old freighter carrying refugees from parts of Europe to Israel. After this, in 1948, he enrolled at the University of Chicago, where he scored so high on admission tests that he had to take only a few courses to earn his bachelor's degree. This he did in one year. He stayed on at Chicago for graduate work in psychology, at first thinking he would become a clinical psychologist. However, he soon became interested in Piaget and began interviewing children and adolescents on moral issues. The result was his doctoral dissertation (1958a), the first rendition of his new stage theory.

Kohlberg is an informal, unassuming man who also is a true scholar; he has thought long and deeply about a wide range of issues in both psychology and philosophy and has done much to help others appreciate the wisdom of many of the "old psychologists," such as Rousseau, John Dewey, and James Mark Baldwin. Kohlberg has taught at the University of Chicago (1962-1968) and, since 1968, has been at Harvard University.

PIAGET'S STAGES OF MORAL JUDGMENT

Piaget studied many aspects of moral judgment, but most of his findings fit into a two-stage theory. Children younger than 10 or 11 years think about moral dilemmas one way; older children consider them differently. As we have seen, younger children regard rules as fixed and absolute. They believe that rules are handed down by adults or by God and that one cannot change them. The older child's view is more relativistic. He or she understands that it is permissible to change rules if everyone agrees. Rules are not sacred and absolute but are devices which humans use to get along cooperatively.

At approximately the same time--10 or 11 years--children's moral thinking undergoes other shifts. In particular, younger children base their moral judgments more on consequences, whereas older children base their judgments on intentions. When, for example, the young child hears about one boy who broke 15 cups trying to help his mother and another boy who broke only one cup trying to steal cookies, the young child thinks that the first boy did worse. The child primarily considers the amount of damage--the consequences--whereas the older child is more likely to judge wrongness in terms of the motives underlying the act (Piaget, 1932, p. 137).

There are many more details to Piaget's work on moral judgment, but he essentially found a series of changes that occur between the ages of 10 and 12, just when the child begins to enter the general stage of formal operations.

Intellectual development, however, does not stop at this point. This is just the beginning of formal operations, which continue to develop at least until age 16. Accordingly, one might expect thinking about moral issues to continue to develop throughout adolescence. Kohlberg therefore interviewed both children and adolescents about moral dilemmas, and he did find stages that go well beyond Piaget's. He uncovered six stages, only the first three of which share many features with Piaget's stages.

KOHLBERG'S METHOD

Kohlberg's (1958a) core sample was comprised of 72 boys, from both middle- and lower-class families in Chicago. They were ages 10, 13, and 16. He later added to his sample younger children, delinquents, and boys and girls from other American cities and from other countries (1963, 1970).

The basic interview consists of a series of dilemmas such as the following:

Heinz Steals the Drug

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 had 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 \$2,000 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 \$ 1,000 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 got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug-for his wife. Should the husband have done that? (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 19)

Kohlberg is not really interested in whether the subject says "yes" or "no" to this dilemma but in the reasoning behind the answer. The interviewer wants to know why the subject thinks Heinz should or should not have stolen the drug. The interview schedule then asks new questions which help one understand the child's reasoning. For example, children are asked if Heinz had a right to steal the drug, if he was violating the druggist's rights, and what sentence the judge should give him once he was caught. Once again, the main concern is with the reasoning behind the answers. The interview then goes on to give more dilemmas in order to get a good sampling of a subject's moral thinking.

Once Kohlberg had classified the various responses into stages, he wanted to know whether his classification was *reliable*. In particular, he wanted to know if others would score the protocols in the same way. Other judges independently scored a sample of responses, and he calculated the degree to which all raters agreed. This procedure is called *interrater reliability*. Kohlberg found these agreements to be high, as he has in his subsequent work, but whenever investigators use Kohlberg's interview, they also should check for interrater reliability before scoring the entire sample.

KOHLBERG'S SIX STAGES

Level 1. Preconventional Morality

Stage 1. Obedience and Punishment Orientation. Kohlberg's stage 1 is similar to Piaget's first stage of moral thought. The child assumes that powerful authorities hand down a fixed set of rules which he or she must unquestioningly obey. To the Heinz dilemma, the child typically says that Heinz was wrong to steal the drug because "It's against the law," or "It's bad to steal," as if this were all there were to it. When asked to elaborate, the child usually responds in terms of the consequences involved, explaining that stealing is bad "because you'll get punished" (Kohlberg, 1958b).

Although the vast majority of children at stage 1 oppose Heinz's theft, it is still possible for a child to support the action and still employ stage 1 reasoning. For example, a child might say, "Heinz can steal it because he asked first and it's not like he stole something big; he won't get punished" (see Rest, 1973). Even though the child agrees with Heinz's action, the reasoning is still stage 1; the concern is with what authorities permit and punish.

Kohlberg calls stage 1 thinking "preconventional" because children do not yet speak as members of society. Instead, they see morality as something external to themselves, as that which the big people say they must do.

Stage 2. Individualism and Exchange. At this stage children

recognize that there is not just one right view that is handed down by the authorities. Different individuals have different viewpoints. "Heinz," they might point out, "might think it's right to take the drug, the druggist would not." Since everything is *relative*, each person is free to pursue his or her *individual* interests. One boy said that Heinz might steal the drug if he wanted his wife to live, but that he doesn't have to if he wants to marry someone younger and better-looking (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 24). Another boy said Heinz might steal it because

maybe they had children and he might need someone at home to look after them. But maybe he shouldn't steal it because they might put him in prison for more years than he could stand. (Colby and Kauffman, 1983, p. 300)

What is right for Heinz, then, is what meets his own self-interests.

