

For definitions are only one way of constructing complex concepts from simple ones. And if there is some nondefinitional way to assemble complex concepts from simple ones, empiricism may be unscathed by the failure of definitional reductionism. What is more, this talk of nondefinitional conceptual construction is no mere pie-in-the-sky hope. Prototype theories developed by Rosch and others provide an impressive alternative account of the structure of complex concepts. (For an excellent review, cf. Smith & Medin, 1981.) Even more sophisticated are the frame-style theories inspired by Minsky and Winograd (cf. Winograd, 1981). None of this is news to Fodor. But he is inclined to dismiss prototype theories because they are not complete theories of conceptual representation. Phrasal concepts like *Chaucer's grandmother* (p. 297) or *people who live in Chicago and eat mangleworts* (p. 274) do not have prototypes, so "it cannot be the case that understanding a phrase is a matter of knowing how its prototype is determined by those of its constituents" (p. 297). And since, on Fodor's view, "a serious theory of concepts must say what lexical items contribute to phrases," Fodor infers that "the prototype story is not a serious theory of concepts" (p. 297). Now Fodor is surely right when he observes that "it's unfortunately highly characteristic of the neo-Wittgensteinian line in lexicography that the problem of squaring the prototype story with the demands that the problem of linguistic productivity imposes simply isn't broached" (p. 297). However, by my lights it is vastly more likely that the prototype or frame account can be amplified to fit phrasal concepts than it is that we will rest content with a theory that holds the concepts of *xylophone* and *electron* to be innate. But however this may be, it is clear that in the wake of Fodor's extraordinary essay, the problem of phrasal concepts is one that can no longer be ignored.

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# Liberalism as Destiny

Lawrence Kohlberg  
**The Philosophy of Moral  
 Development: Moral Stages and the  
 Idea of Justice, Vol. 1. Essays on  
 Moral Development**  
 San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981.  
 476 pp. \$21.95

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Kohlberg believes that reason is on the side of those who oppose capital punishment, hierarchy, tribalism, and divine authority (pp. 21, 30, 176, 289). Moved by the spirit of developmentalism (pp. 87, 134, 136, 137), he holds out secular humanism, egalitarianism, and the Bill of Rights as rational ideals or objective end points for the evolution of moral ideas (pp. 164, 165, 215). For Kohlberg, the history of the world (p. 227) and the history of childhood (in all societies) (p. 25) is the story of the progressive discovery of the principles of the American Revolution (pp. 8, 38, 154, 237). Hegel's Prussian state has been replaced by Western liberal democracy. Liberalism has become destiny (pp. 227, 253).

Three great works of moral philosophy have been written in the past 10 years: John Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*, Alan Gewirth's *Reason and Morality*, and Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*. Rawls and Gewirth seek to establish the rational foundations for an objective morality. Their basic idea is that what *deserves* to be considered moral is the same across cultures and history, and that knowledge of that external, objective morality is possible by means available to all people, namely, the canons of deductive and/or inductive logic.

Kohlberg's essays in *The Philosophy of Moral Development* are reflections on the developmental implications of that idea. Of the 10 essays published in the volume, some are already classics, for example, "Development as the Aim of Education" and "From Is to Ought."

Other essays are perhaps less well known but are equally substantial, for example, "Justice as Reversibility" and "Capital Punishment, Moral Development, and the Constitution."

#### The defense of objective morality

Kohlberg advances many provocative claims in these essays. The three most important claims are (a) that "even if there are observed cultural divergences of moral standards, there are rational principles and methods that can reconcile these divergences or lead to agreement" (p. 98), (b) that moral thinking is in fact historically and ontogenetically ordered in a sequence of general stages (pp. 227, 243), and (c) that later stages can be shown to be "objectively" preferable to earlier stages (p. 190)—which explains why they tend to be chosen. Kohlberg believes that with the development of processes of rational reasoning (e.g., operational thinking) and with the right kind of education (Socratic dialogue to promote stage growth), there ought to be, and has been, a historical, cross-cultural, and ontogenetic convergence of beliefs about what is moral.

