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PIAGET'S MORAL PSYCHOLOGY IN POST-KOHLBERGIAN PERSPECTIVE

Robert L. Campbell

From 1965 to 1990, the field of moral development was largely dominated by a single moral philosophy – the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his 20th-century followers – and by a single moral psychology – that of Lawrence Kohlberg and his followers. But the Kohlbergian conception and its Kantian presuppositions have come under stronger and stronger criticism. The Kantian tradition compels developmentalists to define too many things too narrowly. Moral reasoning is worth studying; moral character is not. Moral rules are important; moral virtues are not. Interpersonal justice is a moral concern; what is good for individuals is not. Educating the self into noumenal and phenomenal – moral and nonmoral – components is hardly consistent with the rest of our psychological knowledge (particularly when we realize that the noumenal self was meant to be off-limits to psychological investigation). And even if the Kantian tradition were prescriptively correct, it would fail to account for the development of those who, as thoughtful adults, do not consider morality to be an affair of impersonal rules and do not wall off the moral from the nonmoral in the way that Kantianism requires. The growing acknowledgment that moral developmentalists must return to fundamentals, and rethink the nature and scope of moral development studies, indicates that we are nowadays living in a post-Kohlbergian era (Campbell & Christopher, 1996a, 1996b; Lapsley, 1992, 1996; Walker, Pitts, Hennig, & Matsuba, 1995).

After Kohlberg, what about Piaget?

Heavily preoccupied with more contemporary figures, the initial post-Kohlbergian literature presented no philosophical criticisms of Jean Piaget. So a full-dress reassessment of his moral psychology is overdue. While it has always been clear that Piaget depended heavily on Kant in his moral psychology, it has proven all too easy to assimilate what Piaget was doing to what others, like Lawrence Kohlberg, did later. A careful investigation of Piaget's moral psychology does indeed reveal many similarities between Piaget's assumptions and Kohlberg's. But it also reveals important differences that did not get much attention until recently.

Most developmental psychologists have reduced Jean Piaget's conception of moral development to the contents of a single publication, *The Moral Judgment of the Child*, which, for thirty years or more, has been read as a prelude to the theories of Lawrence Kohlberg. Much is left out when this kind of story is told (for instance, by Lapsley, 1996). On the one hand, some of Piaget's best epistemological ideas – reflecting abstraction and the grasp of consciousness – are conspicuously absent from Kohlberg's work (Campbell & Christopher, 1996c). On the other hand, there was much to Piaget's moral psychology that Kohlberg did not carry forward either.

What happened to the 3 x 2 table?

The pioneering status of *Le jugement moral* is not being questioned here. We might think, however, that a book on *The Moral Judgment of the Child* would survey the possibilities in the moral realm – if only to argue against those moral viewpoints that Piaget thought were philosophically unacceptable, or regarded as obstacles to developmental explanation. Historico-critical approaches to philosophy were fundamental to his research program, and he did these kinds of surveys in other books. Consider the first two sections of the *Introduction to Genetic Epistemology* (the general introduction and the chapter on number). In these 142 pages, Piaget discusses relevant ideas from Plato, Husserl, Hume, Russell and Whitehead, the

Vienna Circle, Heisenholz, Peirce, Pears, Hilbert, d'Alembert, Pythagoras, Zeno, Cantor, and Maine de Biran – and I am repeating only the most famous names. The introduction attempts to summarize the alternatives, in the form of a 3 x 2 table of approaches to epistemology (1970b, p. 31). Piaget's own view appears at the bottom right:

	Nondevelopmental Solutions	Developmental Solutions
Primacy of the object	Realism	Empiricism
Primacy of the subject	Apriorism	Pragmatism and conventionalism
Indissociation between subject and object	Phenomenology	Relationalism

Where are the 3 x 2 tables in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*? Where are the alternatives? The book never mentions:

- + any advanced non-Western moral conceptions, such as Confucian, Buddhist, or Hindu teachings;
- + any moral sentiment theories, such as those of David Hume or Adam Smith;
- + any form of utilitarianism, for instance, as put forward by Jeremy Bentham or Mill;
- + any Ancient moral philosophy, including Platonism, Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, or Stoicism (the single reference to Plato concerns his epistemology, not his ethics).

Kant, Durkheim, and Bove

On the contrary, here is how Piaget formulated his project: "Every morality consists of a system of rules. The essence of every morality is to be found in the respect that the individual acquires for these rules. The reflective analysis of a Kant, the sociology of a Durkheim, or the individualistic psychology of a Bove come together on this

point. The divergences in doctrine appear only when it is time to explain how the conscience comes to respect the rules. It is this 'how' question that we must attempt to analyze on our own, in the arena of child psychology." (1975a, p. 1).

The first statement (that morality consists of rules) and the second (that its essence lies in respect for rules) are flatly contradicted by a number of different moral traditions, ranging from Aristotelianism to Buddhism to the teachings of Hume and Smith. So is the assumption (not stated here, but clear enough elsewhere in the book) that morality is essentially social, that rules, values, or goals that pertain only to the life of the individual have no place in it.

