The Development of Children’s Orientations Toward a Moral Order
I. Sequence in the Development of Moral Thought*

Lawrence Kohlberg
Department of Psychology, University of Chicago, Ill.

Since the concept of a moral attitude forms the basic building block of the social psychological theories of Freud (1922), Durkheim (1906), Parsons (1960) and others, there is reason to agree with McDougall (1908) that “the fundamental problem of social psychology is the moralization of the individual by the society”.

Following the leads of Freud and Durkheim, most social scientists have viewed moralization as a process of internalizing culturally given external rules through rewards, punishments, or identification. Without questioning the view that the end point of the moralization process is one in which conduct is oriented to internal standards, one may well reject the assumption that such internal standards are formed simply through a process of “stamping in” the external prohibitions of the culture upon the child’s mind. From the perspective of a developmental psychology such as that of Piaget (1932) or J. M. Baldwin (1906), internal moral standards are rather the outcome of a set of transformations of primitive attitudes and conceptions. These transformations accompany cognitive growth in the child’s perceptions and orderings of a social world with which he is continuously interacting.

Directed by this developmental conception of the moralization process, our research has been oriented to the following tasks:

1. The empirical isolation of sequential stages in the development of moral thought.
2. The study of the relation of the development of moral thought to moral conduct and emotion.
3. The application of a stage analysis of moral judgment to subcultural differences as well as pathological deviance in moral orientations.
4. The isolation of the social forces and experiences required for the sequential development of moral orientations.

In the present paper, we shall summarize our findings as they relate to moralization as an age-developmental process, and we shall compare this characterization with that of Piaget.

The Isolation of Six Stages of Development in Moral Thought

Our developmental analysis of moral judgment is based upon data obtained from a core group of 72 boys living in Chicago suburban areas. The boys were of three age groups: 10, 13, and 16. Half of each group was upper-middle class; half, lower to lower-middle class. For reasons to be discussed in the sequel to this paper, half of each group consisted of popular boys (according to classroom sociometric tests), while

* Part II: Social Experience, Social Conduct and the Development of Moral Thought will appear in a subsequent issue of "Vita Humana".
half consisted of socially isolated boys. All the
groups were comparable in I. Q.

We have also used our procedures with a
group of 24 delinquents aged 16, a group of 24
six-year-olds, and a group of 50 boys and girls
aged 13 residing outside of Boston.

The basic data were two-hour tape-recorded
interviews focussed upon hypothetical moral
dilemmas. Both the content and method of the
interviews were inspired by the work of Piaget
(1932). The ten situations used were ones in
which acts of obedience to legal-social rules or to
the commands of authority conflicted with the
human needs or welfare of other individuals. The
child was asked to choose whether one should
perform the obedience-serving act or the need-
serving act and was then asked a series of ques-
tions probing the thinking underlying his choice.

Our analysis of results commenced with a
consideration of the action alternatives selected by
the children. These analyses turned out to shed lit-
tle light on moral development. Age trends toward
choice in favor of human needs, such as might be
expected from Piaget’s (1932) theory, did not
appear. The child’s reason for his choice and his
way of defining the conflict situations did turn out
to be developmentally meaningful, however.

As an example, one choice dilemma was the
following:

Joe’s father promised he could go to camp if
he earned the $ 50 for it, and then changed his
mind and asked Joe to give him the money he had
earned. Joe lied and said he had only earned $ 10
and went to camp using the other $ 40 he had
made. Before he went, he told his younger
brother Alex about the money and about lying to
their father. Should Alex tell their father?

Danny, a working class 10-year-olds of I. Q.
98 replied: “In one way it would be right to tell on
his brother or his father might get mad at him and
spank him. In another way it would be right to
keep quiet or his brother might beat him up.”

Obviously whether Danny chooses to fulfill
his “obligation” to adult authority or to peer loy-
alty will depend on which action he perceives as
leading to the greater punishment. What interests
us most, however, is the fact that Danny does not
appear to have a conception of moral obligation.

His judgments are predictions; they are not
expressions of moral praise, indignation, or obli-
gation. From one to the next of the situations pre-
sented him, Danny was not consistently
“authoritarian” or “humanistic” in his choices,
but he was consistent in choosing in terms of the
physical consequences involved.