You might have noticed that children at both stages 1 and 2 talk about punishment. However, they perceive it differently. At stage 1 punishment is tied up in the child's mind with wrongness; punishment "proves" that disobedience is wrong. At stage 2, in contrast, punishment is simply a risk that one naturally wants to avoid.

Although stage 2 respondents sometimes sound amoral, they do have some sense of right action. This is a notion of *fair exchange* or fair deals. The philosophy is one of returning favors--"If you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours." To the Heinz story, subjects often say that Heinz was right to steal the drug because the druggist was unwilling to make a fair deal; he was "trying to rip Heinz off," Or they might say that he should steal for his wife "because she might return the favor some day" (Gibbs et al., 1983, p. 19).

Respondents at stage 2 are still said to reason at the pre-conventional level because they speak as isolated individuals rather than as members of society. They see individuals exchanging favors, but there is still no identification with the values of the family or community.

Level II. Conventional Morality

Stage 3. Good Interpersonal Relationships. At this stage children--who are by now usually entering their teens--see morality as more than simple deals. They believe that people should live up to the expectations of the family and community and behave in "good" ways. Good behavior means having good motives and interpersonal feelings such as love, empathy, trust, and concern for others. Heinz, they typically argue, was right to steal the drug because "He was a good man for wanting to save her," and "His intentions were good, that of saving the life of someone he loves." Even if Heinz doesn't love his wife, these subjects often say, he should steal the drug because "I don't think any husband should sit back and watch his wife die" (Gibbs et al., 1983, pp. 36-42; Kohlberg, 1958b).

If Heinz's motives were good, the druggist's were bad. The druggist, stage 3 subjects emphasize, was "selfish," "greedy," and "only interested in himself, not another life." Sometimes the respondents become so angry with the druggist that they say that he ought to be put in jail (Gibbs et al., 1983, pp. 26-29, 40-42). A typical stage 3 response is that of Don, age 13:

It was really the druggist's fault, he was unfair, trying to overcharge and letting someone die. Heinz loved his wife and wanted to save her. I think anyone would. I don't think they would put him in jail. The judge would look at all sides, and see that the druggist was charging too much. (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 25)

We see that Don defines the issue in terms of the actors' character

traits and motives. He talks about the loving husband, the unfair druggist, and the understanding judge. His answer deserves the label "conventional "morality" because it assumes that the attitude expressed would be shared by the entire community—"anyone" would be right to do what Heinz did (Kohlberg, 1963, p. 25).

As mentioned earlier, there are similarities between Kohlberg's first three stages and Piaget's two stages. In both sequences there is a shift from unquestioning obedience to a relativistic outlook and to a concern for good motives. For Kohlberg, however, these shifts occur in three stages rather than two.

Stage 4. Maintaining the Social Order. Stage 3 reasoning works best in two-person relationships with family members or close friends, where one can make a real effort to get to know the other's feelings and needs and try to help. At stage 4, in contrast, the respondent becomes more broadly concerned with *society as a whole*. Now the emphasis is on obeying laws, respecting authority, and performing one's duties so that the social order is maintained. In response to the Heinz story, many subjects say they understand that Heinz's motives were good, but they cannot condone the theft. What would happen if we all started breaking the laws whenever we felt we had a good reason? The result would be chaos; society couldn't function. As one subject explained,

I don't want to sound like Spiro Agnew, law and order and wave the flag, but if everybody did as he wanted to do, set up his own beliefs as to right and wrong, then I think you would have chaos. The only thing I think we have in civilization nowadays is some sort of legal structure which people are sort of bound to follow. [Society needs] a centralizing framework. (Gibbs et al., 1983, pp. 140-41)

Because stage 4, subjects make moral decisions from the perspective of society as a whole, they think from a full-fledged member-of-society perspective (Colby and Kohlberg, 1983, p. 27).

You will recall that stage 1 children also generally oppose stealing because it breaks the law. Superficially, stage 1 and stage 4 subjects are giving the same response, so we see here why Kohlberg insists that we must probe into the reasoning behind the overt response. Stage 1 children say, "It's wrong to steal" and "It's against the law," but they cannot elaborate any further, except to say that stealing can get a person jailed. Stage 4 respondents, in contrast, have a conception of the function of laws for society as a whole--a conception which far exceeds the grasp of the younger child.

Level III. Postconventional Morality

Stage 5. Social Contract and Individual Rights. At stage 4, people want to keep society functioning. However, a smoothly functioning society is not necessarily a good one. A totalitarian society might be well-organized, but it is hardly the moral ideal. At stage 5, people begin to ask, "What makes for a good society?" They begin to think about society in a very theoretical way, stepping back from their own society and considering the rights and values that a society ought to uphold. They then evaluate existing societies in terms of these prior considerations. They are said to take a "prior-to-society" perspective (Colby and Kohlberg, 1983, p. 22).

Stage 5 respondents basically believe that a good society is best conceived as a social contract into which people freely enter to work toward the benefit of all. They recognize that different social groups within a society will have different values, but they believe that all rational people would agree on two points. First they would all want certain basic *rights*, such as liberty and life, to be

protected Second, they would want some *democratic* procedures for changing unfair law and for improving society.

In response to the Heinz dilemma, stage 5 respondents make it clear that they do not generally favor breaking laws; laws are social contracts that we agree to uphold until we can change them by democratic means. Nevertheless, the wife's right to live is a moral right that must be protected. Thus, stage 5 respondent sometimes defend Heinz's theft in strong language:

It is the husband's duty to save his wife. The fact that her life is in danger transcends every other standard you might use to judge his action. Life is more important than property.