Just one passage in *The Moral Judgment of the Child* addresses obligations to ourselves: "we cannot treat as primitive the actions that the individual applies to himself and that are really the result of that inter-individual conduct. An order or a suggestion that one gives oneself internally could be at the root of feelings of obligation. But these internal orders are either simple replicas, or they are the more or less distant analogs of orders and suggestions tied to commands or to one has received [from external authorities], I decide, for instance, to work at a certain hour. But where would the consciousness of duty that accompanies my acts come from (or, if I fail, the feeling of dissatisfaction) if I had never learned, during the entire course of my childhood, to work at a set hour or to respect my engagements?" (Piaget, 1975a, p. 162).

In the same book Piaget worries, close to interminably, about the crispness of his stage definitions, the ecological validity of the tasks he has selected to assess moral development, and the danger of asking children leading questions. But no concern is ever expressed that the problem definition might be too narrow. Most moral traditions would not rule out moral character, or moral emotions, or striking a balance between competing goods, or acting in a certain way because it is good for you, in favor of formal rules and respect for those rules. But the philosophical tradition founded by Immanuel Kant would. Émile Durkheim, who provided Piaget with a sociological reference point, was part of that tradition. So was Pierre Bourdieu.

Durkheim (1925) offered theories of social processes and social evolution that Piaget found attractive. But they came at a cost. Piaget had to expend many pages combating Durkheim's propensity to rely society, to make it a distinct agency sitting over and above individuals; this was inconsistent with Piaget's ontology of relations. Piaget was also upset with Durkheim's endorsement of authoritarian moral education, which, so far as he was concerned, would only put obstacles in the path of a truly autonomous morality of mutual respect, reciprocity, and cooperation.

Bovet is largely forgotten, but of the three he had the most direct influence on Piaget's moral thinking. He was one of Piaget's mentors: he founded the Friends of Nature Club to which Piaget belonged while in high school, and was the director of the Rousseau Institute in Geneva when Piaget arrived there (Robert-Grandjean, 1998).

Kant had made respect for "the moral law" primary and respect for other people secondary; if you had respect for the impersonal principles promulgated by the noumenal self, then you might have respect for other people, insofar as they embodied these principles. Bovet inverted this relationship, making respect for concrete authority figures, especially parents, the basis for respect for the moral law.

Bovet may have turned Kant upside down, but from a psychological standpoint, Kant was badly in need of help. Kant was neither developmental nor evolutionary in his orientation; he treated the categories of the understanding, the noumenal self, and the imperatives that the noumenal self issued as though they were performed. What is worse, Kant (1963) actually maintained that the noumenal self was beyond the "forms of intuition". In other words, the noumenal self was not in time; the very notion of change or development in the noumenal self was incomprehensible. (Since Kant also wanted to maintain that a had noumenal self could overcome its "evil maxims" and reform itself, the timelessness of the noumenal self was a significant and recurring source of embarrassment to him.) With his developmental account of the origins of duty and moral rules, Bovet offered a way out of this perplexity.

Piaget's account of the heterogeneous morality of constraint,

based on unilateral respect for parental authority, is taken directly from Bovey (1912). In a later publication (which makes multiple admiring references to Piaget's latest project, *La reproduction au moule des l'enfant*, which was published in 1926), Bovey (1922) argued that love of God grows out of and replaces love for parents, as children discover that their parents are neither omniscient, nor omnipotent, nor morally perfect. Piaget (1973a) found this hypothesis congenial and endorsed it. Only when Piaget expounded the sources of the autonomous morality of cooperation did he find Bovey's treatment inadequate: Bovey paid little attention to peer relations, and had no conception of equilibration.

Apparently, then, Piaget was satisfied with Kant, Durkheim, and Bovey as his points of reference for moral development. Yet he would never have written about mathematics or physical causality without detailing some of the views with which he disagreed. Was Piaget sure that none of the other moral traditions had anything to offer – not even as descriptions of other possible endpoints for moral development? Was he ignorant of them? Or had he already disposed of them, with arguments that he thought he did not need to repeat?

Recherche

There is just one place in Piaget's vast oeuvre where alternative moral viewpoints appear. They are mentioned in *Recherche*, the autobiographical essay that he wrote in 1917.

In *Recherche* the young Piaget, describing the philosophical crisis within his alter ego, Sébastien, sets himself the Kantian task of resolving the conflict between science and values (or the conflict between science and faith – for Piaget, as for Kant, these were equivalent). Only in *Recherche* do we learn what Piaget thought about other moral traditions.

A pivotal question in *Recherche* is what a "scientific morality" might consist of. Through his apprenticeship in malacology (the science of mollusks) with Paul Godet, his period of infatuation with the philosophy of Henri Bergson, and the debates in which he had engaged in high school, as a member of the Friends of Nature Club,

Piaget had become convinced that evolutionary biology would have to contribute to the answer (Vidal, 1994).

