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COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND MORAL DECISION MAKING

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У статті розглядаються когнітивні аспекти прийняття моральних рішень. Зокрема, розглядається теорія когнітивного розвитку, запропонована американським психологом Л. Колбергом, та можливість її застосування до аналізу міркувань у процесі прийняття рішення.
Ключові слова: когнітивний розвиток, прийняття рішень, особистість, лінгвістика, психологія.

В статье рассматриваются когнитивные аспекты принятия моральных решений. В частности, рассматривается теория когнитивного развития, предложенная американским психологом Л. Колбергом, и возможность её использования при анализе рассуждений в процессе принятия решения.
Ключевые слова: когнитивное развитие, принятие решений, личность, лингвистика, психология.

The article deals with the cognitive aspects of moral decision making. In particular, the theory of cognitive development proposed by American psychologist L. Kohlberg is examined, which could be applicable to the analysis of reasoning in the decision making process.
Key words: cognitive development, decision making, an individual, linguistics, psychology.

Moral decision is understood as an intellectual phase of moral choice, rational procedure of moral consciousness determining the choice of an act to be performed with preference for certain moral values and rules. The main stages of the procedure of making a moral decision are the following: analysis of the moral situation, formulation of its problems, comparison of possible alternative acts, evaluation of the consequences, adopting a decision. Moral reason is a well developed ability of an individual to interpret social reality and him/herself in terms of moral and general values. For moral reason, reality is not a predetermined order of things, or a closed system, but an open process which requires of an individual not only understanding of the existing situation but the ability to critically evaluate it, to transform and create fundamentally different possibilities. Moral reason synthesizes cognitive and socially creative moral culture, which presupposes man's broader and richer inner world [1].

The purpose of the article is to consider the cognitive aspects of moral reasoning.

Although moral reasoning is an interesting object for research from the cognitive and linguistic perspective, little attention has been paid to the analysis of moral reasoning. Zvada Oksana used the frame analysis to analyze the concept of morality [4]. But she paid more attention to the analysis of external dialogue not the internal one. Kohlberg, psychologist, who taught education and social psychology at the University of Chicago and at Harvard (1968-87), developed the theory of moral development, and analyzed the moral reasoning in the internal dialogue. He used the cognitive-structural perspectives on development, and focused on moral development, a specific component of cognitive development that deals with how people make decisions that affect their lives and lives of others. Based on Piagetian principles, Kohlberg developed the typology of three distinct levels of moral judgment, and two related stages within each of these levels. Kohlberg (1972) stated: "The principle central to the development of moral judgment ...is that of justice. Justice, the primary regard for the value and equality of all human beings, and for reciprocity in human relations, is a basic and human standard" [5, p. 14].

Theory of moral development is the result of a 20-year longitudinal study. Subjects were 58 boys aged 10, 13, and 16 at time 1 and were approximately equally divided at each age by social class and sociometric status. Sociometric and

socioeconomic groups were equalized for intelligence. The study included six testing times - the original interview and five follow-up interviews administered at 3-4-year intervals. Subjects were interviewed first in 1955-56; the last set of interviews (including 35 subjects) was completed in 1976-77. At each testing time subjects were individually interviewed on their judgments about nine hypothetical moral dilemmas. Each dilemma was followed by 9-12 standardized probe questions designed to elicit justifications, elaboration, and clarifications of the subject's moral judgment [3, p. 7]. The example of the dilemma and questions are:

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 10 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 druggies said, "No, I discovered the drug and I'm going to make money from it." So Heinz gets desperate and considers breaking into the man's store to steal the man's store to steal the drug for his wife.

1. Should Heinz steal the drug?

1a. Why or why not?

Based on his study Kohlberg saw moral development as representing the transformations that occur in a person's form or structure of thought. At the core of Kohlberg's theory is the claim that moral reasoning develops through a six-stage sequence grouped into three levels. Levels are considered from the socio-moral perspective, which refers to the point of view the individual takes in defining both social facts and sociomoral values, or "oughts" [6, p. 177]. The three major levels of social perspective are postulated corresponding to the three major levels of moral judgment.

Moral Judgement	Social Perspective
I. Preconventional	Concrete individual perspective
II. Conventional	Member-of-society perspective
III. Postconventional, or principled	Prior-to-society perspective

Stages are considered to be distinct or qualitative differences in individual's modes of thinking or of solving the same problem at different ages. Each of these different and sequential modes of thought forms a "structured whole" [7]. The concept of structure implies that consistent logic or form of reasoning can be abstracted from the content of an individual's responses to a variety of situations. Moral development may be defined in terms of the qualitative reorganization of the individual's pattern of thought rather than the learning of new content. The developing child becomes better able to understand and integrate diverse points of view on a moral conflict situation and to take more of the relevant situational factors into account. Each stage of development then is a better cognitive organization than the one before it, one that takes account of everything present in the previous stage but making new distinctions and organizes them into a more comprehensive or more equilibrated structure [3, p. 26]. Kohlberg believed that under normal environmental conditions the direction of moral change will always be upward. There will be no stage skipping, and an individual's thinking will be at a single dominant stage across varying content, though use of the adjacent stage may also be expected [3, p. 2].