This young man went on to say that "from a moral standpoint" Heinz should save the life of even a stranger, since to be consistent, the value of a life means any life. When asked if the judge should punish Heinz, he replied:

Usually the moral and legal standpoints coincide. Here they conflict. The judge should weight the moral standpoint more heavily but preserve the legal law in punishing Heinz lightly. (Kohlberg, 1976, p. 38)

Stage 5 subjects, - then, talk about "morality" and "rights" that take some priority over particular laws. Kohlberg insists, however, that we do not judge people to be at stage 5 merely from their verbal labels. We need to look at their social perspective and mode of reasoning. At stage 4, too, subjects frequently talk about the "right to life," but for them this right is legitimized by the authority of their social or religious group (e.g., by the Bible). Presumably, if their group valued property over life, they would too. At stage 5, in contrast, people are making more of an independent effort to think out what any society ought to value. They often reason, for example, that property has little meaning without life. They are trying to determine logically what a society ought to be like (Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 21-22; Gibbs et al., 1983, p. 83).

Stage 6: Universal Principles. Stage 5 respondents are working toward a conception of the good society. They suggest that we need to (a) protect certain individual rights and (b) settle disputes through democratic processes. However, democratic processes alone do not always result in outcomes that we intuitively sense are just. A majority, for example, may vote for a law that hinders a minority. Thus, Kohlberg believes that there must be a higher stage--stage 6--which defines the principles by which we achieve justice.

Kohlberg's conception of justice follows that of the philosophers Kant and Rawls, as well as great moral leaders such as Gandhi and Martin Luther King. According to these people, the principles of justice require us to treat the claims of all parties in an impartial manner, respecting the basic dignity, of all people as individuals. The principles of justice are therefore universal; they apply to all. Thus, for example, we would not vote for a law that aids some people but hurts others. The principles of justice guide us toward decisions based on an equal respect for all.

In actual practice, Kohlberg says, we can reach just decisions by looking at a situation through one another's eyes. In the Heinz dilemma, this would mean that all parties--the druggist, Heinz, and his wife--take the roles of the others. To do this in an impartial manner, people can assume a "veil of ignorance" (Rawls, 1971), acting as if they do not know which role they will eventually occupy. If the druggist did this, even he would recognize that life must take priority over property; for he wouldn't want to risk finding himself in the wife's shoes with property valued over life.

Thus, they would all agree that the wife must be saved--this would be the fair solution. Such a solution, we must note, requires not only impartiality, but the principle that everyone is given full and equal respect. If the wife were considered of less value than the others, a just solution could not be reached.

Until recently, Kohlberg had been scoring some of his subjects at stage 6, but he has temporarily stopped doing so. For one thing, he and other researchers had not been finding subjects who consistently reasoned at this stage. Also, Kohlberg has concluded that his interview dilemmas are not useful for distinguishing between stage 5 and stage 6 thinking. He believes that stage 6 has a clearer and broader conception of universal principles (which include justice as well as individual rights), but feels that his interview fails to draw out this broader understanding. Consequently, he has temporarily dropped stage 6 from his scoring manual, calling it a "theoretical stage" and scoring all postconventional responses as stage 5 (Colby and Kohlberg, 1983, p. 28).

Theoretically, one issue that distinguishes stage 5 from stage 6 is civil disobedience. Stage 5 would be more hesitant to endorse civil disobedience because of its commitment to the social contract and to changing laws through democratic agreements. Only when an individual right is clearly at stake does violating the law seem justified. At stage 6, in contrast, a commitment to justice makes the rationale for civil disobedience stronger and broader. Martin Luther King, for example, argued that laws are only valid insofar as they are grounded in justice, and that a commitment to justice carries with it an obligation to disobey unjust laws. King also recognized, of course, the general need for laws and democratic processes (stages 4 and 5), and he was therefore willing to accept the penalties for his actions. Nevertheless, he believed that the higher principle of justice required civil disobedience (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 43).

Summary

At stage 1 children think of what is right as that which authority says is right. Doing the right thing is obeying authority and avoiding punishment. At stage 2, children are no longer so impressed by any single authority; they see that there are different sides to any issue. Since everything is relative, one is free to pursue one's own interests, although it is often useful to make deals and exchange favors with others.

At stages 3 and 4, young people think as members of the conventional society with its values, norms, and expectations. At stage 3, they emphasize being a good person, which basically means having helpful motives toward people close to one. At stage 4, the concern shifts toward obeying laws to maintain society as a whole.

At stages 5 and 6 people are less concerned with maintaining society for its own sake, and more concerned with the principles and values that make for a good society. At stage 5 they emphasize basic rights and the democratic processes that give everyone a say, and at stage 6 they define the principles by which agreement will be most just.

THEORETICAL ISSUES

How Development Occurs

Kohlberg, it is important to remember, is a close follower of Piaget. Accordingly, Kohlberg's theoretical positions, including that on developmental change, reflect those of his mentor.

Kohlberg (e.g., 1968; 1981, Ch. 3) says that his stages are not the product of maturation. That is, the stage structures and sequences

do not simply unfold according to a genetic blueprint.

Neither, Kohlberg maintains, are his stages the product of socialization. That is, socializing agents (e.g., parents and teachers) do not directly teach new forms of thinking. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine them systematically teaching each new stage structure in its particular place in the sequence.

The stages emerge, instead, from our own thinking about moral problems. Social experiences do promote development, but they do so by stimulating our mental processes. As we get into discussions and debates with others, we find our views questioned and challenged and are therefore motivated to come up with new, more comprehensive positions. New stages reflect these broader viewpoints (Kohlberg et al., 1975).

We might imagine, for example, a young man and woman discussing a new law. The man says that everyone should obey it, like it or not, because laws are vital to social organization (stage 4). The woman notes, however, that some well-organized societies, such as Nazi Germany, were not particularly moral. The man therefore sees that some evidence contradicts his view. He experiences some cognitive conflict and is motivated to think about the matter more fully, perhaps moving a bit toward stage 5.