The young Piaget had met both positive and negative exemplars of a biological morality. The acceptable path was indicated in the works of Guyau. The unacceptable path was laid out in the works of Le Dantec. Piaget read both of these thinkers during two periods of intense philosophical study. He checked two books by Guyau out of the Neuchâtel Public Library in 1914 (while Arthur Piaget checked out Fouillée's book about Guyau, presumably for his son's use). In 1917, Jean Piaget checked out no fewer than five books by Le Dantec (Liangsue Bessire & Béguélin, 1996).

Jean-Marie Guyau (1854-1888) was a philosopher who published extensively on ethics and aesthetics. A stepson of Alfred Fouillée, whose writings Piaget had also studied, Guyau could be described as a vitalist: he believed that a life force pervaded the universe, and that this life force naturally tends to expand, to bloom, to overflow boundaries, to expend its resources. The vitalistic orientation would have been attractive; from 1912 through 1914 Piaget was a partisan of Henri Bergson's doctrines of the "creative evolution".

But Guyau's special significance lay in his responses to the "English" moral doctrines that were still regarded with great suspicion in the French-speaking world – not just the utilitarianism of Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, but the newer, even more threatening ideas of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer. Though Piaget did obtain a French translation of Spencer in 1914, he seems to have relied primarily on Guyau's tome *Morale appliquée contemporaine: Morale de l'instinct et de l'évolution* for information about these thinkers (Liangsue Bessire and Béguélin, 1996, indicate that Piaget checked out *Morale sociale* by Guyau, but there is no such title). Guyau's (1904) book criticized these ideas from a distinctly Kantian standpoint: for Guyau, morality was fundamentally "disinterested" and "impersonal", and he feared that rational judgments regarding self-interest would lead to hedonism. Guyau's presentation had been even-handed enough to raise a commendation from Spencer himself; Piaget's reaction to Darwin and Spencer was considerably more visceral and less nuanced. Piaget reduced Darwin

and Spencer's moral thinking to the "survival of the fittest", which he rejected as grossly egotistic and morally repugnant.

Hélis Le Dantec (1869-1917) was a prominent Lamarckian evolutionary biologist, who, as Vidal (1994) has demonstrated, also had a profound influence on Piaget's early development. Piaget was indebted to Le Dantec for notions as central to his own framework, as equilibrium and assimilation. But Le Dantec was also being cited constantly by Piaget's friend Gastave Juret, who was active in the debates that took place at the Friends of Nature Club, criticizing Piaget's reliance on the "nonempirical" doctrines of Bergson and Poulitke (Vidal, 1996). Le Dantec was an outspoken materialist, determinist, and atheist. Particularly troubling were his moral views, which in Piaget's eyes legitimized not only competition but outright struggles for power and dominance.

Closely following Guyau (1893), Piaget begins his solution to the moral problem in *Recherche* by announcing that "every morality has anticipated, and evolutionary moralities have proven, that the good is life itself and evil is everything that impedes life from blooming" (1938, pp. 173-174). But what are the implications of an evolutionary morality? "Guyau, basing his morality on life, arrived at the noblest altruism, while Nietzsche, starting from the exact same principle, ended up (we can say without deliberately oversimplifying such a rich doctrine) glorifying egoism and pride. A Le Dantec – I am not sure who I am flatterring with this comparison – arrived by the evolutionist route at the same conclusions, but how much narrower they were! As for the English, all they could arrive at from the same premises was utilitarianism (Mill) and Spencer) or a morality of opinion (Bain), and these sickly-sweet doctrines have every quality except that of being moral" (p. 174).

Having made quick work of egoism and utilitarianism, Piaget continues: "Now I am claiming that by being precise enough about biological evolution we can provide the basis for a morality of obligation – a unique morality that leaves no room for evasion. This will be neither utilitarianism, nor amorality, nor a science of morals in the narrow sense, but a morality of altruism that responds to the highest aspirations of the human conscience." (p. 174).

This morality of obligation and altruism is Kantianism slightly

modified; it is adequate, so far as Piaget is concerned, to fend off any of the objections put forward by such critics of Kant as Schopenhauer and Hegel, who complained that Kantian ethics would lead to egotism (p. 176).

But what kind of Kantianism is it in fact? Not exactly Guyau's. Guyau (1893; Poulitke, 1892) was convinced that the advance of science had already made religious dogmas untenable for educated people; the growth of our powers of reason, he maintained, leads us to question our instincts (including some that induce us to act morally) as well as our religious beliefs. Guyau's aim was not to reform religion, but to find scientifically acceptable substitutes for religiously based duties, and new metaphysical hypotheses to replace dogma. His predictions were enunciated most boldly in a book titled *L'irréligion de l'avenir* (a title significantly softened, in its 1897 English translation, to *The non-religion of the future*). Guyau sometimes said that he was aiming at a "science of morals", a formulation that Sébastien finds wanting.

