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Three Theories of Development: A Comparison of Dewey, Kohlberg, and Noddings' Models of Moral Growth

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THREE THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT:
A COMPARISON OF DEWEY, KOHLBERG, AND NODDINGS'
MODELS OF MORAL GROWTH

A Synthesis Project Presented

by

MARK J. CONNERTY

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies, University of Massachusetts
Boston, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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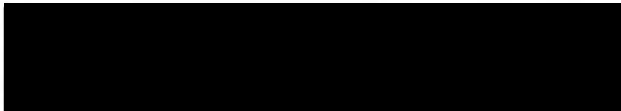
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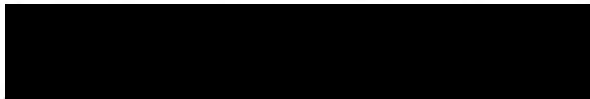
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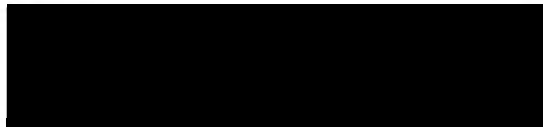
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ABSTRACT

THREE THEORIES OF DEVELOPMENT: A COMPARISON OF DEWEY, KOHLEBERG, AND NODDINGS' MODELS OF MORAL GROWTH

May 1998

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This paper will compare the moral theories developed by John Dewey, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Nel Noddings to discern places of agreement and areas of dispute. The paper will also examine the most consequential ethical formulations of the three thinkers. For Dewey it is his conception of conscientiousness. For Kohlberg it is the idea of justice. Lastly, for Noddings it is the virtue of empathy found in the caring response. These conceptions are the foundations of their moral ideas. They color their thoughts on such related topics as the objective versus subjective nature of morality, the role of the rational and the emotional faculties in decision making, and the elements of moral judgment. This paper will examine where Dewey, Kohlberg, and Noddings stand on these issues and how they compare and contrast with each other. Their theories present an insightful glimpse into the entirety and diversity of the moral nature that informs the human condition. For this the moral theories of Dewey, Kohlberg, and Noddings merit a studied inquiry which this paper seeks to accomplish.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1. DEWEY’S MODEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS.....	2
Historical Background of a Theory of Ethics.....	4
Freedom and Reason.....	5
The Role of Judgment and Will.....	6
The Social Nature of Morality.....	7
Conscience and Consciousness.....	8
2. JUSTICE AND STAGE DEVELOPMENT.....	10
Kohlberg’s Stage Formula.....	13
Ethics As Justice.....	14
The Objective Nature of Morality.....	17
Universalizability and Reversibility.....	19
3. AN ETHIC OF CARING.....	21
The Objective vs. Subjective Mind.....	24
The Universal Moral Sentiment.....	25
Natural and Ethical Caring.....	26
4. A MODEL COMPARISON.....	28
Goodness As Reason and Feeling.....	29
A Question of Content.....	31
The Bounds of Empathy.....	34
The Role of the Affective and the Reflective in Empathy.....	35
CONCLUSION.....	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	39

INTRODUCTION

This paper will examine three leading moral theorists of this century, John Dewey, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Nel Noddings. John Dewey, variously described a pragmatist or positivist, left a deep and diverse body of writings that continues to influence the landscape of American psychology and philosophy today. His ethical theories relate to his studies of progressive education and the functioning of the mind. He originated the stage theory of moral growth that has shaped the thinking of moral philosophers such as Piaget, Kohlberg, and others. Dewey's highest formulation of morality is an ethic directed toward goodness through consciousness.

Lawrence Kohlberg is a moral theorist known for his formulation of the six stages of moral development. This model and its characteristics are influenced by the Western philosophical tradition, particularly the Socratic and Kantian traditions. Kohlberg is further indebted to Dewey's moral writings, including the role of obligation and action, his stress on scientific inquiry, and his theory of stage growth. Kohlberg's work is driven by his conception of justice as the most sublime ideal of ethical goodness.

Nel Noddings is an educational specialist whose book *Caring* continues the focus on empathy that Carol Gilligan brought to her studies of the moral behavior of women. Noddings further develops this line of thinking with her formulation of the ethic of caring. This ethic is based on the affective nature of humans and stands at times in marked contrast to the theories of Dewey and Kohlberg. Noddings' moral philosophy finds its highest ideal in her conception of empathy and kindness.

CHAPTER 1

DEWEY'S DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS

The heart of Dewey's ethical philosophy is summarized by his statement that "the moral world is here and now; it is a reality apart from the wishes, or failure to wish, of any given individual." (Dewey, 1969, 167) Dewey has staked out a definitive position in this pronouncement, placing the moral world in the context of the living present and testifying to the distinct, objective nature of morality. It is a reality greater than any one of us because it concerns all of us, yet it can only be fully realized through the medium of the thinking, the acting subjective being.

The manner by which the individual realizes his place in the moral world is the process of reasoned reflection and corresponding action. This belief in the deliberative act is the cornerstone of Dewey's formulation of moral conduct. In his *A Theory of Ethics* Dewey states that a moral law is "the principle of action." (Dewey, 1969, 177) It is not a remote abstraction but an organic, ever-changing series of relationships we come to know through experiences with the social world. Action implies an audience to be acted upon. This, for Dewey, is the immediate social order. Morality gathers its material from the public realm of the society and works upon it in the private realm of the individual.