Kohlberg also sometimes speaks of change occurring through role-taking opportunities, opportunities to consider others' viewpoints (e.g., 1976). As children interact with others, they learn how viewpoints differ and how to coordinate them in cooperative activities. As they discuss their problems and work out their differences, they develop their conceptions of what is fair and just.

Whatever the interactions are specifically like, they work best, Kohlberg says, when they are open and democratic. The less children feel pressured simply to conform to authority, the freer they are to settle their own differences and formulate their own ideas. We will discuss Kohlberg's efforts to induce developmental change in the section on implications for education.

The Stage Concept

Piaget, you will recall, proposed that true mental stages meet several criteria. They (1) are qualitatively different ways of thinking, (2) are structured wholes, (3) progress in an invariant sequence, (4) can be characterized as hierarchic integrations, and (5) are cross-cultural universals. Kohlberg has taken these criteria very seriously, trying to show how his stages meet them all. Let us consider these points one at a time.

1. Qualitative differences. It seems fairly clear that Kohlberg's stages are qualitatively different from one another. For example, stage 1 responses, which focus on obedience to authority, sound very different from stage 2 responses, which argue that each person is free to behave as he or she wishes. The two stages do not seem to differ along any quantitative dimension, they seem qualitatively different.

2. Structured wholes. By "structured wholes," Kohlberg means that the stages are not just isolated responses but are *general* patterns of thought that will consistently show up across many different kinds of issues. One gets a sense that this is true by reading through his scoring manual; one finds the same kinds of thinking reappearing on diverse items. For example, one item asks, "Why should a promise be kept?" As on the Heinz dilemma, children at stage 1 again speak in terms of obedience to rules, whereas those at stage 2 focus on exchanging favors that are in one's self-interest (e.g., "You never know when you're going to need that person to do something for you"). Similarly, as children proceed through

the stages they keep giving responses that are similar to those to the Heinz dilemma (Gibbs et al., 1983, pp. 315-82).

In addition, Kohlberg and his co-workers (Colby et al., 1983) have obtained quantitative estimates of the extent to which subjects respond in terms of one particular stage. Since some subjects might be in transition between stages, one does not expect perfect consistency. Nevertheless, Kohlberg found that subjects scored at their dominant stage across nine dilemmas about two-thirds of the time. This seems to be a fair degree of consistency, suggesting the stages may reflect general modes of thought.

3. Invariant sequence. Kohlberg believes that his stages unfold in an invariant sequence. Children always go from stage 1 to stage 2 to stage 3 and so forth. They do not skip stages or move through them in mixed-up orders. Not all children necessarily reach the highest stages; they might lack intellectual stimulation. But to the extent they do go through the stages, they proceed in order.

Most of Kohlberg's evidence on his stage sequence comes from *cross-sectional* data. That is, he interviewed different children at various ages to see if the younger ones were at lower stages than the older ones. Stages 1 and 2 are primarily found at the youngest age, whereas the higher stages become more prevalent as age increases. Thus, the data support the stage sequence.

Cross-sectional findings, however, are inconclusive. In a cross-sectional study, different children are interviewed at each age, so there is no guarantee that any individual child actually moves through the stages in order. For example, there is no guarantee that a boy who is coded at stage 3 at age 13 actually passed through stages 1 and 2 in order when he was younger. More conclusive evidence must come from *longitudinal* studies, in which the same children are followed over time.

The first two major longitudinal studies (Kohlberg and Kramer, 1969; Holstein, 1973) began with samples of teenagers and then tested them at three-year intervals. These studies produced ambiguous results. In both, most subjects either remained at the same stage or moved up one stage, but there were also some who might have skipped a stage. Furthermore, these studies indicated that some subjects had regressed, and this finding also bothered Kohlberg, because he believes that movement through his stages should always be forward.

Kohlberg's response to these troublesome findings was to revise his scoring method. He had already become uncomfortable with his first (1958b) scoring manual, believing that it relied too heavily on the *content* of subjects' answers rather than their underlying *reasoning*, and he had made some improvements on it. So, when these longitudinal findings emerged, he decided to develop a much more precise and adequate scoring system and, to some extent, to revise his definitions of the stages.

To create the latest scoring manual, Kohlberg and his co-workers (Colby et al., 1983) worked with seven boys from his original (1958) sample who had been retested every three or four years for 20 years. It was during this work that Kohlberg decided to drop stage 6.

Kohlberg then examined the hypothesis of invariant sequence for 51 other boys from his original sample, who also had been retested at least twice (every three or four years) over the 20-year period. This time, Kohlberg and his colleagues (Colby et al., 1983) found no stage-skipping, and only about 6 percent of the subjects showed signs of regressing. Four recent longitudinal studies have obtained similar results although, two have found somewhat more

regression (up to 15 percent) (see Colby et al., 1983). In general, then, the new longitudinal studies seem to support the invariant-sequence hypothesis.

Kohlberg's new, longitudinal study has also changed the earlier picture of moral development in other ways. Stage 4 had become the dominant stage by age 16. In the new scoring system, however, it is more difficult to achieve the higher stages--the reasoning must be more clearly demonstrated--and Kohlberg finds that stage 4 does not become dominant until the boys are in their 20s and 30s. Stage 5, too, only appears in the mid-20s and never becomes very prevalent.

4. Hierarchic integration. When Kohlberg says that his stages are hierarchically integrated, he means that people do not lose the insights gained at earlier stages, but integrate them into new, broader frameworks. For example, people at stage 4 can still understand stage 3 arguments, but they now subordinate them to wider considerations. They understand that Heinz had good motives for stealing, but they point out that if we all stole whenever we had a good motive, the social structure would break down. Thus stage 4 subordinates a concern for motives to a wider concern for the society as a whole.