The dominant theme in Kohlberg's essays is that what is moral is not a matter of taste or opinion. Kohlberg abhors relativism. He shudders at the idea that the moral codes of man might be like the languages and foods of man—different but equal. Kohlberg's project in these essays is to establish that there is an objective morality that reason can reveal, to define that objective morality in terms

of justice, equity, equal respect for all persons, and the "natural" rights of man, and to defend that formulation against relativists, behaviorists, romantics, emotivists, psychoanalysts, and advocates of capital punishment and character education. What Kohlberg seeks is a conceptualization of what is moral derived from premises that no rational person could possibly deny by means that no rational person could possibly avoid—preferably deductive logic (pp. 226, 293). Rawls provides the philosophical inspiration (p. 192). Dewey provides the educational inspiration (p. 94). Piaget provides the psychological inspiration (p. 136). Martin Luther King provides the spiritual inspiration—Kohlberg believes that King was put to death because he was a stage 6 thinker (p. 85).

#### The failure of objective morality: MacIntyre's views

In my view, Kohlberg's project is a provocative and stimulating failure. The best statement of why it had to fail can be found in Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, and thus, to evaluate Kohlberg's project, I must discuss MacIntyre's work at some length. MacIntyre never mentions Kohlberg. Instead he sets out to show that no rational justification for moral allegiances is possible within the framework of Western culture established at the time of the Enlightenment. As MacIntyre puts it, "moral debate [e.g., over such matters as abortion] is rationally interminable" (pp. 11, 70), and 200 years of brilliant reflection has yet to produce any consensus about the nature of that purported "objective" morality.

MacIntyre reveals the incommensurability of divergent contemporary moral positions. Claims about individual rights compete with claims about social utility, which compete with claims about virtue or just desert, and no scale exists for weighing these claims. He writes that the only *telos* left to the modern secular person is to maximize happiness, yet "the notion of happiness is not a unitary, simple notion and cannot provide us with a criterion for making our key choices" (p. 61); there is no non-arbitrary way to decide which "happiness" (the "insight" or the "orgasm") ought to guide us. Having disposed of the idea of "utility" (stage 5 thinking), MacIntyre turns to the concept of "human rights" (stage 6 thinking). It is shown to be a fiction: "Every attempt to give good reasons for believing there *are* such rights has failed" (p.

67). Kant's "categorical imperative" (act as you would will that everyone else act in the same situation) suffers an inglorious fate. It is shown to be useless for discriminating moral from nonmoral judgments, whereas Kant's principle of "universalizability" (treat all of humanity as an end, not as a means) is shown to be an assumption that rational persons can deny without inconsistency.

MacIntyre persuasively argues that every notable attempt since the Enlightenment (including Rawls and Gewirth) to construct a rational foundation for an objective morality has been built out of nonrational premises, premises that any rational person might reasonably deny. Consider, for example, the work of John Rawls, Kohlberg's inspirer. Rawls argues that under a "veil of ignorance" any rational person would agree to a social contract committing everyone to grant to everyone else liberty and equality. Under this prior-to-society "veil of ignorance," each of us is imagined to negotiate a social contract ignorant of all the ways we are different from others, ignorant of our place in society, our power, intelligence, and so forth.

Immediately, forceful objections arise in the philosophical literature. Gewirth (*Reason and Morality*, p. 108) argues that the assumption of a "veil of ignorance" is "factually false" and hence provides no rational justification for rational persons living in the real world where moral decisions must be made. Ronald Dworkin (*Taking Rights Seriously*) notes that Rawls does not explain why, given that one would have agreed to such a contract under a "veil of ignorance," that one should now consent knowing fully that one is talented, intelligent, handsome, rich, and powerful. MacIntyre himself criticizes Rawls for ignoring the "past" (p. 231) and overlooking the possibility that received inequalities are one's just desert. No rational consensus emerges, even among sophisticated thinkers.

If MacIntyre is right about the "recent" history of Western moral philosophy, alternative philosophies coexist for hundreds of years cycling in and out of philosophical prominence. Pace Kohlberg, Kant's defense of stage 6 reasoning is followed by Bentham's utilitarianism (stage 5), then by Moore's emotivism (stage 2, or is it stage 4½?), and now by MacIntyre's defense of pre-Kantian concepts of virtue (stage 4?). None of these philosophies goes away, nor does any ra-

tional criterion emerge for securing moral agreement. Quite the contrary. As MacIntyre argues, the modern secular individualist, having lost his concept of the ends (the *telos*) of life and having conceived of the "self" as either "prior to" or "outside" society and community, is left with no fixed reference point for constructing a rational moral code. Existentialism and relativism become the most genuine expressions of secular consciousness.