A careful consideration of individual cases
eventually led us to define six developmental
types of value-orientation. A Weberian ideal-
typological procedure was used to achieve a com-
bination of empirical consistency and logical
consistency in defining the types. The six devel-
opmental types were grouped into three moral
levels and labelled as follows:

**Level I. Pre-Moral Level**

Type 1. Punishment and obedience orientation.
Type 2. Naive instrumental hedonism.

**Level II. Morality of Conventional Role-Conformity**

Type 3. Good-boy morality of maintaining
good relations, approval of others.
Type 4. Authority maintaining morality.

**Level III. Morality of Self-Accepted Moral Principles**

Type 5. Morality of contract and of demo-
cratically accepted law.
Type 6. Morality of individual principles of
conscience.

These types will be described in more detail
in subsequent sections of this paper. The typology
rests upon 30 different general aspects of moral-
ity which the children brought into their thinking.
One such aspect was the child’s use of the con-
cept of rights, another his orientation toward
punitive justice, a third his consideration of inten-
tions as opposed to consequences of action, etc.
Each aspect was conceived as a dimension
defined by a six-level scale, with each level of the
scale corresponding to one of the six types of
morality just listed.
A “motivational” aspect of morality was defined by the motive mentioned by the subject in justifying moral action. Six levels of motive were isolated, each congruent with one of the developmental types. They were as follows:

1. Punishment by another.
2. Manipulation of goods, rewards by another.
3. Disapproval by others.
4. Censure by legitimate authorities followed by guilt feelings.
5. Community respect and disrespect.

These motives fall into three major levels. The first two represent on the verbal level what McDougall (1905) termed “the stage in which the operation of the instinctive impulses is modified by the influence of rewards and punishments”. The second two correspond to McDougall’s second stage “in which conduct is controlled in the main by anticipation of social praise and blame”. The fifth, and especially the sixth, correspond to McDougall’s third and “highest stage in which conduct is regulated by an ideal that enables a man to act in the way that seems to him right regardless of the praise or blame of his immediate social environment”.

A more cognitive aspect of morality, conceptions of rights, was defined in terms of the following levels:

1. No real conception of a right. “Having a right” to do something equated with “being right”, obeying authority.
2. Rights are factual ownership rights. Everyone has a right to do what they want with themselves and their possessions, even though this conflicts with rights of others.
3. Same as the second level concept but qualified by the belief that one has no right to do evil.
4. Recognition that a right is a claim, a legitimate exception, as to the actions of others. In general, it is an earned claim, e.g., for payment for work.
5. A conception of unearned, universal individual or human rights in addition to rights linked to a role or status.
6. In addition to level 5 conceptions, a notion of respecting the individual life and personality of the other.

Each of the 50 to 150 moral ideas or statements expressed by a child in the course of an interview could be assigned to one of 180 cells (30 dimensions × 6 levels per dimension) in the classification system. This classification yielded scores for each boy on each of the six types of thought based on the percentage of all his statements which were of the given type. Judges were able to assign responses to the moral levels with an adequate degree of agreement, expressed by product moment correlations between judges ranging from .68 to .84.

In spite of the variety of aspects of morality tapped by the 30 dimensions, there appeared to be considerable individual consistency in level of thought. Thus 15 boys in our original group of 72 were classified (in terms of their modal response) as falling in the first of our six types. On the average, 45 % of the thinking of these 15 boys could be characterized as Type 1.

The differences between our age groups offer evidence concerning the developmental nature of the typology. The age trends for usage of the six types of thought are presented in figure 1.
It is evident that our first two types of thought decrease with age, our next two types increase until age 13 and then stabilize, and our last two types increase until age 16. Analyses of variance of the percentage usage of each type of thought by the 10-, 13-, and 16-year-old groups were carried out*. The differences between the three age groups in usage of all types of thought but one (Type 3) were found to be significant beyond the .01 level.

If our stages of moral thinking are to be taken as supporting the developmental view of moralization, evidence not only of age trends, but of sequentiality is required. While the age trends indicate that some modes of thought are generally more difficult or advanced than other modes of thought, they do not demonstrate that attainment of each mode of thought is prerequisite to the attainment of the next higher in a hypothetical sequence.