The stages are defined in the following manner:

Level A. Preconventional Level.

Stage 1. The Stage of Punishment and Obedience

What is Right?

To avoid breaking rules backed by punishment, obedience for its own sake, and avoiding physical damage to persons or property.

Reasons for Doing Right

Avoidance of punishment and the superior power of authorities.

Social Perspective

This stage takes an egocentric point of view. A person at this stage doesn't consider the interests of others or recognize they differ from actor's, and doesn't relate two points of view. Actions are judged in terms of physical consequences rather than in terms of psychological interests of others" [6, p. 409-412].

For example:

"Pro: If you let your wife die, you will get in trouble. You'll be blamed for not spending the money to save her, and there'll be an investigation of you and the druggist for your wife's death.

Con: You shouldn't steal the drug because you'll be caught and sent to jail if you do. If you do get away, your conscience would bother you thinking how the police would catch up with you at any time" [6, p. 121].

Stage 2. The Stage of Individual Instrumental Purpose and Exchange

What is Right?

Following rules only when it is to someone's immediate interest; acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same. Right is also what's fair, what's an equal exchange, a deal, an agreement.

Reasons for Doing Right

To serve one's own needs or interests in a world where you have to recognize that other people have their interests too.

Social Perspective

This stage takes a concrete individualistic perspective. A person at this stage separates own interests and points of view from those of authorities and others" [6, p. 409-412].

For example:

"Pro: If you do happen to get caught, you could give the drug back and you wouldn't get much of a sentence. It wouldn't/ bother you much to serve a little jail term, if you have your wife when you get back.

Con: He may not get much of a jail term if he steals the drug, but his wife will probably die before he gets out, so it won't do him much good. If his wife dies, he shouldn't blame himself it wasn't his fault she has cancer" [6, p. 121-122].

Level B. Conventional Level.

Stage 3. The Stage of Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and conformity

What is Right?

Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect of people in your role as son, brother friend, etc. "Being good" is important and means having good motives, showing concern about others. It also means keeping mutual relationships, such as trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

Reasons for Doing Right

The need to be good person in your own eyes and those of others. Your caring for others. Belief in the Golden Rule. Desire to maintain rules and authority, which support stereotypical good behavior.

Social Perspective

This stage takes the perspective of the individual in relationship to other individuals. A person at this stage is aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations, which take primacy over individual interests. The person relates points of view through the "concrete Golden Rule", putting oneself in other person's shoes. He or she does not consider generalized "system" perspective" [6, p. 409-412].

For example:

"Pro: No one will think you're bad if you steal the drug, but your family will think you're an inhuman husband if you don't. If you let your wife die, you'll never be able to look anybody in the face again.

Con: It isn't just the druggist who will think you're a criminal, everyone else will too. After you steal it, you'll feel bad thinking how you've brought dishonor on your family and yourself; you won't be able to face anyone again" [6, p. 121-122].

Stage 4. The Stage of Social System and Conscience Maintenance
What is Right?

Fulfilling the actual duties to which you have agreed. Laws are to be upheld except in extreme cases where they conflict with other fixed social duties. Right is also contributing to society, the group, or institution.

Reasons for Doing Right

To keep the institutions going as a whole, to avoid the breakdown in the system "if everyone did it", or the imperative of conscience to meet one's defined obligations.

Social Perspective

This stage differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives. A person at this stage takes the viewpoint of the system, which defines roles and rules. He or she considers individual relations in terms of place in the system" [6, p. 409-412].

Example:

Q. - Why shouldn't you steal from a store?

A. – It's a matter of law. It's one of our rules that we're trying to help protect everyone, protect property, not just to protect a store. It's something that's needed in our society. If we didn't have these laws, people would steal, they wouldn't have to work for a living and our whole society would get out of kilter.

Joe is concerned about keeping the law, and his reason for being concerned is the good of society as a whole [6, p. 177].

Level C. Postconventional and Principled Level.

Stage 5. The Stage of Prior Rights and Social Contract or Utility

What is Right?

Being aware of the fact that people hold a variety of values and opinions that most values and rules are relative to one's group. These "relative" rules should usually be upheld, however, in the interest of impartiality and because they are the social contract.

Reasons for Doing Right

A sense of obligation to law because of one's social contract to make and abide by laws for the welfare of all and for the protection of all people's rights. A feeling of contractual commitment, freely entered upon, to family, friendship, trust and work obligations. Concern that laws and duties be based on rational calculation of overall utility, "the greatest good for the greatest number."

Social Perspective

This stage takes a prior-to-society perspective – that of a rational individual aware of values and rights prior to social attachments and contracts. The person integrates perspectives by formal mechanisms of agreement, contract, objective impartiality, and due process. He or she considers the moral point of view and the legal point of view, recognizes they conflict, and finds it difficult to integrate them" [6, p. 409-412].