Sébastien, in fact, is trying mightily to find an intellectual basis for value choices (p. 46), while staying off "the slippery slope that led to absolute positivism" (p. 48). "It was then that he read Guyau, and the sublime faith of this dabbler filled him with enthusiasm. A freely accepted him in favor of responding to life, of always affirming in oneself the best that life has to offer, despite everything, despite the mystery – there is true grandeur. ... But the poetic beauty of Guyau's work did not make Sébastien forget the provisional character of these essays. On the one hand, when boiled down to their philosophical substance, the supposed "equivalents to duty" were all singularly impoverished! ... On the other hand, like Poulitke, Guyau was still a little too positivist. That was what made him talk of irreligion, when in fact he was of the greatest believers in his troubled age." (1938, pp. 46-47).

The "Secret Altruist"

No doubt Sébastien was particularly disturbed when Guyau (e.g., 1892) scorned the arguments of theologians, like Charles Renouvier and Paul Sébastien. For theologians formed a significant part of his

heritage. Three years after *Archivis*, Piaget reaffirmed their importance. In a short article, he declared that his newly launched studies of cognitive development fulfilled a religious agenda: "On the psychological side, I have in mind the line that leads from *Vinet* or *Amiel* through *Malan* and *Fremont* to our contemporaries. Let no one laugh at this amalgam: what is the secret motive behind the German effort to apply psychological methods to education, if not the moral and consequently religious motive that drove *Fremont* to seek the psychological roots of his faith, and *Vinet* to always start from man to explain Christianity? More or less scientific, more or less dogmatic, as may suit different intelligences, this tendency is an inherited part of our religious philosophy" (Piaget, 1923, pp. 418-421).

Here we begin to see how far apart Piaget and Kohlberg could be. Lawrence Kohlberg drew his views from a direct study of Kant's writings (Lapsley, 1996), as well as the output of contemporary moral philosophers (in American academia during the mid-20th century, the most prestigious moral philosophers were all Kantian in outlook). Jean Piaget knew and read Kant, of course - he checked the *Critique of Practical Reason* out of the library in 1914 (Liénang Bessire & Béguélin, 1996) - but he was a committed Kantian long before he opened any of Kant's books. His Kantianism came from his religious training; Alexandre Vinet and Gaston Fremont were Protestant theologians (as were Paul Secrétan and Charles Renouvier, discussed elsewhere in Piaget's 1921 article).

As a young man, Piaget was active in the Swiss Christian Students' Association. He published two books with expressly religious themes (*La Mission de l'Église* and *Recherches*) before he became a psychologist, and he continued to write religious articles (Piaget, 1923, 1928, 1930) for another decade after his career change. He was brought up in a liberal Protestant tradition which regarded God as immanent (residing within each person) rather than transcendent (as a supernatural entity over and above human beings). God does not subsist outside of us, telling us what to do; rather God dwells inside of us, and our own consciences are the source of the moral commandments that bind us. The commandments of Christian morality are conserved, but their source is understood differently.

Religion within the limits of reason alone

The liberal Protestant tradition to which Piaget belonged was saturated with Kantianism. This may sound odd to moral developmentists today, when academic Kantians are usually secular; and Kohlberg had nothing good to say about religious moral education. But Kant himself was deeply religious. His objective - or from the brand of philosophy that modern science seemed to inspire. The best that Kant thought he could do for moral duties, or for the "ideas of pure reason", such as God and freedom of the will, that he thought depended on them, was to make them off limits to rational inquiry. "I have ... found it necessary", he declared, "to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith. The dogmatism of metaphysics ... is the source of that unbelief, always very dogmatic, which wars against morality" (Kant, 1965, p. 830c).

Kant (1794, 1995, 1996, 1991) immunized Christian morality against unbelief by bifurcating the self. The phenomenal self is the self as we experience it - not just as we know it through introspection, but also as we know it through the research efforts of "empirical psychology". The phenomenal self is governed by its "inclinations": by feelings, desires, and self-interest. What the phenomenal self does, its inclinations make it do; its actions are wholly necessitated by antecedent causes. A phenomenal self would have no morality; it would do whatever feels good at the moment and gratify its appetites, quite likely by preying on other phenomenal selves.

Fortunately, from Kant's point of view, we also come equipped with a noumenal self - a self as it is in itself, apart from our means of knowing it. The noumenal self is not governed by inclinations, or determined by natural causes; it is free. The noumenal self is the source of morality; it commands us to do our duty.

In the religious tradition that Piaget came from, there was no need to resort to such jargon. The noumenal self is our conscience. And our conscience is divine.

Kant developed the religious implications of his moral theories in his book *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*. A liberal

Protestant tradition, one that became well entrenched in Switzerland during the 19th century, proceeded directly from these efforts. Religious belief meant adherence to the dictates of conscience. Dogmatic commitments, such as faith in the divinity of Christ, were of secondary importance, if not entirely dispensable. The important thing was for each of us to heed our conscience, which is already commanding us to follow the precepts of Christian morality.

