Moral Development

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Piaget's Views

- Based on his observations of children's application of rules when playing, Piaget determined that morality, too, can be considered a developmental process.

Younger Children

Piaget interviewed children regarding acts such as stealing and lying. When asked what a lie is, younger children consistently answered that they are "naughty words". When asked why they should not lie, younger children could rarely explain beyond the forbidden nature of the act: "because it is a naughty word".

Older Children

- However, older children were able to explain "because it isn't right", and "it wasn't true". Even older children indicated an awareness of intention as relevant to the meaning of an act: "A lie is when you deceive someone else. To make a mistake is when you make a mistake".

Heteronomous Moral Reasoning

From his observations, Piaget concluded that children begin in a "heteronomous" stage of moral reasoning, characterized by a strict adherence to rules and duties, and obedience to authority.

Heteronomous Moral Reasoning: Factor 1

1. **The young child's cognitive structure-**
    -   Egocentrism. That is to say that young children are unable to simultaneously take into account their own view of things with the perspective of someone else. This egocentrism leads children to project their own thoughts and wishes onto others.

Moral Realism

Moral realism is associated with "objective responsibility", which is valuing the letter of the law above the purpose of the law.

Moral Realism

- This is why young children are more concerned about the outcomes of actions rather than the intentions of the person doing the act.

Immanent Justice

This is the expectation that punishments automatically follow acts of wrong-doing. One of the most famous cases of such childhood thinking was that of the young boy who believed that his hitting a power pole with his baseball bat caused a major power blackout in the New York city area.

Heteronomous Moral Reasoning: Factor 2

2. Relative social relationship with adults: In the natural authority relationship between adults and children, power is handed down from above. The relative powerlessness of young children, coupled with childhood egocentrism feeds into a heteronomous moral orientation.

Autonomous Stage of Moral Reasoning

- Through interactions with other children in which the group seeks a to play together in a way all find fair, children find this strict heteronomous adherence to rules sometimes problematic.

Autonomous Stage of Moral Reasoning

- As children consider these situations, they develop towards an "autonomous" stage of moral reasoning, characterized by the ability to consider rules critically, and selectively apply these rules based on a goal of mutual respect and cooperation.

Shift to Perspective Taking

- The ability to act from a sense of reciprocity and mutual respect is associated with a shift in the child's cognitive structure from egocentrism to perspective taking.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development and Education

- Lawrence Kohlberg (1969) modified and elaborated Piaget's work.
- Consistent with Piaget, he proposed that children form ways of thinking through their experiences which include understandings of moral concepts such as justice, rights, equality and human welfare.

Kohlberg Adds to Piaget

- Kohlberg followed the development of moral judgment beyond the ages studied by Piaget, and determined that the process of attaining moral maturity took longer and was more gradual than Piaget had proposed.

Preconventional: Level 1

A person's moral judgments are characterized by a concrete, individual perspective.

- Stage 1 **Obedience and Punishment Orientation** focuses on avoiding breaking rules that are backed by punishment, obedience for its own sake and avoiding the physical consequences of an action to persons and property.

The Preconventional Level

- Stage 2 **Reward Orientation** focuses on the instrumental, pragmatic value of an action.
    - The Golden Rule becomes, "If someone hits you, you hit them back." or "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."
    - One follows the rules only when it is to someone's immediate interests. What is right is what's fair in the sense of an equal exchange, a deal, an agreement.
    - There is an understanding that everybody has his(her) own interest to pursue so that right is relative.

Conventional Level 2

- Individuals have a basic understanding of conventional morality, and reason with an understanding that norms and conventions are necessary to uphold society.

- Rules are upheld consistently, viewing morality as acting in accordance with what society defines as right.

Conventional

Stage 3 Good Boy Nice Girl Orientation

Aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations which take primacy over individual interests.

- Define what is right in terms of what is expected by people close to one's self, and in terms of the stereotypic roles that define being good - e.g., a good brother, mother, teacher.

- Being good means keeping mutual relationships, and value trust, loyalty, respect, and gratitude.

Conventional

Stage 4 Law and Order Orientation

* Marks the shift from defining what is right in terms of local norms and role expectations to defining right in terms of the laws and norms established by the larger social system.

* One must obey the law except in extreme cases in which the law comes into conflict with other prescribed social duties.

* Obeying the law is seen as necessary in order to maintain the system of laws which protect everyone.

Post Conventional Level 3

Reasoning based on principles, using a "prior to society" perspective. These individuals reason based on the principles which underlie rules and norms, but reject a uniform application of a rule or norm..

Post Conventional

Stages 5 and 6

- While two stages have been presented within the theory, only one, Stage 5, has received substantial empirical support. Stage 6 remains as a theoretical endpoint which rationally follows from the preceding 5 stages

Post Conventional

- Reasoning rooted in the ethical fairness principles from which moral laws would be devised.

- Laws are evaluated in terms of their coherence with basic principles of fairness rather than upheld simply on the basis of their place within an existing social order.

Post Conventional

- There is an understanding that elements of morality such as regard for life and human welfare transcend particular cultures and societies and are to be upheld irrespective of other conventions or normative obligations.

- These stages (1 -5) have been empirically supported by findings from longitudinal and cross-cultural research (Power et al., 1989).