#### The paradoxes of moral discourse

If MacIntyre is right, diverse moral philosophies (e.g., Kohlberg's "stages") do not line up along some Jacob's ladder ascending to the rational recognition of the inalienable rights of man. Instead, diverse moral philosophies are coexisting and incommensurate points, and to adopt any one philosophy (e.g., stage 6 individual rights over stage 5 social utility over stage 4 virtue) is merely to assert one's personal or collective preference. Indeed, if MacIntyre is right, moral discourse is rife with paradox.

There is the paradox of "subjectivity versus objectivity." Whereas moral discourse is ultimately a disguise for personal or collective preferences, it is carried on in impersonal terms. When we say it is "right" (or "wrong") to abort a fetus or have more than one wife, we don't simply *mean* "I approve (or disapprove); do so as well." We seem to imply that there are objective standards that justify our conclusion. Kohlberg quite properly criticizes "emotivist" theories about the *meaning* of moral terms, and instead defines moral concepts by their impersonality and their implication that as a person with reason you are obligated to behave in such-and-such a way. That is what we mean when we say "that's good" (or "bad"), but if MacIntyre is right, we have no rational warrant for meaning it. We speak to each other (or at least to those with whom we are still on speaking terms) as though our moral choices had a rational foundation. Upon examination, that rational foundation turns out to be the soft sand of preferred (and often shared) assumptions. At its limit, moral discourse becomes ideology, a deceptive form of "mock rationality."

There is also the paradox of "form versus content." Simply put, there is a trade-off between rationality and relevance. On the one hand, if moral concepts are to be made fully rational, they must be emptied of content. They must

be made devoid of relevance to everyday decisions. On the other hand, if moral concepts are to be made relevant to concrete moral decisions (abort or don't abort?), they must be enriched with nonrational assumptions. For example, the *formal* concept of justice is a rational concept. As Kohlberg notes (p. 176), "It merely prescribes that principles should be impartially applied to all." MacIntyre puts it this way: "If I claim a right in virtue of my possession of certain characteristics, then I am logically committed to holding that anyone else with the same characteristics also possesses this right" (p. 65). In other words, the formal principle of justice merely states "treat like cases alike and different cases differently." Note, it does *not* state which likenesses and differences count; the formal principle of justice says nothing about how particular people are to be treated. As a rational principle the *formal* principle of justice does not dictate that all sentient beings are to be treated in identical fashion; children, for example, may be different from adults in ways that call for special treatment such as denial of voting rights. To decide how particular people are to be treated as alike or different is to introduce nonrational assumptions; for example, that to be just is to treat everyone as though they had the same natural and inalienable rights. That quite substantive idea of justice is faithfully endorsed by secular humanists but is not required by fact or reason.

#### Conceptual inconsistencies

How does Kohlberg fare on the impossible quest for a rationally dictated objective morality? I am tempted to say "as expected." As expected, he has conceptual and empirical difficulties.

On crucial conceptual issues Kohlberg wavers. For example, he seeks a universal morality on which all rational people can agree (p. 161). Question: Does that universal morality prescribe a way of thinking about moral decisions or does it prescribe particular moral choices? Answer: First Kohlberg tells us he is studying the structure of thought, not the content (pp. 16, 170, 172, 184). Whether or not you pay your taxes is not the relevant issue, he says. It is what you think about what you are doing that matters; for example, did you withhold taxes as a matter of "conscience" or "expedience" (p. 184)? We are told that stage 6 ethics cannot tell us what is virtuous or worthy of praise

or blame (p. 172). Then Kohlberg states the opposite (pp. 192, 272). We are told that stage 6 reasoning leads to "'morally right' conclusions about specific dilemmas" (p. 193), for example, opposition to capital punishment and opposition to the anti-Vietnam War sit-in at Harvard to prevent Dow Chemical Corporation, the manufacturer of napalm, from recruiting employees (p. 45).