It should come as no surprise, then, that the two theologians who figured in Piaget's discussion of the "secret motive" behind Geneva's educational research were both Kantians. Alexandre Vinet, a prominent Swiss theologian during the first half of the 19th century, believed that true Christianity originated from the conscience of each individual, and upheld "personal" faith over the dictates of external authority.

Gaston Frommel was active during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. His theology, Vidal says, "was grounded on moral conscience and on each individual's inner conversion and spiritual experiences. ... God was to be found in the personal sentiment of faith and sense of duty" (1994, p. 98). Frommel defined the goal of Protestantism as "the increasingly total obedience to an increasingly internal authority" (1908, p. 177; Vidal's translation). For Frommel, moral development ought to progress toward greater autonomy – toward greater reliance on the nonrational self.

Altruism, humility, and sacrifice

Piaget's expressly religious orientation helps to explain some otherwise puzzling differences between his brand of Kantianism and the kind that has become familiar to us through Rawls (1971), Habermas (1990), Kohlberg (1981a) or Kohlberg, Levine and Hewer (1983). All of these thinkers are impersonalists. Moral commitments must apply equally to everyone; principles of justice are the model for morality, if not its sum total.

But in *Kohlberg's* Piaget announces an altruistic morality rather than an impersonal one. Immanuel Kant drove a wedge between self-interest and morality; he preached duty and self-denial; he

spoke disapprovingly of prudence and the "principle of happiness". But while Kant made altruism possible, he was not an altruist himself (Pulickoff, 1971). In fact, he claimed that we have duties to ourselves, such as a duty to develop our talents, or a duty not to stupefy ourselves with food and drink. A purely altruistic morality is something that developed after Kant, in the first half of the 19th century.

In contemporary discussions, the concept of altruism has been overgeneralized so broadly that it is in danger of losing its meaning (Kempbell & Christopher, 1984b): any bit of kindness or generosity, any act done for the benefit of others, any indication that one's interests might extend beyond one's epidermal layer, is often labelled altruistic. Piaget's altruism was not of this watered-down variety; he spoke, approvingly, of Auguste Comte's (1866) advocacy of altruism and sacrifice. Comte (1798-1857), the founder of both positivism and sociology, propounded a religion of the "Great Being, Humanity" whose first principle was *Vivre pour autrui* (Live for others). He invented the word *altruisme* to express his moral ideal. To Comte's "Religion of Humanity", Piaget gives the significant accolade, "he was the first to understand the possibility of a religion within the limits of experience alone" (1918, p. 190). The words ought to sound familiar. Piaget means that Comte was the first to deliver a "scientific morality" within the constraints imposed by Kant.

Anyone who doubts the strictness of Piaget's altruism should read his discussion of sacrifice (1918, p. 190), in which he argues that morality and sacrifice are correlative: morality requires us to make internal changes that promote equilibrium, whereas sacrifice directly improves the social equilibrium by giving up significant values to others and altering our position in society.

Nor did Piaget have any doubt that sacrifice was morally obligatory. In *Kohlberg's*, he claims that Jesus Christ enjoyed perfect harmony between his nonrational and phenomenal selves. So Jesus had no way out; he had to sacrifice himself. "There was a human conscience that knew perfect harmony between that part of the self that says 'you must' and the part that listens and puts into action. And in this conscience this equilibrium took the form of total com-

manus with the divine. 'The Father and I are one.' And since they were one, Christ took sacrifice farther than any man had ever done, all the way to the Cross" (p. 200). It should be noted that Piaget equated the noumenal self or conscience with absolute value (the ideal equilibrium toward which all living things tend); with God; and with the source of all values, i.e., the Father. (The reader who finds these formulations a bit loose would not be surprised to learn that Piaget's own teacher, Raymond, criticized the ambiguity in his conception of God, cf. *L'homme Beside & Beyond*, 1936.)

In holding up the imitation of Christ as morally obligatory, Piaget followed in Kant's (1948) footsteps. Piaget's treatment of humility is also instructive: "The best touchstone of the validity of a moral system is the satisfaction it gives to human humility. The farther a man has traveled on the moral path, the humbler he is. This is not a principle; it is a fact of experience. Every utilitarian morality is therefore bad, because if we believe the utilitarian, everyone is easily capable of attaining perfect virtue. The purely individualist morality of a Spinoza ceases to be moral with the theorem: 'Humility is not a virtue'. How superior is the morality of a Pascal making the supreme outcry: 'The self is hateful' " (1918, p. 189).

Making a moral commitment to the absolute value guarantees humility and a need for salvation: "... because it is divine value alone that gives the moral conscience the absoluteness that believers attribute to it, the primary feeling that a man experiences when confronted with this value is the feeling of complete misery, of incapacity to attain any good on his own. This feeling of distress, which science explains by demonstrating the continual opposition between real organizations and ideal organizations, is exacerbated by faith. The more we believe, the more we are humble and the more we cry for help." (p. 200).