Because the higher types of moral thought replace, rather than add to, the lower modes of thought, the Guttman (1950) scaling technique used by other investigators to establish certain cognitive developmental sequences (Schuessler and Strauss, 1950; Wohlwill, 1960) is not appropriate for our material. A more appropriate statistical model is derived from Guttman’s (1954) quasi-simplex correlation matrix. The “simplex” pattern of intercorrelations derives from the expectation that the more two types of thought are separated from one another in a developmental sequence, the lower should be the correlations between them. This expectation can be compared with the actual intercorrelations obtained among the six types of thought.

Each child had a profile showing the percent of his responses that fell within each of the six types of thought. These profiles permitted us to correlate each of the six types of thought with each of the others across the sample of 72 boys, aged 10 to 16. The resulting product-moment correlation matrix is presented in table 1. Each correlation reflects the extent to which the individuals who use the type of thought identified by the numbers at the left margin of the matrix also use a second type of thought identified by the numbers above the matrix.

The expectation applied to the matrix is that the correlations between two types of thought should decrease as these two types are increasingly separated in the developmental hierarchy. The matrix presented in table 1 indicates general agreement with the expectation. The correlations diminish as we move away from the main diagonal entries, whether we go across the columns or down the rows. (The correlations are markedly negative, partially because of the necessity for one percentage score to decrease as another increases.) Furthermore, correlations of types within the three main levels are higher than between levels, supporting our distinction of levels**.

The First Two Stages Compared with Piaget’s Stages

Our proposed sequence of stages must have logical as well as empirical support. In characterizing our stages, we shall attempt a logical justification of their location in the hierarchy and at the same time, a comparison of our stages and concepts with Piaget’s (1932) theory of developmental stages of moral judgment***.

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* The means in figure 1 for age 7 are based on only 12 boys and a limited number of responses per child, compared to the older group.

** These cross-sectional findings need to be supplemented by a longitudinal analysis if we are to accept the stages as a genuine developmental sequence. We are presently engaged in a semilongitudinal analysis, in which we have reinterviewed 54 of our original subjects after a three-year interval. The findings will be reported in a subsequent publication.

*** There are a number of other recent typologies of moral judgment relevant to our own, briefly discussed elsewhere (Kohlberg, 1963).

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### Table 1. Matrix of Intercorrelations between Six Types of Moral Judgment

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<th>Type</th>
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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 $2000 for a small dose of the drug. The sick woman’s husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money, but he could only get together about $1000 which is half of what it cost. He told the druggist that his wife was dying and asked him to sell it cheaper or let him pay later. But the druggist said: “No, I discovered the drug and I’m going to make money from it.” So Heinz got desperate and broke into the man’s store to steal the drug for his wife. Should the husband have done that?

The interview proceeded as follows:

“His wife was sick and if she didn’t get the drug quickly, she might die. Maybe his wife is an important person and runs a store and the man buys stuff from her and can’t get it any other place. The police would probably blame the owner that he didn’t save the wife. That would be like killing with a gun or knife.”

(Interviewer: Would it be all right to put the druggist in the electric chair for murder?)

“If she could be cured by the drug and they didn’t give it to her, I think so, because she could be an important lady like Betsy Ross, she made the flag. And if it was President Eisenhower, he’s important, and they’d probably put the man in the electric chair because that isn’t fair.”

(Should the punishment be more if she’s an important person?)

“If someone important is in a plane and is allergic to heights and the stewardess won’t give him medicine because she’s only got enough for one and she’s got a sick one, a friend, in back, they’d probably put the stewardess in a lady’s jail because she didn’t help the important one.”

(Is it better to save the life of one important person or a lot of unimportant people?)

“All the people that aren’t important because one man just has one house, maybe a lot of furniture, but a whole bunch of people have an awful
lot of furniture and some of these poor people might have a lot of money and it doesn’t look it.”

On the one hand we notice Tommy’s reasoning ability, his utilitarian calculation of the economics of the greater good. On the other hand we notice that the calculation of value is based on a “primitive” assumption as to the basis of moral values. A prosaic and commendable concern about the wife’s life is eventually based on the notion that the value of a life is determined by its “importance” and that such importance is essentially a function of the amount of furniture owned.

