

## RE-INTERPRETATIONS AND EXTENSION OF THE THEORIES OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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### Abstract

This paper aims at an analysis of some extensions and reinterpretations of the classical theories of moral development such as the theories of Carol Gilligan (moral / ethical worries), M. Swainson, Norman J. Bull etc. and, last but not least, a presentation of new directions of approach to morality - from the perspective of neuromoral and theories proposed by specialists such as Paul Jak and the renowned neurologist and biologist Robert Sapolsky. All this, in order to draw conclusions about how the theories of moral development can be capitalized in the educational space.

**Keywords:** morality; theories of moral development; neuromorality; moral education;

### I. Extensions of the theories of moral development

In the current social context, the need to intervene appropriately and effectively in character education must be a constant concern of educators who can build and adopt training strategies as they adapt to new orientations, new accents and scientific discoveries in the issue of moral development.

We present, for illustration, some of them, which are constructed, distanced or reinterpreted the well-known theories proposed by Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg.

#### *1.1 Carroll Gilligan- ethics of care*

The theory outlined by Carol Gilligan appears as a result of the gender controversy encountered in the well-known theory of moral development proposed by Lawrence Kohlberg.

Starting from the observation that the study conducted by Kohlberg does not include girls or participants of color, the researcher aims to study whether there are differences between the moral reasoning of boys / men and girls / women. The conclusion he reaches is that men adopt the so-called "ethics of justice" and women the so-called "*ethics of care*", this being contextual, oriented towards the other, focused on empathy, understanding the needs of others and not impartial, with impact sometimes negative (as in Kohlberg's theory).

The stages proposed by Carol Gilligan are:

1. The pre-conventional stage - self-centeredness and self-interest
2. The conventional stage - the emphasis is on taking responsibility for others
3. The post conventional stage - the emphasis falls on oneself in relationships with others; to take care of others.

Carol Gilligan advocates for the equal promotion of both types of ethics in the school, thus supporting the whole list of values on which they are built: justice, fairness, legality (ethics of justice) and responsibility, empathy, involvement, sensitivity to the needs of others (ethics of care).

### *1.2 M. Swainson - Me-Others dialogue*

This theory supports the idea that the moral development of the individual is determined by a certain "creative tension between the attitude of being honest with yourself and that of taking others into account." (Ion Neacșu, 2018, p. 144)

The first stage - up to 8 years - the child reports and conforms to the guidelines of adults, considering that they know and understand the mechanisms of the moral order.

The second stage - 10-12 years - moral behavior is group-oriented that approves or disapproves of behavior; now "the child's attempts to fool his parents appear, but he accepts the punishment, if he is caught; ambivalence towards the force of parental authority occurs; increases mutual respect for moral conduct;" (Ibidem)

The third stage - 13-18 years - takes place the internalization of the self-society conflict; moral norms are analyzed from the perspective of their relevance; the morality of cooperation is present, but it does not guarantee the child's autonomous moral thinking.

### 1.3 Norman J. Bull - subject mediation - moral norm and logic of staging (idem)

The stage of anomie - expressed by the lack of laws, moral norms, etc .; it is a premoral stage in which behavior is instinctive; pleasure and pain appear as sanctions.

The stage of heteronomy - morality imposed from the outside

The stage of socio-economics - (corresponding to the stage of reciprocity in the structure proposed by Piaget) is the stage in which moral judgments are shaped by relationships with others (especially with colleagues). The feeling of obligation and responsibility is outlined and self-respect and guilt begin to replace fear as a reason for moral conduct. The opinion of others / public opinion becomes a benchmark; there is a fear of social isolation,

The stage of autonomy - autonomy as a freely accepted morality, coordinated by one's own internal landmarks.

In fact, "N.J Bull opposes Piaget's conception of heteronomy as an obstacle to the development of autonomy. Bull believes that heteronomy is a necessary predecessor of autonomy. Bull insists that autonomy is based on heteronomy rather than reciprocity. " (Neacșu, I., 2018)

#### *1.4 Gilligan Barsley and Andrew Wilkinson*

Analyzing, validating and capitalizing on the studies of the previously presented authors, the two researchers, Barsley and Wilkinson (1981), propose a structure by stages / levels of moral development - "presenting an evolution of (self) evaluation of morality by judgment based on specific criteria" , I, 2018, pp. 145)