Piaget concluded that if we have faith in the "absolute value" of ideal equilibrium, which is constituted by our noumenal self, we will become painfully aware of our distance from ideal equilibrium. Or in Christian terms, we will become aware of our distance from God; we will stand in need of salvation, and we will be helped without Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

While Piaget was largely following the program laid down in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, he thought that Kantian impersonalism needed adjusting. Morality must follow universalizable rules, but it must not only be social, it must be altruistic. The noumenal self needs fortifying, too; if it is not to succumb to noumenal egotism, other noumenal selves must dwell within it.

In *Recherche*, Piaget drew on psychoanalytic theories of "complexes", and probably on hints in Guyau's writings, to argue that each personality includes the personalities of others. We contain multitudes; we harbor subpersonalities derived from concrete others in our environment. It is not just those who are close to us who give rise to complexes within us; Piaget talks as though each individual is internally related to everyone else (in his local community? in her nation? in the whole world?). We cannot reach equilibrium individually unless we strive to satisfy all of these concrete others, and bring our subpersonalities into balance with our overall personality. This is not particularistic, "caring" altruism, as might be expected if we harbor subpersonalities that originate with our mothers and fathers and siblings and friends and classmates; it is altruism that owes its obligations to everyone else.

Altruism embodies the ideal equilibrium between individuals, and between individuals and society, but our personal equilibrium is already a microcosm of these other forms of equilibrium. "Though egoism incurs ... social disapproval, its true condemnation is borne by the individual who practices egoism and feels the disequilibrium within himself that is its effect" (pp. 178-179). Piaget finds fault with those who "make duty toward oneself the indispensable basis of morality ... failing to see in moral obligation the sign of an organization that is both individual and social and failing to find it within each individual (as we have done), they are incapable of getting any sort of altruism out of duty toward oneself. They can make respect legitimate, but never service to our neighbor. Spinoza is one example" (p. 179).

Altruism is not a strong presence in *The Moral Judgment of the Child*; in that book, "altruistic" is an occasional positive epithet and

"egoistic" is a negative one (just as "solidarity" is good and "competition" is bad), but virtually everything can be understood in terms of an impersonal morality of justice. But Piaget (1985a, 1998a, 1995c) reaffirmed his altruistic convictions in his sociological writings of the 1940s. His moral sociology may have been full of abstract equations of exchange and formal criteria of equilibrium, such as reversibility and reciprocity. Piaget (1995d) argued, however, that moral relations were not interchangeable or substitutable; each moral relationship between an individual and a concrete other is unique. Consequently, Piaget believed that moral relationships are distinct from legal relationships, and he took Kant to task for "legalism".

Just as Kant (1963) believed that the moral rules or maxims adopted by another person's noumenal self are inscrutable to us, Piaget (1918) maintained that we cannot know what internal commitments other people have made: "I know nothing of my neighbor's responsibility ... There is but one being that I may judge, and that is myself, for I have made myself responsible ..." (pp. 183-184). In the sociological writings (e.g., 1995d), Piaget maintains that every "moral relationship" is unique: if person *A* makes a promise to person *B*, they have a moral relationship that is completely different from the relationship that results from *X*'s promise to *Y*. Indeed, since *A* does not know *B*'s noumenal self, and consequently does not know *B*'s true responsibilities, the relationship between *A* and *B* is somewhat of a mystery—even to them.

What is more, Piaget believed that each of us has unlimited moral obligations to those concrete others: "In a general fashion moral equilibrium is never reached because since it is linked to the condition of the indefinite satisfaction of the other, which continuously raises the ideal pursued. ... in the case of reciprocity, morality by its disinterested character acts as a factor of social equilibria, even if the specifically moral equilibrium is unobtainable." (1995b, p. 139).

Impersonal norms, then, help to balance out the exchange of values in society, but they do not suffice to bring about ideal equilibrium within each individual, or among individuals in society. That would require us to make good on unbounded obligations to

others: "moral obligations never appear to be completely fulfilled, the more delicate the conscience the greater the gap between real actions and ideal duties, precisely because these duties are multifarious and their internal construction is never completed" (Piaget, 1995d, p. 173).

Premature closure

From a Kantian standpoint, *Kocherke* has its revisionist features, some of which I lack room to discuss here: it affirms altruism and dismisses free will (Piaget later reverted to an orthodox Kantian treatment of freedom; cf. Piaget, 1930); it equates God with an abstract condition of ideal equilibrium; it urges us not to pass moral judgment on others. But the summation is resoundingly Kantian: "The conclusion of our morality is thus the condemnation of all forms of egotism, of all forms of pride, and of all forms of passion: it is Christian morality. Scientific morality thus merely confirms the views that the individual conscience has already adopted." (p. 182). Piaget promulgates his own categorical imperative: "act so as to realize the absolute equilibrium of the organization of life, both collective and individual, which is at root a rather faithful translation of the famous Kantian formula." (p. 177).

