

Reflection 5 (Jenna Lee)

Delineate Kohlberg's levels and stages of moral development and discuss their interface with Piaget's stages of cognitive development.

Kohlberg expanded Piaget's early work in cognitive development. However, he didn't believe that moral reasoning will be developed at early ages. As Piaget proposed that the first stage of moral development, moral realism or heteronomous morality formed ages 5 through 10, and the second stage, moral relativism or autonomous morality formed ages 10 through adulthood, Kohlberg posited that moral reasoning was not fully developed by ages 10 to 11.

Compared to Piaget, Kohlberg proposed that moral development was achieved through a long and complex process. While he accepted Piaget theory that each moral development stage is developed building upon the previous moral stages, Kohlberg did not necessarily believe that there were definite associations between age and moral maturity in which are facilitated by two main factors: cognitive disequilibrium and advancement of expanded perspectives.

He proposed three levels of moral development where each level has two corresponding stages.

In the first level, the pre-conventional level, which lasts from birth to age 9, children will go through two stages, stage 1 of obedience and punishment orientation which they follow rules in fear of punishments. In the following stage 2, children's moral development is motivated to earn rewards or favors, which is termed as the naively egoistic orientation.

In the second level, the conventional level which lasts roughly ages 9 through 15, older children follow rules to avoid social disapproval or negative evaluations by other people which is termed as the stage 3 of the good boy/nice girl orientation. As older children develop more social awareness and viewpoints, they want to seek acceptance as good people. They gradually discern the good intention as to viewing rule breaking. In the following stage 4, older children tend to avoid criticism especially from authority figures. In fear of being guilty and shameful, they conform to social rules and orders. This is called as the authority-maintaining morality.

In the final level, the post-conventional level which lasts age 16 onward, there are two following stages, the stage 5, the contractual legalistic orientation and the stage 6, the universal ethical principal orientation. In the contractual legalistic orientation, people tend to accept their moral perceptions to guide their lives based on the morality of contracts, which are deemed to be fair and just. People will consider more of the social justice and the greater good of the society. In the final stage, the universal ethical principle orientation, Kohlberg believed that people are able to develop autonomous morality based on individual conscience. He proposed that people will behave morally based on their internalized moral principles such as justice, compassion, equality, and human dignity.

At later stage, Kohlberg added a possible stage 7, the cosmic orientation. He suggested that people will behave morally as an aspirational ideal rather than an empirically verified reality. He proposed that people who reach to this level of moral and spiritual thinking will develop a perspective of care for all people. He took into account of mystical experiences of union with God or the whole reality.