Here Dewey is following in the footsteps of the 19th century rationalists, particularly Kant, who wedded reason and action in his conception of Duty. Dewey agrees that the road to moral truth lies in the reflective function finding fulfillment in the

active life, and like Kant, Dewey thinks the origin of this process is empirical experience. The evolution of this idea can be traced back to the French and English Enlightenment of the 18th century when the scientific revolution hailed the emergence of a new approach to knowledge based on observable fact. The method that Bacon, Hume and their peers proposed for the physical world, Kant and his circle urged for the moral world a century later. Dewey continues in this tradition. “Since morals is concerned with conduct, it grows out of special empirical facts.” (Boydston 1983, 204)

Dewey further asserts that morality, far from Christianity’s view of a far-off, fixed place of judgment is:

The most human of all subjects. It is that which is closest to human nature; it is ineradicably empirical, not theological nor metaphysical nor mathematical. Since it directly concerns human nature, everything that can be known of the human mind and body in physiology, medicine, anthropology, and psychology is pertinent to moral inquiry... moral science is not something with a separate province. It is physical, biological and historical knowledge placed in human context where it will illuminate and guide the activities of men. (Dewey 1969, 204-205)

Dewey’s synthesis of empirical process with ethical content grounds the moral world in the present and the human. Dewey believes that all other influential moral theories, with the exception of utilitarianism, refuse to accommodate this application of the empirical. He offers the example of Christians following the given commands of the distant and supernatural, The Romantics and Transcendentalists believing in the immanent but unseen spirit, and the Greek Stoics confusing the natural laws with moral laws. For Dewey, only the marriage of sense, reason, and conduct will provide us with the

knowledge of how to be moral in the present, and in every moment of our lives. Only the tool of the scientific method put to the service of morality will lead to genuine moral goodness.

It is also from the “Age of Reason” that Dewey finds a complimentary theme to the scientific method. From the enlightenment ideal of the autonomy and dignity of the individual Dewey formulates his conception of freedom. Dewey calls freedom “the most practical of all moral questions...” (Dewey 1969, 8) Without freedom man cannot be moral because he lacks the choice between doing a better or worse thing. Freedom is the basis of moral responsibility. Dewey proposes that there is no responsibility for any result not intended or foreseen. Such results are merely physical, not moral. But when a result is foreseen, it is no longer an outcome of external forces but the individual’s “conception of an end.” Dewey states that “we are responsible for our conduct because that conduct is ourselves objectified into action.” (Dewey 1969, 161) It is free will that makes this chosen conduct possible and which makes us responsible for it.

Dewey identifies two forms of freedom. Negative freedom is the ability to control the appetites and desires so that a moral end can be achieved. Dewey calls this ability to control the appetites by reasoned reflection the power of self government. The other freedom Dewey calls potential freedom. Potential freedom consists of the process of placing various outcomes before the rational eye. The ability to conceive of various ends establishes a freedom of choice, or potential to act in different ways. This freedom to choose potential outcomes is not only the central feature of the idea of free will, but is also the spark for moral reflection and action.

Free will, the freedom to act, originates in the idea of free reason. For Dewey the

highest faculty of man, the one ~~that~~ speaks to the whole of the human condition, is reason. It bears upon every aspect of his understanding and character. Reason, the ability to process sensory data into analysis of condition, relation, and outcome, is also the most appropriate tool for determining moral action. The ability to reason freely is the heart of morality for it is the ability to contemplate the various outcomes of a situation and to choose which one is the more ethically appropriate. Without reason there is no choice and without choice no free will to act. Thus morality hinges upon the rational nature of man.

Reason, which finds its material in the observable facts of experience, gives rise to judgments upon both the nature of those facts and how best to respond to them. The method of judgment according to Dewey, ~~like~~ that of reason should be an “impersonal, impartial habit of observation”, a “habit of scrutinizing conduct objectively” (Dewey 1969, 220) that is akin to the process utilized in scientific inquiry. Judging, for Dewey, is indeed a habit for it is a continuous process of decision making.

Of all the habits which constitute the character of an individual, the habit of judging moral situations is the most important, for this is the key to the direction and to the remaking of all other habits... the moral life has its center in the periods of suspended and postponed action, when the energy of the individual is spent in recollection and foresight, in severe inquiry and serious consideration of alternative aims. ((Boydston 1978, 375)

Judgment is the conduit between thought and action, reason and relation. It is perfected judgment awakened by elevated reflection that gives rise to just action. The reformation of moral judgment leads to the reformation of the man. This refinement of judgment

leads also to the fulfillment of the will in the form of action.

The instrument by which the wish of judgment is implemented in the physical world is the will. The will brings theoretical decisions into the world of practical experience and interactive relations. The will, then, carries the commands of the individual mind into the active and social world. Dewey, in fact, equates the relation of knowledge and action to the individual and the social. But what for Dewey constitutes action? Dewey makes a distinction between the various forms of common action and genuine action. Common action includes the dictates of external authority which demands conformity; customary action, based upon precedence; routine action; self-interested actions, etc. In all of these cases there exists a gap between thought and conduct, theory and practice. This divorce between knowledge and experience leads to impractical idealism on the one hand and uninspired materialism on the other. Genuine action consists of a knowledge-based intelligence directing a measured action. This reasoned conduct leads not only to authentic action, but in the context of individual-social relations to true morality.

Action is the fulfillment of individual thought in the social realm. Dewey further states that individual thought, to be moral, must also find fulfillment in this realm. “Selfhood is not something which exists apart from association and intercourse. The relationships which are produced by the fact that interests are formed in this social environment are far more important than are the adjustments of isolated selves.” (Boydston 1985, 298-299) Dewey contends that morality potentially concerns every act of our lives so that its influence is felt in all spheres including the social. “Morals is as much a matter of interaction of a person with his social environment as walking is an

interaction of legs with a physical environment.” (Boydston 1983, 219) In fact, Dewey makes interaction of the self with the society the overriding condition of morality.

Morals are realized in social relations, the most embedded of which become institutions. True morality is the surrender of private interests to the welfare of the whole. “The smaller local life of the private self is given up in order that the richer and fuller life of the social or active self may be realized.” (Dewey 1969, 222) Dewey thinks there is no such thing as private morality. Morality is a common and public property that the individual works upon to perfect for the good of all. The individual cannot become moral in a vacuum, he must interact with the society and within the ethical system that society represents. Dewey sums up this view in his A Theory of Ethics: “These institutions are morality real and objective; the individual becomes moral as he shares in this moral world, and takes his due place in it.” (Dewey 1969, 170)

Dewey has argued that it is a man’s active, social relationships that condition his moral development. Man, for Dewey, cannot become a moral creature in absentia of others. Institutions and their laws, the moral codes embraced by a society, in particular regulate this growth. In his section of Ethics entitled the “Moral Life of the Individual” Dewey considers how these agencies awaken this moral consciousness. He believes this moral consciousness to be based of active relations not the consciousness of theoretical relations that exist in contemplation. This moral consciousness represents Dewey’s highest formulation of the moral development of the individual.