Why are we justified in using the term “primitive” in describing the derivation of the value of life from the value of furniture? Awarding moral value to furniture involves a failure to differentiate the self’s point of view from that of others, or to differentiate what the community holds as a shared or moral value (the value of life) and what the individual holds as a private value (the desire for furniture). Such a lack of a sense of subjectivity of value is also suggested by Tommy’s definition of culpability in terms of consequences rather than intentions (the wickedness of the druggist depends on his causing the loss of an important life).

It seems warranted then to view our Type 1 responses as reflecting cognitively primitive value assumptions.

Type 1 value assumptions, furthermore, are externalized from the motivational point of view, as indicated by definitions of right and wrong in terms of punishment and conformity to power-figures. As an example, Tommy defines the druggist’s wrong in terms of a prediction with regard to punishment, and in terms of conformity to the wishes of important persons.

Such an interpretation of Tommy’s responses as involving external motives is open to question, however. Piaget would see these responses as reflecting the young child’s deep respect for authority and rules. Piaget sees the young child’s morality as externally oriented only in a cognitive sense, not in a motivational sense. According to Piaget, the strong emotional respect the young child feels for authority and rules makes him feel unable to judge for himself, and forces him to rely on external adult sanctions and commands to define what is right and wrong. In the Piaget view, the child is oriented to punishment only because punishment is a cue to what is disapproved by adults or by the “sacred World-Order”.

In contrast to Piaget’s interpretation, it has seemed to us simpler to start with the assumption that the Type 1 definition of wrong in terms of punishment reflects a realistic-hedonistic desire to avoid punishment, rather than a deep reverence for the adult “World-Order”. The children of 10 and older who represent Type 1 morality did not in fact seem to show strong respect for adult authority. A case in point is Danny who, in a situation of conflict between brother and father, defined the right choice in terms of a prediction as to which one would retaliate more heavily. Danny went on to say:

“My brother would say, ‘If you tell on me, I’ll whip you with my belt real hard’.”

(What would you do then?)

“Well, if I was to tell my Dad if my brother Butchie was still hurting me, my brother Butchie would go find another house to live in.”

Danny scores high on various attributes of Piaget’s “moral realism”, but it is hard to see Danny as expressing what Piaget terms “the sacredness of rules”, “unilateral respect for adults”, or a “belief in a World-Order”.

We have concluded that it is possible to interpret all our observations with regard to “moral realism” without invoking Piaget’s notion of the child’s sense of the sacredness of authority and rules. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of other studies of Piaget’s moral judgment dimensions, as is documented elsewhere (Kohlberg, 1963).

Regardless of the validity of Piaget’s interpretation of “moral realism”, Piaget’s assumption that the young child feels a strong idealized moral respect for adult authority requires direct investigation. Piaget shares this assumption with psychoanalysts, and some form of the assumption seems critical for widely accepted notions as to the early childhood origins of adult neurotic guilt.

In collaboration with B. Brener, we attempted a direct study of the validity of the Piaget assumption of “heteronomous respect” to explain the
moral judgments of children aged four to eight. Earlier work with children of six and seven indicated that these children defined right and wrong mainly by reference to punishment when faced with simplified versions of our moral dilemmas. Did this indicate a basically “hedonistic” view of right or wrong or did it rather reflect a lack of cognitive resources in answering “why” questions in the context of a concern for conformity to sacred authority (Piaget’s view)?

To investigate this issue, 96 children, aged 4, 5, and 7 were confronted with doll-enactments of stories in which disobedience to a rule (or adult) was followed by reward, and other stories in which obedience to a rule was followed by punishment. One such story was of a boy who was ordered to watch a baby on a couch while his mother left the house. The boy in the story proceeded to run out of the house and play outside. The S was asked to complete the story. The S was told that the mother returned and gave the disobedient boy some candy. S was then asked whether the child-doll had done good or bad, and a series of related questions.

In general, the 4-year-olds defined the story act as good or bad according to the reward or punishment rather than according to the rule or adult command. The older children showed considerable conflict, some of the 7-year-olds defining right and wrong in terms of the rule and showing concern about the “injustice” of punishing good and rewarding evil. These older children, however, still explained the rightness and wrongness of the act in relation to sanctions, but took a long-range or probabilistic view of this relation. Disobedience might have been rewarded in that situation, the children said, but in general it would still lead to punishment.

