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# THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORALITY IN HUMAN LIFE: AN OVERVIEW

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## Introduction

Ethics is the discipline which is an important branch of philosophy which devotes itself to the study of moral concepts and undertakes the critical tasks of understanding the real meaning of moral notions and their significance to our lives. This is our intention is to discuss an important ethical issue i.e. the development of morality.

## Moral Development



## The Development of Morality

The development of morality in each stage depends on the basis of standard of morality and it passes through the following stages:

**The Level of Instinctive Morality:** In this first stage, an individual works on the basis of instinctive tendencies and he regards only that action as morally right which satisfy his instinctive carving, that action as wrong which fails to do so.

**The Level of Customary Morality :**In this stage customs and conventions become the basis of morality. The individual at this stage holds that action as morality which is in keeping with a well-established custom, and that action which violates it, is considered as morally undesirable.

**The Level of Reflective Morality:** In this stage, conscience guides human beings in moral matters; their moral judgments of right and wrong, good and bad depend on conscience which holds the moral authority and principles of deciding between right and wrong.

There are certain forces which are responsible for the breakdown of customary morality and reinforcing the reflective morality instead. These factors and causes have been subjected to a keen analysis and investigation by John Dewey and Tuft.

## Morality in Personal Life

The function of personal morality is to help each of us realize the meaning of our life in the world through being a person and living the personal life of a self in the world. Moral development means children's reasoning about morality, their attitudes toward moral lapses, and their behavior when faced with moral issues. The following psychologists discussed about the moral development in a man:

## Jean Piaget's Theory of Moral Development:

Stages	Age Range	Description
Sensorimotor	0-2 years	Object permanence recognized by a child.
Preoperational	2-7 years	Egocentric thought, child lacks ability to decenter.
Concrete Operations	7-11 years	No abstract reasoning or the ability to test hypotheses.
Formal Operations	11-15 years	Children begin to reason abstractly.

In Piaget's theory, moral thought has two stages: heteronomous morality, associated with moral realism ('being subject to another's laws or rules'), and autonomous morality, associated with moral relativism ('being subject to one's own laws or rules'). The stages are not mutually exclusive (e.g. most adults show a combination of both).

## Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development:

Lawrence Kohlberg developed a theory of stages of ethical development. He admired Piaget's approach to studying children's conceptions of morality. If Piaget saw children as little logicians, he viewed them as moral philosophers.

Levels	Stages	Definition
Pre-conventional	1. Obedience and punishment	Based on avoiding punishment, a focus on the consequences of actions, rather than intentions, intrinsic deference to authority.
	2. Individualism and exchange	The "right" behaviors are those that are in best interest of oneself; tit for tat morality
Conventional	3. Interpersonal relationships	"good boy/good girl" attitude, sees individuals as filling social roles
	4. Authority and social order	Law and order as highest ideals, social obedience is a must to maintaining a functional society
Post-conventional	5. Social contract	Begin to learn others' have different values; realization that law is contingent on culture
	6. Universal Principles	Develop internal moral principles; individual begins to obey these above the law

## Gilligan's Theory of Morality

Carol Gilligan, a student of Kohlberg's, contends that girls and women tend to approach moral issues differently, are more focused on caring than on rules and duty. Gilligan developed her own set of stages:

Stages	Description
Preconventional	Goal is individual survival
Transition	Transition is from selfishness to a recognition of responsibility to others
Conventional	Self-sacrifice is goodness
Transition	Transition is from goodness to the truth that she is a person too
Postconventional	Principle of nonviolence: do not hurt others or self

## Morality in Public Life

Public morality refers to moral and ethical standards enforced in a society, by law or police work or social pressure, and applied to public life, to the content of the media, and to conduct in public places. It is grounded in the notion of responsibility and accountability.

## Conclusion:

The development of morality as discussed above is not historical development. So, the above mentioned moral development according to psychological points of view as it is also of an important concern. The truth is that this development is only logical, because in it the three states are distinguished and arranged in above order according to their moral significance only. It is, therefore, worthwhile to discuss here the exact nature and significance of these stages.

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