The practical beginnings of this consciousness is conscience. Dewey asserts that conscience is the recognition of the means to the ends of an action and that it is made up of three elements. 1. The knowledge of forms of conduct; 2. The recognition of the

obligatoriness of these forms; 3. The emotions which color this recognition. Conscience, for Dewey, is not a distinct subset of the mind but is the normal intelligence working upon moral material. "Intelligence deals with the relations of persons and deeds, and it is termed conscience." (Dewey 1969, 184)

Dewey, like Kohlberg, perceived an organized stage structure of moral growth. Unlike Kohlberg who broke these stages down into six headings, Dewey finds three groupings. They are the conventional conscience, the loyal conscience, and the reflective conscience. The moulding influence of the social institutions without the aid of independent reflection creates the mindset of the conventional conscience. This form of morality becomes consolidated into laws, obeyable commands and maxims. The person is shaped and guided solely by external forces.

The second-level conscience, the loyal conscience, begins the process of verification of the world's imprint. Not yet critical of social institutions, the individual recognizes the practical importance of these agencies in the continuance of his lifestyle. He actively identifies with these value-forms and they seem to be an extension of his own free will. He recognizes the inherent freedom of social conviction. The highest or reflective stage of development concerns the active questioning of the previously accepted value-systems. It seeks to criticize in order to correct, to perfect first the individual's own ethical code and then the mores of the existing social structure. Dewey identifies this process with the work of the great moral teachers of history. But Dewey is

Dewey thinks that an error is committed when it is asserted that the content as well as the form of this conscience is subjective. Dewey maintains that the social standard upon which the individual conscience reflects is universal and objective. It is embodied in social relationships and practiced in regard to “historical forms and contemporary ideals.” (Dewey 1969, 189) Yet Dewey believes that value-systems can and should always be perfected, but only in the context of what is already in existence. He says: “A morality which does not recognize both the possibility and the necessity of advance is immorality.” (Dewey 1969, 189) But this conscience must be based on the moral consciousness expressed in “existing institutions, manners, and beliefs.” (Dewey 1969, 189) Otherwise it becomes relativistic.

Reflective intelligence cross-questions the existing morality; and extracts from it the ideal which it pretends to embody, and thus is able to criticize the existing morality in the light of its own ideal. It points out the inconsistencies, the incoherencies, the compromises, the failures, between the actual practice and the theory at the basis of this practice. And thus the new ideal proposed by the individual is not a product of his private opinions, but is the outcome of the ideal embodied in existing customs, ideas and institutions. (Dewey 1969, 190)

Dewey is proposing a synthesis of individual reflective conscience and public moral consciousness that will result in a perfecting of the moral development of both the individual and the society of which he is a member.

CHAPTER 2

JUSTICE AND STAGE DEVELOPMENT

Lawrence Kohlberg's primary contribution to moral education is his formulation of the six stages of moral development. He groups the stages into three levels: the preconventional, the conventional, and the postconventional or autonomous level. The stages ascend from an obedience orientation to an objective principle of justice.

Kohlberg rejects what he calls the "bag of virtues" approach to moral education. The bag of virtues is a set of character traits considered by many to be desirable. Some examples of these would be honesty, charity, loyalty and courage. Kohlberg objects to this idea on the grounds that everyone has their own bag, and that the definitions of the individual traits differ from person to person. The defect Kohlberg concludes is that this approach to moralization, like many others, is based upon a relativist view. What is needed is an objective philosophy of ethical conduct applicable and practicable by all peoples of the world. Kohlberg responded by developing his stage approach and naming as its highest common good the ideal of justice.

The ideal of justice is of course as old as the Greek and Jewish traditions of Western Culture and perhaps far older. Justice as an element of the Good gained considerable momentum during the Socratic and Platonic Eras of the Athenian Age. The two philosophers proposed that virtue is objective, that it is of one substance and that it has the same ideal form regardless of culture or period. The name of the ideal form is

justice. According to Plato, he who knows the Good (i.e. justice) chooses the good and this good can in fact be taught. It can be taught because the good is of a nature inherent and apparent to all of us if uncovered. Finally, the proper method of this uncovering is the asking of questions, not the giving of answers. Kohlberg agrees with much of the Socratic and Platonic vision of the Good as justice, and they are the most significant influence on his work. Where he disagrees, such as his notion of equality rather than hierarchy as the central concern of justice, he does so within the framework of their models.

Kohlberg incorporates other influences, including the rationalist's ideal of reason, the humanists focus on the here and now, and in particular, Kant's conception of justice as duty. But perhaps his most singular influence of the modern age is John Dewey. Both Kohlberg and Dewey reject traditional standards and value relativism, including the cultural transmission, romantic and behaviorist approaches, for ethical universals such as the Categorical Imperative and the Golden Rule. Both believe in a process of ascension to higher levels of moral functioning with Kohlberg setting forth a more rigidly-defined model of stage sequencing. There are many more similarities and a few important differences among the works of Kohlberg and Dewey. It is not necessary to enumerate them here as the focus of this chapter is Kohlberg's own formulation of the moral development of the individual. Dewey's influence may well be apparent in this brief summary. However, the primary comparative issues will be more fully addressed in the concluding chapter of this paper.

This paper has asserted that Kohlberg's ethical philosophy has been inspired by several sources including Platonic Idealism, Kantian Rationalism, and Dewey's brand of

Pragmatic Progressivism. From Plato, Kohlberg has taken the notion of an objective form of virtue known as justice; from Kant the idea of universal, rational and process-oriented principles of ethics; and from Dewey, Kohlberg has derived his model of the ordered stages of moral growth. It is this model that is the central concept and foremost contribution of Kohlberg's theory of ethics.