These results, while not consistent with Piaget’s assumptions, should not be used to conclude that the moral decisions of 4–5-year-olds are based on crafty hedonism. Only as children reach a level of cognitive development at which the meaning of moral concepts can be differentiated from punishment can they attain either a definite hedonism or a degree of disinterested respect for authority.

The emergence of individualistic hedonism out of such growing cognitive differentiation is suggested by the responses which fall in our Type 2. Just as our first stage of morality coincides descriptively with Piaget’s “heteronomous stage” but differs from it in interpretation, so our second stage coincides descriptively with Piaget’s autonomous stage but differs from it in interpretation. Like Piaget and others, we found an increase in the use of reciprocity (exchange and retaliation) as a basis for choice and judgment in the years six to ten, though not thereafter. We also found age increases in notions of relativism of value, and in egalitarian denial of the moral superiority of authorities.

These reactions were common enough and well enough associated in our 10-year-olds to help define our Type 2. The tendency to define value relative to private needs is reflected in the response of Jimmy (a 10-year-old working-class boy, I. Q. 105) to our test situation about mercy-killing. The story continues the plight of the wife dying of cancer as follows:

The doctor finally got some of the radium drug for Heinz’s wife. But it didn’t work, and there was no other treatment known to medicine which could save her. So the doctor knew that she had only about six months to live. She was in terrible pain, but she was so weak that a good dose of a pain-killer like ether or morphine would make her die sooner. She was delirious and almost crazy with pain, and in her calm periods, she would ask the doctor to give her enough ether to kill her. She said she couldn’t stand the pain and she was going to die in a few months anyway.

Should the doctor do what she asks and make her die to put her out of her terrible pain?

Jimmy replied, “It’s according to how you look at it. From the doctor’s point of view, it could be a murder charge. From her point of view, it isn’t paying her to live anymore if she’s just going to be in pain.”

(How about if there were a law against it?)

“It should be up to her; it’s her life. It’s the person’s life, not the law’s life.”

In this situation Jimmy defines right action instrumentally, as means to individual values; he defines it relativistically, in relation to the conflicting values of various individuals; and he defines it hedonistically, in terms of “paying” in
pleasure and pain. The woman has ownership rights over herself, she is her own property. In more mature types of thought rights are defined relative to duties, the law is seen as defending and defining rights, and the law’s respect for the woman’s rights represents a respect for her personality and life.

Jimmy also relied heavily on reciprocity in defining role relations as indicated by such remarks as the following:

(Why should someone be a good son?)
“Be good to your father and he’ll be good to you.”

The advance in cognitive differentiation of this type of response over that of Type 1 seems evident. It seems clear that such definition of value in terms of ego-need and reciprocity of needs is in a sense internal; i.e., it is not simply a reflection of direct teaching by others. It reflects rather Type 2’s increasing awareness of its own ego-interests and of the exchange of ego-interests underlying much of social organization.

It also seems evident, however, that the Type 2 modes of thought are far from constituting an adequate or mature basis for morality. We find in a number of our older delinquent boys that further intellectual development seems to carry this Type 2 morality to the cynicism which is its logical endpoint. For example, John, a bright 17-year-old working-class delinquent (I. Q. 131), said in response to the story about stealing a drug for one’s wife:

“Should the husband steal the drug for his wife? I would eliminate that into whether he wanted to or not. If he wants to marry someone else, someone young and good-looking, he may not want to keep her alive.”

John’s hedonistic relativism was also associated with a view of rights and law which was the systematic endpoint of Jimmy’s views:

(Should the law make a worse punishment for stealing $500 or for cheating that amount by making a personal loan with no intention to repay it?)

“I don’t see that they have a right to decide anything? Who are they? They didn’t get robbed and they don’t do the stealing. It’s vanity, they like the feeling of saying what’s right. Laws are made by cowards to protect themselves.”

Insofar as John was willing to make judgments not based completely on hedonistic relativism, they involved some notion of equality or reciprocity, e.g.:

“If a buddy of mine loans me something I’d do anything for him. If he double-crosses me, I’ll do anything against him.”

From a developmental view, then, the Type 2 morality of need and reciprocity reflects both cognitive advance and a firmer internal basis of judgments than does the Type 1 morality. It does not, however, give rise to any of the characteristics usually attributed to moral judgment, or to a sense of obligation. While possessing the basic attributes stressed by Piaget as characterizing the stage of moral autonomy, this type of thought is not based on mutual (or any other type) moral respect (as Piaget had hypothesized).