In around 20 pages of *Kocherke*, Piaget seems to have thought that he had defined morality, solved the problem of the basis for morality, and identified the ideal endpoint of moral development. Anything that the utilitarians had to say, or Spinoza, or Hegel, or Nietzsche, or Darwin, or Spencer, had been taken care of, once and for all.

Even in *Kocherke*, though, we never find the 3 x 3 table. Non-Western moral traditions did not figure in Piaget's discussion; the Greeks scarcely rated a mention. Plato's notion of virtue as a harmony between parts of the soul is reinterpreted as an equilibrium among subpersonalities (p. 179). Only Aristotle's conception of God is spoken of, and then only as a way station toward Christian theology (p. 156). What we know of Piaget's education (Schaller-Jouneret, 1984; Schurr, 1996; Liège's Bessire & Bigaudin, 1996; Robert-Grandpierre, 1996) gives no indication that his philosophy

teachers, Arnold Raymond and Pierre Bovet, exposed him to the Nietzschean Ethic, nor is there any sign that Piaget read this work on his own.

The religion goes underground

Piaget quickly stopped referring to Kohlberg. Years later, he obviously had it in mind when he wrote that "the egocentrism typical of adolescence manifests itself in a kind of Messianic attitude: the theories that the adolescent uses to represent the world are centered on his future calling as a reformer" (Inhelder & Piaget, 1955, p. 306), and when, in a discussion of the grandiose life projects that adolescents may secretly harbor, he referred to the young man "in a small class, in a small town in French-speaking Switzerland", who, "written with philosophy, merely regarded himself as destined to reconcile science and religion" (*ibid.*).

Piaget did not immediately abandon religion as a subject. But his religious publications appeared in out-of-the-way places, and after 1938 they ceased. *Le jugement moral*, which was published just two years later, never alludes to any of them. It does not even hint at Piaget's (1928) contention, expressed while his moral judgment research was well under way, that a morality of constraint and unilateral respect supports faith in a transcendent God, while a morality of reciprocity and mutual respect supports immanent religion. We would not even know from the moral judgment volume that Pierre Bovet professed a brand of liberal Christianity rather similar to Piaget's own, or that Bovet (1925) plentifully cites nearly every theologian that Piaget has stopped mentioning. To the readers of *Le jugement moral*, Bovet appears only as a dispassionate psychological researcher.

Why this transition took place is still debated. Some scholars (e.g., Perrot-Clermont, 1996; Robert-Grandpierre, 1996; Thiazant, 1996) have surmised that Piaget lost his faith. Vidal (1994) contends that it merely went underground, after Kohlberg got a disappointing response from his fellow liberal Christians, and then Swiss Protestants began turning back to Calvinism in droves.

We may never know exactly what happened. We can only

wonder how Piaget came to evaluate some of the arguments in Kohlberg. How did he square his theory of complexes and sub-personalities with his later conceptions of egocentrism, and of coordinating one's own point of view with those of others? Did he still believe that we should not judge other people? Or that we have no moral basis for punishing criminals, because their nonmoral selves must remain inscrutable to us and phenomenal punishments can exert no leverage on a nonmoral self that has adopted evil maxims? (Piaget endorsed this critique of the "expiative sanction" which he took directly from Gayan, 1893, in *Le jugement moral*.)

But he must have thought most of the arguments were sound. If he did not believe that he was on safe ground ignoring Aristotle, Hobbes and the Stoics, and dismissing Mill, Spinoza, and Nietzsche, surely he would not have let Kant, Durkheim, and Bovet define the boundaries to his moral psychology.

Moral education after Kohlberg – and after Piaget

Jean Piaget's Kantianism was distinct from Lawrence Kohlberg's. Kohlberg was firmly secular, even anti-religious; Piaget was thoroughly Christian. Kohlberg was an impersonalist; Piaget was an altruist. Kohlberg never seems to have worried that he might be reducing morality to law; Piaget sought to differentiate moral relationships from legal relationships.

In moral psychology, then, Piaget was no mere prelude to Kohlberg. But how are differences between them relevant to moral education? There is no doubt that Piaget and Kohlberg exhibited vastly different levels of commitment to that enterprise. Piaget's initial program of research on cognitive development (up through the early 1930s) was tied to the "new education" of the time (Oelkers, 1996), but he always managed to keep a strategic distance from educational issues (Perrot-Clermont, 1996). *Le jugement moral* may be continually and passionately opposed to authoritarianism in moral education, but its findings are presented as basic research. Only the last two pages (out of 300) are given over to "pedagogical consequences". For a moment, Piaget speaks approvingly of self-government in moral education, and of "children's republics". But

he hastens to qualify the endorsement: "It is one thing to prove that cooperation in games, or in children's spontaneous social life, entails certain moral effects; it is another to establish that this cooperation can be generalized as an educational procedure. On that point, only experimental pedagogy is competent to decide" (1975a, p. 329). Piaget's idea of a "children's republic" is not terribly different from Kohlberg's "just community". The difference is that Kohlberg (1981b) regarded the "just community" as a direct entailment of his theory, and devoted years of effort to implementing it in schools.