The concept of hierarchic integration is very important for Kohlberg because it enables him to explain the direction of his stage sequence. Since he is not a maturationist, he cannot simply say that the sequence is wired into the genes. So he wants to show how each new stage provides a broader framework for dealing with moral issues. Stage 4, as mentioned, transcends the limitations of stage 3 and becomes more broadly concerned with social organization. Stage 5, in turn, sees the weakness of stage 4; a well-organized society is not necessarily a moral one. Stage 5 therefore considers the rights and orderly processes that make for a moral society. Each new stage retains the insights of the prior stage, but it recasts them into a broader framework. In this sense, each new stage is more cognitively adequate than the prior stage.

If Kohlberg is right about the hierarchic nature of his stages, we would expect that people would still be able to understand earlier stages but consider them inferior. In fact, when Rest (Rest et al., 1969; Rest, 1973) presented adolescents with arguments from different stages, this is what he found. They understood lower-stage reasoning, but they disliked it. What they preferred was the highest stage they heard, whether they fully understood it or not. This finding suggests, perhaps, that they had some intuitive sense of the greater adequacy of the higher stages.

Werner, we remember from Chapter 4, described hierarchic integration as a process that occurs alongside *differentiation*, and Kohlberg believes his stages represent increasingly differentiated structures as well. Kohlberg points out that the stage 5 value on life, for example, has become differentiated from other considerations. Stage 5 respondents say that we ought to value life for its own sake, regardless of its value to authorities (stage 1), its usefulness to oneself (stage 2), the affection it arouses in us (stage 3), or its value within a particular social order (stage 4). Stage 5 subjects have abstracted this value from other considerations and now treat it as a purely moral ideal. Their thinking, Kohlberg says, is becoming like that of the moral philosophers in the Kantian tradition (1981, p. 171).

5. Universal sequence. Kohlberg, like all stage theorists, maintains that his stage sequence is universal; it is the same in all cultures. At first glance, this proposal might be surprising. Don't different cultures socialize their children differently, teaching them

very different moral beliefs?

Kohlberg's response is that different cultures do teach different beliefs, but that his stages refer not to specific beliefs but to underlying modes of reasoning (Kohlberg and Gilligan, 1971). For example, one culture might discourage physical fighting, while another encourages it more. As a result, children will have different beliefs about fighting, but they will still reason about it in the same way at the same stage. At stage 1, for example, one child might say that it is wrong to fight when insulted "because you will get punished for it," while another says that "it is all right to fight; you won't get punished." The beliefs differ, but both children reason about them in the same underlying way, in terms of the physical consequences (punishment). They do so because this is what they can cognitively grasp. Later on, the first child might argue that fighting is bad "because if everyone fought all the time there would be anarchy," while the second child argues that "people must defend their honor, because if they don't everyone will be insulting everyone, and the whole society will break down." Once again, the specific beliefs differ, reflecting different cultural teachings, but the underlying reasoning is the same--in this case it is stage 4, where people can consider something as abstract as the social order. Children, regardless of their beliefs, will always move to stage 4 thinking some time after stage 1 thinking because it is cognitively so much more sophisticated.

Kohlberg, then, proposes that his stage sequence will be the same in all cultures, for each stage is conceptually more advanced than the next. He and other researchers have given his interview to children and adults in a variety of cultures, including Mexico, Taiwan, Turkey, Israel, the Yucatan, Kenya, the Bahamas, and India. Most of the studies have been cross sectional, but a few have been longitudinal. Thus far, the studies have supported Kohlberg's stage sequence. To the extent that children move through the stages, they appear to move in order (Edwards, 1980).

At the same time, people in different cultures seem to move through the sequence at different rates and to reach different endpoints. In the United States most urban middle-class adults reach stage 4, with a small percentage using some stage 5 reasoning. In urban areas of other countries the picture is fairly similar. In the isolated villages and tribal communities of many countries, however, it is rare to find any adult beyond stage 3 (Edwards, 1980).

Kohlberg (Nisan and Kohlberg, 1982) suggests that one can understand these findings in terms of Piagetian theory. Cultural factors, in this theory, do not directly shape the child's moral thought, but they do stimulate thinking. Social experiences can challenge children's ideas, motivating them to come up with new ones. In traditional villages, however, there may be little to challenge a stage 3 morality; the norms of care and empathy work very well in governing the face-to-face interactions of the group. Thus, there is little to stimulate thinking beyond this stage.

When, in contrast, young people leave the village and go off to the city, they witness the breakdown of interpersonal ties. They see that group norms of care and empathy have little impact on the impersonal interactions of city life, and they see the need for a formal legal structure to ensure moral conduct. They begin to think in terms of stage 4 morality. Furthermore, as Keniston (1971) notes, if young people attend the universities, they may take classes in which the teachers deliberately question the unexamined assumptions of their childhoods and adolescences. Thus they are stimulated to think about moral matters in new ways.

Moral Thought and Moral Behavior

Kohlberg's scale has to do with moral thinking, not moral action. As everyone knows, people who can talk at a high moral level may not behave accordingly. Consequently, we would not expect perfect correlations between moral judgment and moral action. Still, Kohlberg thinks that there should be some relationship.

As a general hypothesis, he proposes that moral behavior is more consistent, predictable, and responsible at the higher stages (Kohlberg et al., 1975), because the stages themselves increasingly employ more stable and general standards. For example, whereas stage 3 bases decisions on others' feelings, which can vary, stage 4 refers to set rules and laws. Thus, we can expect that moral behavior, too, will become more consistent as people move up the sequence. Generally speaking, there is some research support for this hypothesis (e.g., with respect to cheating), but the evidence is not clear-cut (Blasi, 1980; Brown and Herrnstein, 1975).