Kohlberg devised a set of general stages of moral thought "that can be defined independently of the specific content of particular moral decisions or actions." (Kohlberg 1981, 16) Kohlberg's typology contains three different levels of thinking, with each level comprising two related stages. The first level, the pre-conventional, typifies thinking that is concerned with rewards, bartering, and fear and threat of punishment. The second, or conventional level, has to do with maintaining and conforming to the rules and laws of the person's family, group or nation. The last level is called the postconventional level, and is identified with universal moral principles of justice and freedom.

Kohlberg arrived at this theory through the kind of empirical study championed by Dewey. Kohlberg designed a series of cross-cultural, age specific tests aimed at testing the veracity of his claims. Using hypothetical moral situations such as the Heinze Dilemma, Kohlberg interviewed children and adults in the Yucatan, the United States, England, Turkey and other regions to delineate the forms of moral thought. This research confirmed Kohlberg's formulation of the moral stages, the principle-content of each stage and the manner by which the individual progresses through them. This method of progression is disequilibrium. Tension aroused by the discrepancy between the moral compass of the person and the events he is confronted with leads to a sense of disequilibrium and a glimpse at a higher stage of morality that is more adequate to

addressing the ethical situation posed. The person chooses the higher form of moral conduct to reestablish his equilibrium.

Kohlberg further defined the stages based on given motives for obeying rules of moral action:

1. Obeys rules to avoid punishment.
2. Conforms to obtain rewards, have favors returned.
3. Conforms to avoid disapproval and dislike by others.
4. Conforms to avoid censure by legitimate authorities and resultant guilt.
5. Conforms to maintain the respect of the impartial spectator judging in terms of community welfare.
6. Conforms to avoid self-condemnation. (Kohlberg 1981, 19)

As is evident these stages are process-oriented and as such are not guided by content-specific virtues such as integrity and kindness which are the hallmark of the various value-relativist schools of thought. They appeal to an ideal of morality rooted in objective principles, not specific characteristics or commands. An example of this is the Categorical Imperative which states: Act only as you would be willing that your act should become universal law. (Kohlberg 1981, 19) This is, according to Kohlberg, “A guide for choosing among behaviors, not a prescription for behavior. As such, it is free from culturally defined content; it both transcends and subsumes particular social laws. Hence it has universal applicability.” (Kohlberg 1981, 69)

The universal nature of Kohlberg’s moral theory rests upon the idea of the potentiality of the stages, the fact that we all have it within ourselves to reach the highest stages of moral growth. This ability to become more fully moral, this power of

awakening, Kohlberg calls the “Socratic faith in the power of the rational good.”

(Kohlberg 1981, 29) Another key component of stage ascension is the idea of socialization. The individual uncovers the moral stages through his interactions with his society. Thus justice as the highest moral virtue is realizable only in the social milieu. And justice is implemented in the milieu through just acts. Morality is as much for Kohlberg as Dewey a morality of the practical, an ethics of action. For both men, to be just is to do.

If the process of moral development for Kohlberg is social action, the form it takes is justice. “Justice, in turn, is a matter of equal and universal human rights.”

(Kohlberg 1981, 39) Justice, Kohlberg declares, is not a rule but an ethical principle.

The difference is that a principle is universal, applicable to all nations and men.

Kohlberg is proposing here that concepts of the good are culturally universal. So while Kohlberg proposes a process-based “drawing out” of non-specific forms of virtue, the ultimate destination of this process has a very definite form and content: justice and equality.

Kohlberg makes it a condition of his stage progression that movement is orderly and sequential. The individual moves up the six rungs of this ladder in definite order. He also follows Plato’s maxim that “he who knows the good chooses the good.” A person who is at stage three conventional morality will not commit a lower sequential moral action without feelings of guilt and anxiety. Individuals cannot skip a stage although they may be able to comprehend one stage ahead, resulting in the type of tension Socrates thought necessary for moral growth.

The method by which individuals may see ahead is through the guidance of a

moral teacher and through the analysis of moral problems. This teacher acts more like a shepherd who uses techniques such as Socratic questioning to aid the person in reflecting upon his own views and in understanding views that may be more morally adequate.

What Kohlberg is underscoring is that rather than giving external, content-specific ideals, the moral guide is providing a path for the learner to discover principles that are immanent within himself and all human beings. Thus Kohlberg proposes what is a universal, but subjective process that leads to a known objective principle – justice.

Dewey conceives of consciousness as the highest development of an individual according to his theory of ethics. Conscience, as derived from obligation, is the ideal form of the practical good. It is the objective and universal principle of socialized morality. Kohlberg too espouses the universal ethic but locates it, in contrast to Dewey, in the principle of justice. The highest stage of Kohlberg's model, the sixth, is defined by this spirit. It represents Kohlberg's most significant work in the area of moral education and should be examined in light of Dewey's own conceptions of conscience and consciousness.

Kohlberg defines his stage six formulation of morality in his book treatise The Philosophy of Moral Education.

Right is defined by the decision of conscience in accord with self-chosen ethical principles appealing to logical comprehensiveness, universality and consistency. These principles are abstract and ethical (the golden rule, the categorical imperative); they are not concrete moral rules such as the

Ten Commandments. At heart, these are universal principles of justice, of the reciprocity and equality of human rights, and of respect for the dignity of human beings as individuals. (Kohlberg 1981, 19)

Kohlberg is promoting the idea that there is indeed an objective and universal morality, that it is provoked by the conscience and confronted in the form of moral judgment (self-chosen ethical principles”). This moral judgment is guided by the principle of justice and based on “sympathy for others” (Kohlberg 1981, 141). These judgments are provoked by moral conflicts that occur between the individual and his society. "A moral conflict is a conflict between competing claims of people... where such conflicts arise, the principles we use to resolve them are principles of justice”. (Kohlberg 1981, 143)

Kohlberg’s idea of morality, like Dewey’s, is a practical one. It involves concrete situations, ways to act in the present moment and in the human and social world. He asserts,