The Intermediate Stages of Moral Development

It is clear that Type 1 and Type 2 children do not express attitudes toward “the good” and “the right” like those we take for granted in adults and which we often regard as moral cliches or stereotypes. These stereotypes first appear in our Type 3 and Type 4 preadolescents, whose verbal judgments and decisions are defined in terms of a concept of a morally good person (the implication of labelling Type 3 as a “good boy” morality).

A fairly typical Type 3 “good boy” response to the story about stealing the drug is the following response by Don (age 13, I. Q. 109, lower-middle class):

“It was really the druggist’s fault, he was unfair, trying to overcharge and letting someone

*Such use of reciprocity by delinquents should not be considered evidence of a genuine morality of peer loyalty or “mutual respect” however. John says elsewhere, “I’m a natural leader. I understand how kids are made and I just pull the right strings and make monkeys out of them.”
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.”

Don’s response defines the issues in terms of attitudes toward the kinds of people involved; “the loving husband”, “the unfair druggist”, “the understanding judge”, “what anyone would do”, etc. He assumes that the attitude he expresses are shared or community attitudes.

Don carries his moral-stereotypical definition of the social world into material not explicitly moral, e.g. into a series of questions we asked concerning the status of various occupational roles. Don tells us:

“President Eisenhower has done a good job and worked so hard he got a heart attack and put himself in the grave, just about, to help the people.”

Don sees expected role-performances as expressions of a virtuous self, and bases respect for authority on a belief in the good intentions and wisdom of the authority figure, rather than in his power. It is also clear that his definition of the good and right has moved from a simple classification of outward acts (Type 1) and their need-related consequences (Type 2) to a definition in terms of “intentions”, of inner attitudes of liking and “helping other people” (Type 3), or attitudes of “showing your respect for authority” (Type 4). These concerns imply a definition of good and right which goes beyond mere obedience to rules and authority, and which involves an active concern for the social goals behind the rules.

In terms of motivation, this second level is one in which conduct is controlled in the main by anticipation of praise and blame. Praise and blame are, of course, effective reinforcers even in the child’s earliest years. In these early years, however, disapproval is but one of the many unpleasant external consequences of action that are to be avoided. In contrast, our Type 3 and Type 4 pre-adolescents attempt to make decisions and define what is good for themselves by anticipating possible disapproval in thought and imagination and by holding up approval as a final internal goal. Furthermore, the pre-adolescent is bothered only by disapproval if the disapproval is expressed by legitimate authorities. This attitude is naively expressed by Andy (age 16, working class, I. Q. 102) in his reply to the second story about telling one’s father about one’s brother’s lie:

“If my father finds out later, he won’t trust me. My brother wouldn’t either, but I wouldn’t have a conscience that he (my brother) didn’t.”

Andy equates his “conscience” with avoidance of disapproval by authorities, but not by peers. The growth of self-guidance in terms of consciously anticipated moral praise or blame seems to be part of a larger process of development expressed in the active use of moral praise and blame toward others expressed at this stage. There is also a close relationship between approval-sensitivity and what is often termed “identification with authority”. This is evident with regard to Andy who tells us:

“I try to do things for my parents, they’ve always done things for you. I try to do everything my mother says, I try to please her. Like she wants me to be a doctor and I want to, too, and she’s helping me to get up there.”

Unlike the statements of compliance to the wishes of superiors (as in Level I), Andy’s statements imply an identification of his own goals with his parent’s wishes and a desire to anticipate them, somewhat independent of sanctions.

To summarize, we have mentioned the following “cognitive” characteristics of moral definitions at our second level:

a) Moral stereotyping. Definition of the good in terms of kinds of persons and a definition of persons and roles in terms of moral virtues.

b) Intentionalism. Judgments of moral worth based on intentions.

c) Positive, active and empathic moral definition. Duty and moral goodness defined in terms going beyond mere obedience to an actual service to other persons or institutions, or to a concern about the feelings of others.

On the motivational side we have mentioned:

d) Sensitivity to and self-guidance by anticipated approval or disapproval.

e) Identification with authority and its goals.