No one should be shocked to learn that Piaget was really a basic researcher and not an educational psychologist. Something in his moral psychology, however, may have inhibited him from jumping into moral education. Kohlberg's impersonalistic brand of Kantianism tended to collapse the moral domain into the legal domain. And Kohlberg believed that laws could be entirely separated from content in moral judgments: whatever your particular values might be, whether you thought Heinz should steal the drug or not, your moral reasoning would develop through the same sequence of stages. Consequently, it was possible for Kohlberg to believe that his scheme of moral education could be used in government-run schools under a regime of compulsory education without (too blatantly) favoring any moral tradition over any other. And, Kohlberg thought, such a scheme should be acceptable to everyone, because the core of morality is interpersonal justice, and it is principles of interpersonal justice that everyone needs to agree on in a democratic society. While Piaget shared most of Kohlberg's Kantian presuppositions, he resisted collapsing moral and legal relationships together, and he may have feared that any "universal" scheme for moral education would grow into the latest species of classroom authoritarianism.

Neither Piaget's moral psychology nor Kohlberg's can actually generate a universal form of moral education: both presume that Kantian moral philosophy is right, and that all other moral traditions are wrong. By contrast, post-Kohlbergian approaches to moral development are pluralistic: they do not allow moral psychology to presume the correctness of Kantianism, or Aristotelianism, or Buddhism, or any other moral doctrine.

Moral psychology, after all, is a descriptive discipline (Campbell & Bickhard, 1988; Campbell & Christopher, 1996c). It is charged with explaining how adult human beings came to hold the moral conception they hold and how they came to acquire the moral character they have – whatever those may be. Moral psychology has to explain how dedicated Boy Scouts got to be the way they are – and how dedicated members of the Hitler Youth got to be the way they were. Moral psychology has to explain how one person may conclude that self-sacrifice is the highest duty – and how another may not think that morality is about duty at all, and may reject self-sacrifice as morally offensive (e.g., Rand, 1964). It has to make sense of people who think that cocaine abuse should be legally permitted even though they believe that it is morally wrong (a phenomenon complex enough to throw one Kantian framework into confusion; see Turiel, Hillsbrandt, & Wainryb, 1993).

The descriptive enterprise does not prohibit us from judging the moral viewpoints that arise through the developmental process, but it does oblige us to account for them all. Moral psychology has to explain how people acquire harmful or even evil systems of morality, as well as beneficial ones.

By contrast, moral education is a prescriptive enterprise. And if we acknowledge moral pluralism, Kohlberg's "one-size-fits-all" scheme of moral education is no longer credible. There can be no honest moral education without an explicit affirmation of the values that are being taught, and the values that guide the training. No matter what values we think ought to guide moral education, no matter how strong our case for them, we can be sure that not everyone will accept them.

To what extent pluralism in the moral sphere is compatible with a common system of rights and legal protections in the political sphere is one of the major questions of our time (e.g., Rawson & Den Uyl, 1998). I cannot pretend to answer it in this essay. Suffice it to say that if moral pluralism is compatible with a common legal regime that protects each person's prospects of exercising self-direction in the pursuit of what is good for him or her, then genuine moral education will never find a home in monopolistic, government-run schools.

That is because moral education programs designed by Kantians will necessarily promote Kantian values; moral education programs designed by Aristotelians will promote Aristotelian values; and so on – none will ever be free of presuppositions about human nature, about moral obligation, about what is good or bad for us. The choice for moral educators thus boils down to uniform moral education for everyone, which will be achieved only through coercion, or true pluralism, which ultimately requires that parents choose schools for their children and that each school be able to go its own way. But schools can go their own only if they are not part of a monopoly – only if there is separation between School and State.

Historically, Kantian views of morality have definitely not prevented their adherents from resorting to coercion in the educational realm. But the separation of School and State completes what was begun in the separation of Church and State, for which liberal Protestants in Switzerland fought so hard in Piaget's childhood. In that regard, some small part of Piaget's moral ideals will remain relevant in a post-Kohlbergian world.

Note

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MORAL SENSIBILITIES
AND
EDUCATION

I

The preschool child

Research in moral development has come a long way since the pure paradigms of cognitive structuralism and social learning theory. The emergence of children's moral sensibilities is now conceived and investigated in many different ways, with important consequences for parents and teachers. This situation calls for open-minded reflection in order to reconsider and evaluate the state of the art.

In this book psychologists, educationists, and philosophers discuss and evaluate recent approaches and draw new lines toward the future of moral education and development research.

With contributions by Sharon Lamb,
Carolyn Zahn-Waxler & Paul Hastings,
Jacqueline Goodnow, Bill Puka, Robert
Campbell, and Thomas Wren.

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