

Moral Development

I. INTRO

What is morality? What makes an action moral or immoral?
(discuss)

Research on moral development has focused on three dimensions of morality:

1. Affect, emotion – corresponding to Freud’s psychoanalytic theory of development
 - Freud, in regard to morality, focused on the development of the Super-Ego, and the role of guilt feelings
 - The super-Ego developed in the Phallic stage of development (age 3-5), when the child develops an attraction for the opposite sex parent, which causes a conflict (Oedipus & Electra complexes); these children in conflict resolve it by internalizing the values of the same sex parent
 - There are problems with this theory
2. Cognition, thinking – a second approach which corresponds to the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg (handout)
 - Kohlberg made use of moral dilemmas to study the moral reasoning processes of young boys (handout)
3. Behavior – social Learning theory says that moral behavior is learned like any other behavior through:
 - (1) Observational Learning
 - (2) Reinforcement and Punishment

(Discuss) Does motivation matter? Is it possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason? Is that action moral?

4. Theological, religious argument – C. S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

- there exists a “moral law”, that is assumed by most groups, with some variation, but with remarkable similarity

EX: most groups have a moral prohibition against murder

- Where does it come from? Lewis would argue that this is evidence for the existence of God who created human beings in His own “image”
- Lewis points out that even though this “law “ is almost universally assumed, it is also universally broken

II. WHAT PROMOTES HEALTHY MORAL DEVELOPMENT?

1. Childhood – this is the time when the foundation is laid

(1) authoritative parenting style, characterized by control but warmth

- definite limits/ boundaries
- increased flexibility as children grow older

(2) positive role modeling

2. Adolescence – most adolescents internalize society’s moral rules

- most moral reasoning is at stage 2 or stage 3; conformity to external authority is trend
- while there are no guarantees, if people invest in parenting while children are young, there will usually be fewer problems

3. Adulthood – Kohlberg's stages 5 and 6 only occur in adulthood, if then

EX: the majority of boys in his original study, after 20 years, were reasoning at stage 3 or 4

III. INFLUENCE OF RELIGION

(discuss) How are morality and religious faith related?

(discuss) Are you more or less religious than you were 10 years ago?

(discuss) Is there a difference between faith and religion? Can a person have faith, but not be religious?

James Fowler, a Methodist minister, professor at Emory University, in the 1980's, developed a theory of faith development, attempting to integrate the work of Piaget, Erikson, and Kohlberg

I. ASSUMPTIONS:

Faith is a human universal, though not always religious in context or content; faith is how a person structures meaning into life, what they trust in when searching for meaning, though the object of faith may vary, everyone "believes" in something

II. STAGES

1. Primal
2. Intuitive- Projective - influenced by stories, symbols, etc; not characterized by logical thinking; corresponds to Pre-Operational stage
3. Mythic- Literal – begins with emergence of Concrete –Operational thinking processes; it is "mythic" in the sense that stories are the primary means of capturing life meaning; it is "literal" in the sense that thinking is pretty concrete
EX: "streets of gold" in heaven

4. Synthetic- Conventional – begins with formal- operational thought; it is “synthetic” as persons are able to synthesize beliefs into a coherent perspective; it is “conventional” because of the tendency to adopt the beliefs of the larger community; sometimes overly dependent on external religious authority – confusion results when authorities conflict
5. Individuative – Reflective – the person begins to establish a sense of personal identity, and to reflect and question group beliefs and practices; feelings of guilt are frequent at this questioning

EX: KJV vs. NAS

6. Conjunctive faith – a person becomes more comfortable with paradox; may not necessarily resolve them; become aware of possibility of idolatry within systems of faith

EX: Adrian Rogers – “mutual submission”

7. Universalizing faith – a principled faith, an element of selflessness in living by universal principles of love, justice, etc; not many reach this level (midlife, if at all)