Some research has focused on the relationships between particular stages and specific kinds of behavior. For example, one might expect that juvenile delinquents or criminals would typically reason at stages 1 or 2, viewing morality as something imposed from without (stage 1) or as a matter of self-interest (stage 2), rather than identifying with society's conventional expectations (stages 3 and 4). Again, some research supports this hypothesis, but there also are some ambiguous results (Blasi, 1980).

Several studies have examined the relationship between postconventional thinking and student protest. In a landmark study, Haan et al. (1968) examined the moral reasoning of those who participated in the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in 1964. Haan found that their thinking was more strongly postconventional than that of a matched sample of nonparticipants, but this finding was not replicated for some other protests, apparently because moral principles were not at stake (Keniston, 1971, pp. 260-61).

Blasi (1980), after reviewing 75 studies, concludes that overall there is a relationship between moral thought and action, but he suggests that we need to introduce other variables to clarify this relationship. One variable may simply be the extent to which individuals themselves feel the need to maintain consistency between their moral thoughts and actions (Blasi, 1980, Kohlberg and Candee, 1981).

Moral Thought and Other Forms of Cognition

Kohlberg has also tried to relate his moral stages to other forms of cognition. He has first analyzed his stages in terms of their underlying cognitive structures and has then looked for parallels in purely logical and social thought. For this purpose, he has analyzed his own stages in terms of implicit *role-taking capacities*, capacities to consider others' viewpoints (Kohlberg, 1976; see also Selman, 1976, and Rest, 1983).

At first, at stage 1, children hardly seem to recognize that viewpoints differ. They assume that there is only one right view, that of authorities. At stage 2, in contrast, they recognize that people have different interests and viewpoints. They seem to be overcoming egocentrism; they see that perspectives are relative to the individual. They also begin to consider how individuals might coordinate their interests in terms of mutually beneficial deals.

At stage 3, people conceptualize role-taking as a deeper, more empathic process; one becomes concerned with the other's feelings. Stage 4, in turn, has a broader, society-wide conception of how people coordinate their roles through the legal system.

Stages 5 and 6, finally, take a more idealized look at how people might coordinate their interests. Stage 5 emphasizes democratic

processes, and stage 6 considers how all parties take one another's perspectives according to the principles of justice.

The moral stages, then, reflect expanded insights into how perspectives differ and might be coordinated. As such, the moral stages might be related to stages of logical and social thought which contain similar insights. So far, the empirical evidence suggests that advances in moral thinking may rest upon prior achievements in these other realms (Kohlberg, 1976; Kuhn et al., 1977). For example, children seem to advance to stage 2, overcoming their egocentrism in the moral sphere, only after they have made equivalent progress in their logical and social thought. If this pattern is correct, we can expect to find many individuals who are logical and even socially insightful but still underdeveloped in their moral judgment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION

Kohlberg would like to see people advance to the highest possible stage of moral thought. The best possible society would contain individuals who not only understand the need for social order (stage 4) but can entertain visions of universal principles, such as justice and liberty (stage 6) (Kohlberg, 1970).

How, then, can one promote moral development? Turiel (1966) found that when children listened to adults' moral judgments, the resulting change was slight. This is what Kohlberg might have expected, for he believes that if children are to reorganize their thinking, they must be more active.

Accordingly, Kohlberg encouraged another student, Moshe Blatt, to lead discussion groups in which children had a chance to grapple actively with moral issues (Blatt and Kohlberg, 1975). Blatt presented moral dilemmas which engaged the classes in a good deal of heated debate. He tried to leave much of the discussion to the children themselves, stepping in only to summarize, clarify, and sometimes present a view himself (p. 133). He encouraged arguments that were one stage above those of most of the class. In essence, he tried to implement one of Kohlberg's main ideas on how children move through the stages. They do so by encountering views which challenge their thinking and stimulate them to formulate better arguments (Kohlberg et al., 1975).

Blatt began a typical discussion by telling a story about a man named Mr. Jones who had a seriously injured son and wanted to rush him to the hospital. Mr. Jones had no car, so he approached a stranger, told him about the situation, and asked to borrow his car. The stranger, however, refused, saying he had an important appointment to keep. So Mr. Jones took the car by force. Blatt then asked whether Mr. Jones should have done that.

In the discussion that followed, one child, Student B, felt that Mr. Jones had a good cause for taking the car and also believed that the stranger could be charged with murder if the son died. Student C pointed out that the stranger violated no law. Student B still felt that the stranger's behavior was somehow wrong, even though he now realized that it was not legally wrong. Thus, Student B was in a kind of conflict. He had a sense of the wrongness of the stranger's behavior, but he could not articulate this sense in terms that would meet the objection. He was challenged to think about the problem more deeply.

In the end, Blatt gave him the answer. The stranger's behavior, Blatt said, was not legally wrong, but morally wrong--wrong ac-

ording to God's laws (this was a Sunday School Class). At this point, Blatt was an authority teaching the "correct" view. In so doing, he might have robbed Student B of the chance to formulate spontaneously his own position. He might have done better to ask a question or to simply clarify the student's conflict (e.g., "So it's not legally wrong, but you still have a sense that, it's somehow wrong. . ."). In any case, it seems clear that part of this discussion was valuable for this student. Since he himself struggled to formulate a distinction that could handle the objection, he could fully appreciate and assimilate a new view that he was looking for.