Kohlberg argues that the higher stages of his scheme are more advanced. Question: What makes them more adequate? Answer: First we are told that later stages are more adequate because they are more differentiated and complex (pp. 84, 134, 135) (MacIntyre, by the way, sees this as their shortcoming). Second we are told they are more adequate because they are useful for solving social problems (e.g., how to behave to an outsider) (pp. 85, 152), although this is later denied (p. 170). Third we are told that later stages are better because they require formal operational thinking (p. 76) (as if "stage" 4 philosophers and "stage" 6 philosophers differ in their operational capabilities). Fourth we are told they are better because they promote agreement about concrete moral decisions (pp. 161, 272) (agreement becomes a criterion of adequacy!). At one point we are told that the criteria of adequacy are "the *formal* criteria that developmental theory holds as defining all mature structures" (p. 135). Later we are told the criterion of adequacy "is that of morality itself, not a conception of rationality or sophistication imported from other domains" (p. 169). So forget about differentiation, complexity, social problem solving, formal operational thinking, and so forth.

And what is that purely moral criterion? The test seems to be that you believe in "equal and universal rights" (p. 39) and view them as "natural" rights (pp. 154, 191, 237), that your allegiance be to "humanity" in general rather than to your tribe, community, or nation (pp. 135, 165), that you totally renounce the exercise of power, influence, and force in getting others to do what you want and never treat others as the instrument of your will (p. 165), that you think all differences between people (sex, age, intelligence, lineage, ethnicity) should be overlooked when deciding how they should be treated (pp. 135, 144, 176), and that you hold a secular (not religious) belief that life is sacred (pp. 19, 20). Somehow, in some way that eludes me, those rather substantive ideas are sup-

posed to qualify as abstract or formal modes of reasoning. To me, they look like the ideas of an articulate liberal secular humanist, and as far as I can tell, not one of those substantive ideas is required by logic or experience.

Some of the inconsistencies in Kohlberg's essays are jarring. One feels the need for a running commentary on the evolution of his thinking about morality. In one essay, B. F. Skinner is criticized for not answering the question, "What is the good?" (p. 67), yet in a later essay Kohlberg explicitly states that his own theory does not address and cannot answer such a question (pp. 169, 172). In one essay we are told that "a culture cannot be located at a single stage" (p. 129). In a later essay we are told that cultures are "highly stage consistent across legal, religious and ethical systems" (p. 237). In one essay we are told that moral principles "are not scales for evaluating collective entities" (p. 111). In a later essay we are told that "societies undergo moral stage evolution" (p. 234, also p. 227). In one essay we are told that "if the facts of development do not indicate that individuals move towards philosophically desired principles of justice, then the initial philosophic definition of the direction of development is in error and must be revised" (p. 86, also p. 178). In a later essay we are told that Rawls's theory successfully describes "the substantive principles used in the considered moral judgments of all human beings in any culture, with one major qualification. The qualification is that it successfully generates the judgments of only the human beings who have completed the sequence of moral development and are at the highest stage of moral judgment (stage 6, attained by less than 5 percent of American adults)" (p. 192). In one essay we are told that "moral concepts are essentially concepts of social relationships as manifested in social institutions" (p. 141). In the very same essay we are told that the term *moral* refers to a type of "decision-making process" not a "social institution" (p. 169). In one essay we are told that "if all people were stage 6, they would unanimously agree that the death penalty is morally wrong" (p. 289). In the very same essay, a quotation from Rawls provides a compelling stage 6 argument that could be used to defend capital punishment (p. 284). Reading these essays side by side, one gets the impression that Kohlberg is deeply uncertain about how to seek that purported objective morality.

Reason may be less cunning than Hegel or Kohlberg supposes.

Finally, there is the question of how Kohlberg's evidence is to be interpreted. Kohlberg's essays are not data-oriented essays, although summary data are presented from cross-cultural and longitudinal studies, and many published and unpublished research findings are cited. I have the following observations on the data that are presented.

#### The nature of the evidential support

First, Kohlberg's own evidence (pp. 24, 25, 255, 256) suggests that very few people in the world conceive of society as a social contract or conceive of individuals as possessing natural and inalienable rights prior to or outside society. Those stage 5 and stage 6 ideas seem to be culture specific; if they are advocated at all, and they rarely are, it is among Western educated middle-class adults. From a cross-cultural and developmental perspective, moral exegesis seems to stabilize around the not unreasonable ideas that social roles carry with them an obligation to behave in a certain way, that society is not of our own making, and that self and society are somehow intimately linked (stages 3 and 4).