For example

"Joe, an advanced Stage 5, says with regard to Heinz dilemma of whether to steal the drug to save his wife:

Usually the moral and the legal standpoints coincide. Here they conflict. The judge should weigh the moral standpoint more.

For Joe, the moral point of view is not yet something prior to the legal point of view. Both law and morality for Joe derive from individual rights and values, and both are more or less on an equal plane" [6, p. 182].

Stage 6. The Stage of Universal Ethical Principles
What is Right?

Following self-chosen ethical principles. Particular laws or social agreements are usually valid because they rest on such principles. When laws violate these principles, one acts in accordance with the principle. Principles are universal principles of justice: the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human beings as individual persons.

Reasons for Doing Right

The belief as a rational person in the validity of universal moral principles, and a sense of personal commitment to them.

Social Perspective

This stage takes the perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive or on which they are grounded. The perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the basic moral premise of respect for other persons as ends not means" [6, p. 409-412].

For example:

*"It is wrong legally but right morally. Systems of law are valid only insofar as they reflect the sort of moral law all rational people can accept. One must consider the personal justice involved, which is the root of the social contract. The ground of creating a society is individual justice, the right of very person to an equal consideration of his claims in every situation, not just those, which can be codified in law. Personal justice means, "Treat each person as an end, not a means" [6, p. 183].

Kohlberg found that none of the subjects reached stage 4 without having attended some college, and none reached the 4/5 level without having completed college. This does not imply that college study is always necessary for development of consolidated stage 4 or movement to stage 5. In an era or a culture with less emphasis on formal education or less accessibility to college, one might find many self-educated people at stage 4 or 5. However, the relationship does suggest that development to the higher stages is facilitated by educational experience [3, p. 71].

Kohlberg stressed that one has to be cognitively mature to reason morally, but "you can be smart and never reason morally" [6, p. 138]. He also pointed out that "the sequence is not dependent on a particular religion or on any religion at all in the usual sense. I found no important differences in the development of moral thinking among Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Buddhists, Moslems, and atheists" [6, p. 25].

He also explored moral development in Turkey, Taiwan, and Mexico, and concluded that "... a stage concept implies universality of sequence under varying cultural conditions. It implies that moral development is not merely a matter of learning the verbal values or rules of the child's culture but reflects something more universal in development, something that would occur in any culture" [6, p. 122].

Kohlberg's theory has several weak points such as, for example:

1. Use of hard stage model;
2. Claim of cultural universality;
3. Exclusive focus on justice issues as the basis of moral reasoning;
4. Some have suggested women conceive of moral issues in terms of care-giving and relationships rather than justice as in Kohlberg's scheme. But available studies have mixed results [2].

However, Kohlberg's theory suggests an interesting approach to analyzing the reasoning in decision making, and defining the moral aspects of the decision made. For example, President of the USA, George W. Bush in his interview to NBC News, on February, 7, 2004, explains his decision to start the war with Iraq in the following way:

"Well, because he had the capacity to have a weapon, make a weapon. We thought he had weapons. The international community thought he had weapons. But he had the capacity to make a weapon and then let that weapon fall into the hands of a shadowy terrorist network.

It's important for people to understand the context in which I made a decision here in the Oval Office. I'm dealing with a world in which we have gotten struck by terrorists with airplanes, and we get intelligence saying that there is, you know, we want to harm America. And the worst nightmare scenario for any president is to realize that these kind of terrorist networks had the capacity to arm up with some of these deadly weapons, and then strike us.

And the President of the United States' most solemn responsibility is to keep this country secure. And the man was a threat, and we dealt with him, and we dealt with him because we cannot hope for the best. We can't say, "Let's don't deal with Saddam Hussein. Let's hope he changes his stripes, or let's trust in the goodwill of Saddam Hussein. Let's let us, kind of, try to contain him." Containment doesn't work with a man who is a madman".

Analyzing his explanation we can see that President Bush takes an egocentric point of view. He doesn't consider the interests of others or recognize they differ from

his, and does not relate two points of view. Actions are judged in terms of physical consequences rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. However, in his explanation of making decision on stem cell research he shows a higher stage of moral reasoning. He takes the perspective of a moral point of view from which social arrangements derive or on which they are grounded.

The perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the basic moral premise of respect for other persons as ends not means:

"And while we must devote enormous energy to conquering disease, it is equally important that we pay attention to the moral concerns raised by the new frontier of human embryo stem cell research. Even the most noble ends do not justify any means" (2006 MSNBC Interactive. President Discusses Stem Cell Research).

As those examples show, the same person can take different perspectives in moral reasoning. The idea of higher stage moral reasoning is that you are able to carry on a conversation in your mind that involves both a "self" that represents you and "others" who stand for those people. And the connection of moral reasoning with the individual's inner world and the issue requires further investigation.

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