In my view, mature principles are neither rules (means) nor values (ends) but are guides to perceiving and integrating all the morally relevant elements in concrete situations. They reduce all moral obligation to the interests and claims of concrete individuals in concrete situations; they tell us how to resolve claims that compete in a situation when it is one person’s life against another’s. (Kohlberg 1981, 175)

Moral goodness, for Kohlberg, is firmly grounded in the human condition, in the reality of the moments and the interactions of our lives. These interactions or “competing claims” are most adequately resolved by Kohlberg’s stage six conception of justice and

its practical adjuncts: universalizability, consistency, and reversibility. The practical concern of this conception of justice is the dignity of human beings as individuals. "The content of moral concerns and claims is always welfare." (Kohlberg 1981, 175)

This regard for welfare is in the larger sense a regard for the equality of all. The belief in all as equals predisposes the moral agent toward a safeguarding of the welfare of all. This idea fits into Kohlberg's conception of justice: "However, I have also argued that the stage six form implies justice as equity." (Kohlberg 1981, 176) Justice finds its meaning the recognition and defense of universal equal rights. Kohlberg states that at the highest stages of moral development the two are one and the same: At advanced stages, the most basic principle of justice is equality." (Kohlberg 1981, 144)

Clearly Kohlberg is process-oriented in that he avoids content-specific approaches to moral development. He rejects the bag of virtues and other value-relativist models of moral behavior. Instead he proposes a framework approach which are general principles of conduct, and not specific rules of content. However, although the process of moralization is content-free (but is defined by patterns of thought Kohlberg calls moral stages) the end to which it strives has definite shape and character. This end, universal and objective though it may be, is of sure content: justice and equality. Thus while the means of his formulations are value free, Kohlberg's ends are not. Kohlberg argues, however, that although there exists value and content, this does not make the product (justice) relativist because justice is a universal principle. The product content is universal and therefore valid in the terms set forth by Kohlberg. Kohlberg says as much in a passage from Is To Ought: "I simply point to the fact that no principle other than justice has been shown to meet the formal conception of a universal prescriptive

principle.” (Kohlberg 1981, 176)

In the sixth stage, the value of justice is realized through the previously mentioned criteria of universalizability, consistency, and reversibility. The appropriateness of these principles is determined through empathic role playing. Role-taking, for Kohlberg, is the most important component of moral judgment. According to Kohlberg, moral concepts are concepts of social relationships. Within these social relationships are ideas of roles defined by shared expectations.

The primary meaning of the word social is the distinctively human structuring of action and thought by role taking, by the tendency to react to others as like the self and to react to the self's behavior from the other's point of view. (Kohlberg 1981, 141)

Kohlberg continues that the importance of role-taking in moral judgment is rooted in the fact that moral judgment is based upon sympathy for others, as well as the idea that the moral person must refer to the ideal of the “impartial spectator” in order to judge objectively.

Role playing is essential for Kohlberg because it has been shown to limit specific value systems and to stimulate general frameworks of moral thought. Kohlberg further posits that the true conditioning agent of moral activity is role playing:

The precondition for a moral conflict is the human capacity for role-taking. Most social situations are not moral, because there is no conflict between the role-taking expectations of one person and another. Where such conflicts arise, the principles we use to resolve them are principles of justice. (Kohlberg 1981, 143)

Thus judgments based upon social experience give rise to role playing which sorts itself out by way of reference to principles of justice. Principled forms of role taking are defined by justice structures. The first of these structures is universalizability.

Universalizability means that an action is just if it could in good conscience be applied to and practiced by all men. This precept negates the individual's capacity for self-interest by adopting the role of the representative being, the impartial spectator. Kant's categorical imperative is the practical end of this principle – "Act as you would want all human beings to act in a similar situation." (Kohlberg 1981, 69)

A related principle of justice found in the sixth stage is reversibility. Like universalizability, it takes the person beyond himself and his own interests by adopting a different point of view. Universalizability adopted the view of all men in a situation. Reversibility holds the viewpoint of the person affected by the original person's decisions and actions. Kohlberg makes it a condition of justice reasoning that a moral judgment must be reversible, that the individual must be willing to live with his judgment if he were to trade places with the others in the situation being judged. As the categorical imperative was the practical tool of universalizability, so too the golden rule is the outcome of the principle of reversibility: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. Kohlberg gives the example of a person who would not save a life:

... That is he is not seeing the situation from the role of the person whose life is being saved as well as the person who can save the life (reversibility) or from the point of view of the possibility of anyone filling these roles (universalizability). (Kohlberg 1981, 198)

The other construct of Kohlberg's stage six justice morality is the idea of consistency. The goal of rational moral judgments, for Kohlberg, is to arrive at moral decisions that all similarly-inclined people could agree on. Moral reasoning must be consistent across a broad spectrum of moral thinkers confronted with actual circumstances. The resolution of a moral conflict should be agreed upon by all thinkers who are at the level of a stage six justice response.

Kohlberg's conception of high-order moral thinking, particularly in the sixth stage of his developmental model, find its fulfillment in his formulation of justice. Justice, for Kohlberg, is based upon abstract and rational principles of equality such as the categorical imperative and the golden rule. Kohlberg breaks down these traditional frameworks of moral thought into their component parts. He labels these structures universalizability, reversibility, and consistency and brings them into the practical realm of social action through the vehicle of role-playing. The process of the actualization of these ideals lacks a specific structural content but they are recognizable through arrangements of moral thought Kohlberg calls stages; and their end product is of a definitive value-content - universal and objective modes of justice.

CHAPTER 3

AN ETHIC OF CARING

Nel Noddings, in her book Caring, contends that traditional approaches to moral development, those based on reason and justice, are not the only and possible not even the best means to becoming more ethical. She believes these formal approaches deny the possibility of a receptive capacity necessary for moral growth. Noddings argues that the rational – cognitive method concerns justifications of abstract ideals that are removed from concrete situations and the elements of human emotion. Noddings contends that what is missing from their models is the fundamental aspect of caring.

Noddings states that many people do not approach moral conflicts based upon formal principles but on the empathetic responses that she labels caring. This process of caring is based upon concretization rather than abstraction. The realization of this process is dependent upon a displacement of interest from the focus on the one doing the caring to the one cared for.