Second, the way children or adults talk about a concept is probably a poor measure of the availability of that concept to the mind of the child or the adult. For example, we know that young children know a lot more about (e.g.) causation, number, grammar, and so forth, than they can articulate. Children who differ dramatically in their ability to articulate a concept (e.g., that a cause precedes its consequences) often do not differ in their ability to use that concept to draw inferences about the world. Kohlberg's emphasis on moral articulation and argumentation tends to obscure the moral competency of his informants. Young children know a lot more about the categorical imperative and the impersonality of rules than Kohlberg's methods have revealed.

Third, I wish Kohlberg had been more Socratic in his interviews. Language should not always be taken at its face value. For example, Kohlberg (p. 223) asks a 10-year-old child, "Why shouldn't someone steal from a store, anyhow? When the child replies, "It's not good because there might be someone who could see you and call the police," it is classified as a stage 1 response. I'd make the following wager with Kohlberg. I will

bet that 7- to 10-year-old children do not define rightness and wrongness by punishment. I will bet that Kohlberg's 10-year-old does not mean that because you might get punished it is wrong to steal, but instead means to state that someone will call the police because it is wrong to steal. In other words, the call to the police and the resulting punishment is seen as a demonstration of the wrongness of theft. In my experience when the issue is pressed further and children are asked questions like, "What if there were no punishment?" or "What if no one could call the police?" they maintain the act would still be wrong. In the mind of the child transgressions are punished because they are wrong, not vice versa. That's my wager.

Finally, the world of cognitive developmental psychology has changed over the past 10 years. It is now widely acknowledged that Piaget underestimated the operational capacity of 2- through 7-year-old children. The idea of general stages has taken a beating. There have been numerous demonstrations that task content is decisive for how you think and

that by manipulating the cognitive task it is possible to elicit either preoperational thinking, concrete operational thinking, or formal operational thinking from a subject. Thinking is task-specific, and most operational structures seem to be available to the mind of a 5-year-old. Kohlberg adopts an orthodox view of the operational incapacities of young children and the reality of abstract general stages (pp. 57, 58, 120, 137). It is no longer 1970. In 1982 the waning of the orthodox Piagetian paradigm cannot be ignored. At least one expects an argument. Kohlberg's silence on the issue is deafening.

*The Philosophy of Moral Development* is the first of three prospective volumes of Kohlberg's collected essays. Volume 2 will be entitled *The Psychology of Moral Development*. Volume 3 will be entitled *Education and Moral Development*. Kohlberg and I disagree about many things. Nevertheless, his work is provocative and stimulating; and as one sociologist of knowledge has commented, it may be just as important to be interesting as to be right. ■

## The Brain and Emotions

Desmond Kelly

Anxiety and Emotions: Physiological Basis and Treatment  
Springfield, Ill.: Charles C Thomas,  
1980. 421 pp. \$24.75

Review by

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In the introduction to his book, Kelly indicates that his work is aimed at readers "interested in how the brain produces feelings as different as anxiety, depression, or sexual arousal" (p. xi). Noting the pre-eminent influence of psychodynamic approaches on American and English psychiatry, he points to biological approaches as more likely to lead to "revolutionary progress" (p. xi) in the field. At the same time, the author emphasizes the importance of bridging the gap between the disciplines of psychiatry and psychology and expresses the hope that his book will be comprehensible to readers without extensive knowledge of neurophysiology or psychopathology. To

this end he includes reviews of background material and chapter summaries, and it is important to note that this comprehensibility is not accomplished at the expense of comprehensiveness.

Kelly's book covers a number of topics on biological approaches to emotions, particularly the author's empirical work on acute anxiety. This research deals with autonomic and endocrine aspects of anxiety disorders, and psychosurgical approaches to their alleviation. After describing the various clinical syndromes of anxiety, the author devotes a chapter to the inter-relationships of anxiety, cardiovascular symptoms, and conditioning processes. The nervous mechanisms for