1. "Stage 1 - the judgment of one's own person and / or others' morality is based on external characteristics or behaviors.
2. Stage 2 - judging the morality of oneself and / or others is based on rewards versus punishments.
3. Stage 3 - - the judgment of the morality of one's own person and / or others is made having as benchmarks either the social status of the subjects, or the nature and complexity of the moral situation;
4. Stage 4 - the rational evaluation of the morality of one's own person and / or others is performed according to the existing conventional norms / rules.
5. Stage 5 - the evaluation of the morality of one's own person and / or others is made according to the manifest intentions of the subject, without taking into account his status and authority.
6. Stage 6 - the evaluation of the morality of one's own person and / or others is made according to abstract concepts and values;
7. Stage 7 - the evaluation of one's own morality and / or that of others is made according to one's own and coherent system of key values, it is done in agreement with a table of accepted social values. "(I. Neacșu, 2018, p.145)

## **2 . New accents and meanings**

### *2.1 Paul J. Zak- „Moral molecule”*

The theory proposed by Paul Zak (integrated construction of several fields - neurology / biochemistry / economics / behavioral sciences) supports the idea that certain behaviors related to the moral dimension such as pro-social, empathic, altruistic, benevolent, self-confidence and in others, the way we make decisions of a moral nature, etc., are not only influenced by belonging to a certain culture, a certain life experience or the baggage of knowledge that the person has, but are influenced by the level of hormones, especially the level of oxytocin in the body - a substance he calls the "moral molecule". The author explains that oxytocin is associated with our well-being, ensures the primary emotional connection with others, supports interpersonal relationships, stabilizing them.

Based on the results obtained as a result of the experiments carried out over several years, which the author presents in his work entitled "Moral molecule". The source of love and prosperity ", he concludes that" a single molecule - which, by the way, researchers like me can manipulate in the laboratory - explains why some people are kind and generous and others are heartless bastards, why some cheat and they steal, and in others you can trust even the

white canvases, why some husbands are more faithful than others and, following the same line, why women are prettier and kinder than men. ”

So the question now is, "How can we capitalize on these ideas in education?" We believe that a holistic view of training is indicated in this regard. It is necessary to overcome the idea, supported until recently, according to which the formation of the moral dimension of personality falls exclusively on education, but there are dimensions of the inframoral that philosophers talk about (see I. Gobry, E. Dupréel etc. in Jeder D. 2006. 2008) which belong to an area of inherited morality and here are the biochemical influences, which can also influence the moral behaviors of individuals.

We mention that Paul J. Zek is the inventor of the term "neuromanagement" and thus opens a path to what the literature calls neuroethics - respectively neuromorality.

*What is neuromorality?*

Neuromorality "is an emerging field of neuroscience that studies the connection between morality and neuronal function." (Wilson, James Q. 1998) Specialists in the investigation of neuromorality claim that the center of morality is found in the activity of the prefrontal cortex; This is where the processing of moral stimuli and the regeneration of states such as "empathy, compassion, guilt or shame" take place.

In the experiments performed in this sense, it is used in particular to analyze the brain activity of some subjects with the help of MRI and MRI following the presentation of images that illustrate moral and immoral behaviors, moral dilemmas, etc. Also, experiments have shown that lack of empathy, shame, guilt, etc. antisocial, violent behaviors can occur as a result of injuries to the frontal lobe, prefrontal cortex, etc. (Darby, R. Ryan; Pascual-Leone, Alvaro, 2017)

If the applications of these ideas, it seems, have a response in clinical neuropsychiatry, as well as in forensic neuropsychiatry, we may wonder how we should relate in everyday life to those around us, without judging their slippage / behavior which violates the moral order in these contexts, but intervening to support their recovery.

## *2.2 Robert Sapolsky*

The American neurologist and biologist, Robert Sapolsky, offers a holistic view of the manifestation of human behaviors, explaining, in particular, the biological mechanisms underlying them. However, he points out that we cannot limit ourselves only to this perspective of analysis and proposes psychological and cultural openings in this regard: "(...) You cannot begin to understand without biology issues such as aggression, competition, cooperation and empathy; I say this for a certain species of social science researchers who consider biology to be irrelevant and ideologically unsuspecting when it comes to human social behavior. But, secondly, you are just as helpless if you rely only on biology; I say this for that kind of molecular fundamentalist who believes that the social sciences are destined to be assimilated by the "real" science. And the third aspect: when you have finished reading this book, you will see that, in fact, there is no point in distinguishing between aspects of behavior that are "biological" and those that could be described as "psychological." "Or" cultural ". They are closely intertwined." (R. Sapolsky, 2018, pp. 14-15)

Sapolsky argues in his extensive work *Behave* (2018) for a deep understanding of human behaviors "in their best and worst situations," to the correct corroboration of the three factors of development: heredity (genes), environment and education.

### **Conclusions**

We therefore agree that new trends and openings to the analysis of moral development are essential landmarks for a better understanding of this formative approach, the dynamics of which can be captured only through knowledge, involvement, sustained study and application.

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