Apprehending the others' reality, feeling what he feels as nearly as possible, is the essential part of caring from the view of the one caring. For if I take on the other's reality as possibility and begin to feel its reality, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly, that is, I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf, but in behalf of the other.

(Noddings 1984, 16)

Noddings thinks that the caring response is always dependent on a move away from the self. She says that “At bottom, all caring involves engrossment.” (Noddings 1984, 17) This engrossment for Noddings, however, is not universal. This is true because universal caring cannot be actualized, there is a lack of investment that leads to true empathy. This lack of investment results in the kind of abstraction that the caring ethic seeks to remedy. For Noddings, the immediate is the material of morality.

Noddings claims this immediacy stands in stark contrast to the removed objectivity of the principles championed by moralists such as Kant, Dewey, and Kohlberg. Noddings believes caring to be reactive and responsive, caught up in the moment. Dewey and Kohlberg’s formulations, while acted upon in the moment, are developed prior to that action, and thus have prior content. Caring, on the other hand, is a shifting response directed towards the needs of individuals, rather than a response driven by the demands of abstract and prior rules of conduct. Caring then, according to Noddings’ dictates, is pure process. It is not important how we care, but that we do care.

This caring implies a will to action. Noddings affirms this: “To act as one – caring, then, is to act with ‘special regard’ for the ‘particular person’ in ‘concrete situations’.” (emphasis mine) (Noddings 1984, 24). This idea of acting towards others in concrete situations reflects Noddings belief in the necessity of the socialization of the moral feeling.

The ethical self is an active relation between my actual self and a vision of my ideal self as one – caring and cared-for. It is born of the fundamental recognition of relatedness; that which connects me naturally to the other, reconnects me through the other to myself. As I care for others and am

cared for by them, I become able to
care for myself. (Noddings 1984, 49)

It is this relatedness based on caring that results in the moral redemption of the one caring. It is also the impetus for the moral growth of the one cared for. The emotional benefits of being cared for leads the one cared for to model himself upon his beneficiary, the caring-for. This results in a habit of mutual modeling and attribution which becomes a cooperative form of moral development. (Noddings 1984, 123) Noddings asserts that the lack of this mutual modeling leads to in the ethical world, the kind of abstract and removed principles Dewey and Kohlberg champion, and in the social world, the kind of anti-social behavior that inhibits the healthy formation of relationships, and the positive development of the self. Noddings makes the claim that the type of moral principle that Dewey and Kohlberg esteem in fact promotes this anti-social behavior by removing the individual to a realm of abstract thought that exists apart from his social context.

The methodology of this relatedness consists of a “broad and loosely defined ethic that molds itself in situation and has a proper regard for human affections, weaknesses and anxieties.” (Noddings 1984, 25) It is not conditioned “by a host of narrow and rigidly defined – principles”, and it “does not attempt to reduce the need for human judgment with a series of ‘thou shalts’ and ‘thou shalt nots’.” (Noddings 1984, 25) This negation of previously and externally constructed rules and principles does not negate the need for rational, objective thought. But this rational process should be utilized in the context of the ethic of caring. It should be used “to decide exactly what we will do in behalf of the cared-for.” (Noddings 1984, 26) It is the end of the process of moral decision making, not the beginning.

The problem with the rational-objective mode for Noddings is not in its nature but in its use. It is applied prematurely to most moral situations.

If rational-objective thinking is to be put in the service of caring, we must at the right moments turn it away from the abstract toward which it tends and back to the concrete. At times, we must suspend it in favor of subjective thinking and reflection, allowing time and space for seeing and feeling. The rational-objective mode must continually be re-established and redirected from a fresh base of commitment. (Noddings 1984, 26)

Noddings is postulating a dialectical relationship between the objective and subjective frames of mind. The objective is intrinsically dominant, especially for men, and must be kept in check; it must be guided by the subjective. In Noddings' formulation, the rational mind serves the emotional mind for the betterment of both the acting and the acted upon. If this rational function is given free reign our thoughts become completely separated from the original object of our care.

In her section entitled Ethics and Caring, Noddings sets forth her vision of ethics.

I want to build an ethic on caring,
and I shall claim that there is a form
of caring natural and accessible to all
human beings. Certain feelings, attitudes,
and memories will be claimed as universal.
But the ethic will not embody a set of
universalizable moral judgments. (Noddings 1984, 28)

Noddings, in this passage, affirms her view that the caring response is natural and universal. She claims that the impulse to act for another, indeed the quality of empathy, is innate. Empathy, for Noddings, is "Apprehending the others reality, feeling what he

feels as nearly as possible... for if I take on the others reality as possibility, I feel, also, that I must act accordingly; that is I am impelled to act as though in my own behalf..." (Noddings 1984, 16) Noddings contends that it is this element of empathy, of an immediate caring response, that is absent in Dewey and Kohlberg's moral formulations. Noddings claims that Dewey and Kohlberg's adherence to preconceived abstract principles precludes genuine empathic responses to social situations. Noddings points out that what Dewey and Kohlberg's moral philosophies leave out in their espousal of reason as the foundation of ethics is the importance of feeling. For her, instead of a universal moral principle, there is a universal moral sentiment. While its means and content, the ends to which it fulfills itself, differ, its presence is undeniable. Like Kohlberg, who believes the principle of justice to be both innate and perfectible, Noddings thinks the ethic of caring is attainable by all. "It lies latent in each of us, awaiting gradual development in a succession of caring relations." (Noddings 1984, 83) Noddings suggests that the care-response is a shared genetic property inherent in all humans. Noddings proposes that caring is a natural instinct. The fact that it is instinctual makes it also universal. The method of its fulfillment is also a universal property – empathy or "engrossment" as Noddings labels it. But the means of caring – the "one-caring", and then ends – "the cared-for", are both subjective elements. Thus, the objective moral truth of caring is fulfilled through the subjective instrument of the individual in-relation.