The Kohlberg-Blatt method of inducing cognitive conflict exemplifies Piaget's equilibration model. The child takes one view, becomes confused by discrepant information, and then resolves the confusion by forming a more advanced and comprehensive position. The method is also the dialectic process of Socratic teaching. The students give a view, the teacher asks questions which get them to see the inadequacies of their views, and they are then motivated to formulate better positions.

In Blatt's first experiment, the students (sixth graders) participated in 12 weekly discussion groups. Blatt found that over half the students moved up one full stage after the 12 weeks. Blatt and others have tried to replicate these findings, sometimes using other age groups and lengthier series of classes. As often happens with replications, the results have not been quite so successful; upward changes have been smaller--usually a third of a stage or less. Still, it generally seems that Socratic classroom discussions held over several months can produce changes that, while small, are significantly greater than those found in control groups who do not receive these experiences (Rest, 1983).

One of Blatt's supplementary findings was that those students who reported that they were most "interested" in the discussions made the greatest amount of change. This finding is in keeping with Piagetian theory. Children develop not because they are shaped through external reinforcements but because their curiosity is aroused. They become interested in information that does not quite fit into their existing cognitive structures and are thereby motivated to revise their thinking. Another Kohlberg student--M. Berkowitz (1980)--is examining actual dialogues to see if those who become most challenged and involved in the tensions of moral debate are also those who move forward.

Although Kohlberg remains committed to the cognitive-conflict model of change, he has also become interested in other strategies. One is the "just Community" approach. Here the focus is not the individuals but groups. For example, Kohlberg and some of his colleagues (Power and Reimer, 1979) set up a special democratic high school group and actively encouraged the students to think of themselves as a community. Initially, little community feeling was present. The group's dominant orientation was stage 2; it treated problems such as stealing as purely individual matters. If a boy had something stolen, it was too bad for him. After a year, however, the group norms advanced to stage 3; the students now considered stealing to be a community issue that reflected on the degree of trust and care in the group.

It will be interesting to see if the just community approach can promote further advances in moral thinking. In the meantime, this approach has aroused some uneasiness among some of Kohlberg's associates. In particular, Reimer et al. (1983) have wondered whether Kohlberg, by explicitly encouraging the students to think of themselves as a community, is not practicing a form of indoctrination. Reimer says that he has talked to Kohlberg about this,

and he has come away convinced that Kohlberg is committed to democratic groups in which students are encouraged "to think critically, to discuss assumptions, and, when they feel it is necessary, to challenge the teacher's suggestions" (p. 252). Thus, moral development remains a product of the students' own thinking.

EVALUATION

Kohlberg, a follower of Piaget, has offered a new, more detailed stage sequence for moral thinking. Whereas Piaget basically found two stages of moral thinking, the second of which emerges in early adolescence, Kohlberg has uncovered additional stages which develop well into adolescence and adulthood. He has suggested that some people even reach a postconventional level of moral thinking where they no longer accept their own society as given but think reflectively and autonomously about what a good society should be.

The suggestion of a postconventional morality is unusual in the social sciences. Perhaps it took a cognitive developmentalist list to suggest such a thing. For whereas most social scientists have been impressed by the ways in which societies mold and shape children's thinking, cognitive-developmentalists are more impressed by the capacities for independent thought. If children engage in enough independent thinking, Kohlberg suggests, they will eventually begin to formulate conceptions of rights, values, and principles by which they evaluate existing social arrangements. Perhaps some will even advance to the kinds of thinking that characterize some of the great moral leaders and philosophers who have at times advocated civil disobedience in the name of universal ethical principles.

Kohlberg's theory has provoked a good deal of criticism. Not everyone, first of all, is enthusiastic about the concept of a postconventional morality. Hogan (1973, 1975), for example, feels that it is dangerous for people to place their own principles above society and the law. It may be that many psychologists react to Kohlberg in a similar way, and that this reaction underlies many of the debates over the scientific merits of his research.

Others have argued that Kohlberg's stages are culturally biased. Simpson (1974), for example, says that Kohlberg has developed a stage model based on the Western philosophical tradition and has then applied this model to non-Western cultures without considering the extent to which they have different moral outlooks.

This criticism may have merit. One wonders how well Kohlberg's stages apply to the great Eastern philosophies. One also wonders if his stages do justice to moral development in many traditional village cultures. Researchers find that villagers stop at stage 3, but perhaps they continue to develop moralities in directions that Kohlberg's stages fail to capture.

Another criticism is that Kohlberg's theory is sex-biased, a view that has been thoughtfully expressed by one of Kohlberg's associates and co-authors, Carol Gilligan (1982). Gilligan observes that Kohlberg's stages were derived exclusively from interviews with males, and she charges that the stages reflect a decidedly male orientation. For males, advanced moral thought revolves around rules, rights, and abstract principles. The ideal is formal justice, in which all parties evaluate one another's claims in an impartial manner. This conception of morality, Gilligan argues, fails to capture the distinctly female voice on moral matters.

For women, Gilligan says, morality centers not on rights and rules but on interpersonal relationships and the ethics of compassion and care. The ideal is not impersonal justice but more affiliative

ways of living. Women's morality, in addition, is more contextualized, it is tied to real, ongoing relationships rather than abstract solutions to hypothetical dilemmas.

Because of these sex differences, Gilligan says, men and women frequently score at different stages on Kohlberg's scale. Women typically score at stage 3, with its focus on interpersonal feelings, whereas men more commonly score at stages 4 and 5, which reflect more abstract conceptions of social organization. Thus, women score lower than men. If, however, Kohlberg's scale were more sensitive to women's distinctly interpersonal orientations, it would show that women also continue to develop their thinking beyond stage 3.