All of these characteristics imply that moral judgments at this level are based on role-taking,
on taking the perspective of the other person with legitimate expectations in the situation, as these expectations form part of a moral order.

For children dominantly Type 3, this order and its associated role-taking is mainly based on “natural” or familistic types of affection and sympathy, as our examples have suggested. For children of Type 4, the moral order is seen as a matter of rules; and role-taking is based on “justice”, on regard for the rights and expectations of both rule-enforcers and other rule-obeyers. The distinction between Type 3 and Type 4 styles of role-taking in moral judgment may be illustrated by two explanations as to the wrong of stealing from a store. Carol (13, I. Q. 108, lower-middle class, Type 3) says:

“The person who owns that store would think you didn’t come from a good family, people would think you came from a family that didn’t care about what you did.”

James (13, I. Q. 111, lower-middle class, Type 4) says:

“You’d be mad, too, if you worked for something and someone just came along and stole it.”

Both Carol and James define the wrong of stealing by putting themselves in the role of the victim. James, however, expresses the “moral indignation” of the victim, his sense that the rights of a community member have been violated, rather than expressing merely the owner’s disapproval of the thief as a bad and unloved person. In both, Type 3 and Type 4, regard for rules is based upon regard for an organized social order. For Type 3, this order is defined primarily by the relations of good or “natural” selves; for Type 4 it is rather defined by rights, assigned duties, and rules.

**Moral Orientation at the Third Developmental Level**

It is often assumed by psychologists that moral conflicts are conflicts between community standards and egoistic impulses. If this were true, it seems likely that the Type 3 and 4 moral orientations would persist throughout life. The story situations we used, however, placed in conflict two standards or values simultaneously accepted by large portions of the community. Many of the children at stages 3 and 4 went to great lengths to redefine our situations in such a way as to deny the existence of such conflicts between accepted norms, no matter how glaringly this conflict was presented. Both types of children took the role of the authority figure in defining right and wrong, tending to insist that the authority figure would adjust the rule in the interests of the various individuals involved.

In contrast, children of Types 5 and 6 accept the possibility of conflict between norms, and they attempt something like a “rational” decision between conflicting norms. This is most clear in our Type 6 children who attempt to choose in terms of moral principles rather than moral rules. Conventional examples of moral principles are the Golden Rule, the utilitarian principle (the greatest good for the greatest number) and Kant’s categorical imperative. A moral principle is an obligatory or ideal rule of choice between legitimate alternatives, rather than a concrete prescription of action (Dewey and Tufts, 1936; Kohlberg, 1958). Philosophically such principles are designed to abstract the basic element that exists in various concrete rules, and to form an axiomatic basis for justifying or formulating concrete rules*. Moral principles, of course, are not legally or socially prescribed or sanctioned, they are social ideals rather than social realities.

An example of the use of the utilitarian maxim as a moral principle is provided by Tony (age 16, I. Q. 115, upper-middle class). He is replying to a situation involving a choice of leaving or staying at a civilian air-defense post after a heavy bombing raid may have endangered one’s family:

“If he leaves, he is putting the safety of the few over the safety of many. I don’t think it matters that it’s his loved ones, because people in the burning buildings are someone’s loved ones too.

* It is historically true that all philosophic formulations of moral principles, such as those just mentioned, are variations of a basic prescription to take the role of all others involved in the moral situations.
Even though maybe he’d be miserable the rest of his life, he shouldn’t put the few over the many.”

Tony says that leaving the post is wrong, not because of the actual consequences, but because he evaluated the situation wrongly, and “put the few over the many”. This is not merely a matter of utilitarian economics but of the requirement of justice that all lives be treated as of equal value.

Moral principles are principles of “conscience”, and Type 6 children tend to define moral decisions in these terms. When Type 6 children are asked “What is conscience?”, they tend to answer that conscience is a choosing and self-judging function, rather than a feeling of guilt or dread.

A more easily attained “rationality” in moral choice than that of Type 6 is embodied in the Type 5 orientation of social contract legalism. Type 5 defines right and wrong in terms of legal or institutional rules which are seen as having a rational basis, rather than as being morally sacred. Laws are seen as maximizing social utility or welfare, or as being necessary for institutional functioning. It is recognized that laws are in a sense arbitrary, that there are many possible laws and that the laws are sometimes unjust. Nevertheless, the law is in general the criterion of right because of the need for agreement.