This moral grounding within the subjective self is the opposite of the devotion to something beyond that is the hallmark of the traditional schools of philosophy and religion, whether it be God or principle. This moral grounding is predicated upon a

feeling: “Thus at the foundation of moral behavior – as we have already pointed out – is feeling or sentiment.” (Noddings 1984, 92) This too is the opposite of Kant’s traditionalist formula of the divorce of duty and desire, reason and emotion. Noddings poses the question, what is the nature of this universal sentiment? Her answer leads her to the origins of natural and ethical caring and the role of obligation in moral development.

Noddings contends that morality as an “active virtue” is comprised of two complimentary elements. The first is the unconditioned, unreflective response known as natural caring. Noddings stakes out a position that no ethical action can follow an absence of this initial sentiment. The second feeling reacts to the memory of the first. Noddings states that this memory of caring and being cared for sweeps over us as a feeling of “I must” in response to the troubles of others. Therefore, natural and ethical caring grow out of one another and are in continual dialogue.

But an ethic built on caring strives to maintain the caring attitude and is thus dependent upon, and not superior to, natural caring. The source of ethical behavior is, then, in twin sentiments – one that feels directly for the other and one that feels for and with the best self, who may accept and sustain the initial feeling rather than reject it. (Noddings 1984, 80)

This freedom to accept or not the initial feeling of natural caring gives rise to the question of ought or obligation. Noddings states that the initial feeling of natural caring is an involuntary genetic response universal to human nature. Because it is an automatic response, this form of caring does not fall within the purview of obligation which is based on voluntary actions. The second type of caring, ethical caring, is a voluntary ethic built

upon the memory of and an affinity for moments of natural caring which it hopes to maintain in active relationships with the social world. This will to maintain these relationships, and to foster new ones, based on an ethic of caring, is voluntary and thus falls within the bounds of obligatory action.

It is within this second or ethical type of caring, and in its relationship to obligation, that Noddings forges her closest links to the ethical ideologies of Dewey and Kohlberg. Noddings establishes that her first form of caring, natural caring, which is based on a universal and automatic response, is the missing piece in the moral theories of Dewey and Kohlberg. Noddings' second form of caring, ethical caring, proceeds from self-chosen principles of caring that find their material in the memory of the first form, natural caring. This ethical form, caring, because it is based on self-chosen, voluntary principles is concerned with the same type of obligation or duty that permeates the moral works of Dewey and Kohlberg. The fundamental difference between the moral theories of Dewey and Kohlberg, and Noddings, however, is that while Dewey and Kohlberg's self-chosen ethical principles are based upon and directed by reason, Noddings' self-chosen principles are based upon and directed by feeling.

CHAPTER 4

A MODEL COMPARISON

This section will compare and contrast Dewey, Kohlberg, and Noddings' theories as they have been presented in the preceding chapters. The philosophical differences between Noddings' work and that of Dewey and Kohlberg may be fairly obvious, but these differences will be explored in a more in depth manner in the following chapter. Several nuances of disagreement between the ideas of Dewey and Kohlberg have arisen and will also be examined. Throughout this chapter, the similarities of thought that exist among the three theorists will be highlighted and discussed.

The writings of John Dewey, Lawrence Kohlberg, and Nel Noddings are intimately concerned with the moral development of the individual. Each comes from a different school of thought and each supplies a distinct answer to the question of how to be moral. The ethical philosophies of Dewey and Kohlberg are closely related, particularly in their focus on man's rational nature, but there are fundamental divisions between the two men. Noddings takes an alternate approach to moral growth emphasizing the role of feeling and relationship, but her inquiry is a direct response to Dewey and Kohlberg's formulations. Their systems culminate, in varying degrees, in an absolute imperative: For Dewey this is consciousness, for Kohlberg justice, and for Noddings an ethic of caring. This section will compare the similarities and examine the

differences of their thought to discern the methods by which they constructed their divergent theories.

Both Kohlberg and Dewey believe that morality is inherently objective. Each finds fulfillment in a universally applicable principle of moral conduct. These principles are not content specific in terms of concrete situations but are delineated through general modes of thought such as the golden rule or categorical imperative. Dewey and Kohlberg hold that these abstract principles are intrinsic to all humans, and as such they are accessible to every person, thus their objective nature. Noddings, however, takes the contrary view asserting that there are no broad-based moral qualities, no universal and abstract principles of ethical truth to uncover. Dewey and Kohlberg deny any external source of objective goodness, which is the hallmark of traditional religious moral teachings. They equate goodness with the human condition. Noddings denies both external and internal objective goodness. For her, goodness is related to mutable reactions to immediate situations. Morality is concrete for Noddings in a way that it is not for Kohlberg and Dewey. The latter believe that their objective principles are not dependent upon the subjective realm of the individual. Noddings believes the subjective realm conditions the moral response of the individual.

This is a significant division between the philosophies of Kohlberg and Dewey and Noddings. The other major difference, a related one, is the role of reason in morality. The objective moral principles at the heart of Dewey and Kohlberg's theories find fruition in subjective experience through reason. The individual is compelled to moral action through situational reflection. This compelling force is essential, in particular, to Kohlberg's theory of stage progression. Dewey and Kohlberg combine their ideals of

freedom with that of reason in what Kohlberg calls self-chosen ethical principles. Thus *moral action is based on reason*. Noddings rejects this idea. She believes goodness to be shaped and stimulated by feeling. Where Kohlberg and Dewey look to the objective principle, Noddings looks to the subjective relational experience. Where they look to thought, she looks to emotion.

For both camps, however, the priming pumps of thought and emotion lead to the same results: action. All three are firm proponents of social activity as the proper and only setting for moral growth. While they disagree on the objective nature of morality, they do agree that it occurs in the human world. For all three, the moral development of the person is directly related to his role in society.