Gilligan has made an initial effort to trace women's moral development. Since she believes that women's conceptions of care and affiliation are embedded in real-life situations, she has interviewed women facing a personal crisis--the decision to have an abortion. Through these interviews, Gilligan has tried to show that women move from a conventional to a postconventional mode of thinking. That is, they no longer consider their responsibilities in terms of what is conventionally expected, of them but in terms of their own insights into the ethics of care and responsibility.

Not everyone agrees with Gilligan's critique. Rest (1983), in particular, argues that Gilligan has exaggerated the extent of the sex differences found on Kohlberg's scale. An evaluation of this question, however, must await closer reviews of the literature.

In the meantime, Gilligan has raised an interesting theoretical possibility. Like Werner, she is suggesting that development may proceed along more than one line. One line of moral thought focuses on logic, justice, and social organization, the other on interpersonal relationships. If this is so, there is the further possibility that these two lines at some point become integrated within each sex. That is, each sex might become more responsive to the dominant orientation of the other. Perhaps, as Gilligan briefly suggests (1982, Ch. 6), this integration is a major task of the adult years. (For further thoughts in this vein, see Chapter 14 on Jung's theory of adult development.)

There are other criticisms of Kohlberg's work. Many of these have to do with empirical matters, such as the problem of invariant sequence, the prevalence of regression, and the relationships between thought and action. Since I have mentioned these earlier, I would like to conclude with a more general question. Kohlberg writes in a forceful manner and he promotes stage 6 as if it provides the decision-making tools we need for the toughest ethical dilemmas. However, there may be issues that the principles of justice frequently fail to resolve. One such issue is abortion. Stage 6 would ask us to consider the physical life of the fetus as well as all the parties' right to fulfilling lives, but does stage 6 routinely lead to decisions that we feel are right? Kohlberg's students, Reimer et al. (1983, pp. 46-47, 88-89) discuss a stage 6 approach to a hypothetical abortion decision without reaching much of a conclusion. The decision, they say, will have to vary with the situation. Stage 6, of course, is not intended to provide a set of answers--it is a mode of decision-making. Still, Kohlberg sometimes seems to skim over the incredible difficulty that some ethical problems present--a difficulty that is more directly expressed in the writing of Kant (1788).

Nevertheless, whatever criticisms and questions we might have, there is no doubt that Kohlberg's accomplishment is great. He has not just expanded on Piaget's stages of moral judgment but has done so in an inspiring way. He has studied the development of

moral reasoning as it might work its way toward the thinking of the great moral philosophers. So, although few people may ever begin to think about moral issues like Socrates, Kant, or Martin Luther King, Kohlberg has nonetheless provided us with a challenging vision of what development might be.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

Stages of Moral Development

By Kendra Cherry

Moral development is a topic of interest in both psychology and education. Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg modified and expanded upon [Jean Piaget's](#) work to form a theory that explained the development of moral reasoning. Piaget described a two-stage process of moral development, while Kohlberg theory of moral development outlined six stages within three different levels. Kohlberg extended Piaget's theory, proposing that moral development is a continual process that occurs throughout the lifespan.

"The Heinz Dilemma"

Kohlberg based his theory upon research and interviews with groups of young children. A series of moral dilemmas were presented to children, who were then interviewed to determine the reasoning behind their judgments of each scenario. The following is one example of the dilemmas Kohlberg presented.

"Heinz Steals the Drug"

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 had 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 \$2,000 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 \$ 1,000 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 got desperate and broke into the man's store to steal the drug--for his wife. Should the husband have done that? (Kohlberg, 1963)."

Kohlberg was not interested so much in the answer to the question of whether Heinz was wrong or right, but in the *reasoning* for the participants decision. The responses were then classified into various stages of reasoning in his theory of moral development.

Level 1. Preconventional Morality

Stage 1 - Obedience and Punishment The earliest stage of moral development is especially common in young children, but adults are also capable of expressing this type of reasoning. At this stage, children see rules as fixed and absolute. Obeying the rules is important because it is a means to avoid punishment.

Stage 2 - Individualism and Exchange At this stage of moral development, children account for individual points of view and judge actions based on how they serve individual needs. In the Heinz dilemma, children argued that the best course of action was the choice that best-served Heinz's needs. Reciprocity is possible, but only if it serves one's own interests.

Level 2. Conventional Morality

- **Stage 3 - Interpersonal Relationships** Often referred to as the

"good boy-good girl" orientation, this stage of moral development is focused on living up to social expectations and roles. There is an emphasis on conformity, being "nice," and consideration of how choices influence relationships.

- **Stage 4 - Maintaining Social Order** At this stage of moral development, people begin to consider society as a whole when making judgments. The focus is on maintaining law and order by following the rules, doing one's duty and respecting authority.

Level 3. Postconventional Morality

- **Stage 5 - Social Contract and Individual Rights** At this stage, people begin to account for the differing values, opinions and beliefs of other people. Rules of law are important for maintaining a society, but members of the society should agree upon these standards.

- **Stage 6 - Universal Principles** Kohlberg's final level of moral reasoning is based upon universal ethical principles and abstract reasoning. At this stage, people follow these internalized princi-

ples of justice, even if they conflict with laws and rules.

Criticisms of Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development:

- Does moral reasoning necessarily lead to moral behavior? Kohlberg's theory is concerned with moral thinking, but there is a big difference between knowing what we *ought* to do versus our actual actions.

- Is justice the only aspect of moral reasoning we should consider? Critics have pointed out that Kohlberg's theory of moral development overemphasizes the concept as justice when making moral choices. Factors such as compassion, caring and other interpersonal feelings may play an important part in moral reasoning.

- Does Kohlberg's theory overemphasize Western philosophy? Individualistic cultures emphasize personal rights while collectivist cultures stress the importance of society and community. Eastern cultures may have different moral outlooks that Kohlberg's theory does not account for.