While Type 5 relies heavily on the law for definitions of right and wrong, it recognizes the possibility of conflict between what is rationally “right” for the individual actor, and what is legally or rationally right for the society. George (16, upper-middle class, I. Q. 118) gives a fairly typical response to the questions as to whether the husband was wrong to steal the drug for his dying wife:

“I don’t think so, since it says the druggist had a right to set the price since he discovered it. I can’t say he’d actually be right; I suppose anyone would do it for his wife though. He’d prefer to go to jail than have his wife die. In my eyes he’d have just cause to do it, but in the law’s eyes he’d be wrong. I can’t say more than that as to whether it was right or not.”

(Should the judge punish the husband if he stole the drug?)

“It’s the judge’s duty to the law to send him to jail, no matter what the circumstances. The laws are made by the people and the judge is elected on the basis that he’s agreed to carry out the law.”

George’s belief is that the judge must punish even though the judge may not think the act is wrong. This is quite consistent with his belief that the act was individually “just”, but legally wrong. It reflects a typical distinction made at this level between individual person and social role, a distinction which contrasts with the earlier fusion of person and role into moral stereotypes. The judge’s role is seen as a defined position with a set of agreed-upon rules which the role-occupant contractually accepts on entering office. At the level of definition of role-obligation, then, contract replaces earlier notions of helping the role-partner, just as legality replaces respect for social authority in defining more general norms.

All these aspects of a Type 5 orientation seem to be, in part, reactions to a cognitive advance in social concepts to what Inhelder and Piaget (1958) describe as the level of formal operations. Such a cognitive advance permits a view of normative judgment as deriving from a formal system derived from a set of agreed-upon assumptions. Any given set of norms or roles is then seen as one of many possibilities, so that the major requirement of normative definition becomes that of clarity and consistency.

Implications of the Stages for Conceptions of the Moralization Process

We may now briefly consider some of the implications of our stages for conceptions of the process and direction of moral development. Our age trends indicate that large groups of moral concepts and ways of thought only attain meaning at successively advanced ages and require the extensive background of social experience and cognitive growth represented by the age factor. How is this finding to be interpreted?

From the internalization view of the moralization process, these age changes in modes of moral thought would be interpreted as successive acquisitions or internalizations of cultural moral
More strongly than the quantitative data, we believe that the qualitative data and interpretations contained in our stage descriptions makes the notion of developmental transformations in moral thought plausible and meaningful. We have described characteristics of the types which suggest that each type is qualitatively different than previous types. Such qualitative differences would not be expected were development simply a reflection of greater knowledge of, and conformity to, the culture. We have also attempted a logical analysis of the characteristics of the types which allows us to see each type as a conceptual bridge between earlier and later types.

The developmental conception of the moralization process suggested by our analysis of age changes has some definite further implications. Implications as to relations of the development of moral thought to social environmental factors on the one hand, and to the development of moral conduct on the other, will be considered in the sequel to this paper.

Summary

The paper presents an overview of the author’s findings with regard to a sequence of moral development. It is based on empirical data obtained mainly from boys aged 10, 13, and 16 in lengthy free interviews around hypothetical moral dilemmas. Ideal-typological procedures led to the construction of six types of moral thought, designed to form a developmental hierarchy. The first two types parallel Piaget’s heteronomous and autonomous moral stages, but various findings fail to support Piaget’s view that these stages are derived from heteronomous or mutual respect.

More mature modes of thought (Types 4–6) increased from age 10 through 16, less mature modes (Types 1–2) decreased with age. Data were analyzed with regard to the question of sequence, e.g., to the hypothesis that attainment of each type of thought is the prerequisite to attainment of the next higher type. A quasi-simplex pattern of intercorrelations supported this hypothesis.
Such evidence of developmental sequence in moral attitudes and concepts is believed to be of great importance for conceptions of the process of moralization. It indicates the inadequacy of conceptions of moralization as a process of simple internalization of external cultural rules, through verbal teaching, punishment, or identification. In contrast, the evidence suggests the existence of a series of internally patterned or organized transformations of social concepts and attitudes, transformations which constitute a developmental process.

**References**


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