Noddings, Dewey, and Kohlberg agree that society is both the proper setting and the material by which moral growth occurs. They also believe that action is a necessary condition of that growth. But whereas Dewey and Kohlberg assert that this action follows the commands of moral reasoning, Noddings thinks it develops from the wellsprings of feeling. They also agree that the human will is the means by which ethical reflection becomes ethical action. Unspoken here, of course, is their common presumption of the intrinsic freedom of human beings. But while they all attest to the importance of society and action in the ethical, they differ not only about what it is directed by (reason vs. feeling) but also what it is directed to: An abstract ideal for Dewey and Kohlberg, a concrete accomplishment for Noddings. For both Kohlberg and Dewey pre-existing principles shapes the reaction to a situation. For Noddings, the situation shapes its own reaction without reference to any prior principles. Noddings believes the only rule by which a situation is guided is an ethic of caring, and this ethic is

neither previously formed nor universally applicable in either content or spirit. This ethic depends only on the context of the situation. Noddings then is a proponent of moral relativism.

Similar to Dewey and Kohlberg, Noddings holds that there is no ideological content to the means by which moral action fulfills itself such as is evidenced by the bag of virtues. But while Kohlberg, and to a much lesser extent Dewey, find identifiable content in the end to which that means is directed (i.e., justice and consciousness) Noddings ~~claims~~ there are no definite characteristics not only of means but of ends in her philosophy of caring. Noddings establishes that every person and every situation is of a different moral nature and as a result there can be no prescribed content to the means by which a situation is morally reconcilable nor the end to which it is reconciled. Kohlberg, however, believes that while there is no content to the means of a morally reconcilable situation, there is a definite content to the reconciled end – the characteristics of justice. But is Noddings truly content free in both means and ends?

Noddings, in rejecting prescriptions of virtue and by identifying each situation as unique, establishes that the means to an ethical end are situationally-based and thus content free. Emotions are immediate, unchanneled responses to an occurrence. They cannot be fashioned and directed as thoughts can be. For Noddings the emotions, particularly the caring emotion, is our truest nature and most reliable guide to doing what is right. For her rationality, because it deals in abstract conceptions, is not as rooted in the concrete and the human. Therefore it cannot meet the needs of concrete, human conflicts as well as the emotional response.

This is perhaps the most significant schism between the Noddings and

Dewey/Kohlberg camps. This question of the affective vs. the reflective is the origin of their debate and colors the rest of their ethical views. However, the more immediate question as to the exact nature of Noddings' position on content remains. Her position on the relationship between content and means is a settled one. But her claim to a content-free end merits attention.

Noddings believes that the moral end, much as in the case of the means, is relativist because of the diverse nature of events. There can be no name given to an outcome of a moral act such as duty or justice because moral actions are based on feelings and situations which are in every case dissimilar. The characteristics of the end differ each time depending on the relationship of the caring-for and the cared-for. But though the characteristics of both the means and end differ, one detects in Noddings a uniting spirit at the end of moral conduct. The characteristics of her end (caring) differ because of differing relationships, but the spirit of that end remains always the same – kindness. Noddings, then, like Kohlberg and Dewey has content as the fulfillment of her ethical philosophy. She is relativist in situation but not in spirit.

Dewey's philosophy finds as its moral end the ideal of goodness. This goodness is predicated upon the maturation of a process Dewey calls consciousness. But while Kohlberg establishes no specific virtue content to his ideal of justice, he does delineate types of behavior associated with a just outlook. Dewey does no such thing. He does propose a model of the progression of the conscience in three stages (which Kohlberg adopted and expanded upon). This conscience is directed to the good. But Dewey, like Noddings, does not set forth types of thoughts and behavior that indicate what the good is. Dewey asserts that the moral person seeks the good and is directed to it by a

conscientious manner of relational living. But he does not concretely define this good.

What Dewey and Kohlberg do have in common is that they both believe their moral end – goodness or justice – to be absolute. It is a form common to all men. Kohlberg and Dewey believe morality to be an objective truth located in a subjective being. Noddings believes morality to be a subjective truth located in the subjective being. But the fact that all have the capacity to care even if they do not, as all have the capacity to be good or just even if they are not, is a fact of potentiality that Noddings does not adequately address.

Another major break in the thinking of Noddings, Dewey, and Kohlberg is just how far the capacity to be kind, to be good or to be just extends. Dewey and Kohlberg, following the traditional rational model of Kant, believe this capacity to extend to all. There is a duty to be good or just not only to your family, your friends and your society, but to all men. Their moral philosophies propose a regard for all. Noddings believes this focus on the universal reach of conduct leads to an abstract understanding of relations that undermines true involvement in the lives of others. What this abstract conception of situations lacks is the empathy that results from concrete conflicts and results in caring intervention. This empathy extends only as far as a person's experience and so the proper sphere of moral conduct is the people who are most directly related to that person's life. Kohlberg and Dewey's regard for all becomes in Noddings' hands a regard for the related individual. This sense of regard harkens to a related issue at the heart of the ethical philosophies of the three: The idea of obligation.

As we have seen, the form of obligation extends to everyone for Kohlberg and Dewey and to those directly related for Noddings. There is further disagreement on how

this obligation operates. For Kohlberg and Dewey, obligation, based on the rational faculties, applies to all equitably and is thus divorced from the individual's own desires. The individual's needs are only as important as any one else's and must be balanced with the needs of others. Noddings places obligation at the affective bequest of empathy and so for her, obligation is based on the desires of the individual. A person feels obligated because he feels. He has no need to consult an external principle to know what is right. He knows so naturally and internally. If he does not feel so naturally he has no obligation to act. Noddings is, ironically, following the same prescription here that Dewey upholds and Kohlberg cites for his own theory: The Socratic mantra "He who knows the good does the good." Only whereas, in Dewey and Kohlberg's models, the individual knows the good through reason, in Noddings' they know it through feeling.

Empathy, the foundation of Noddings' moral framework and the conditioning agent of her conception of obligation, is important to Kohlberg as well. For both, empathy is the taking of a role by the individual in a conflict. But whereas for Noddings this conflict is always concrete, for Kohlberg it may be immediate or it may be a conjuring exercise of the mind. This conjuring occurs when the person contemplates the ethics of the abstract such as in the case of the categorical imperative. It is immediate for Noddings because it is based on the immediacy of a caring feeling that puts one person into the place of another before the rational faculty can intervene. For Kohlberg, role taking is a measured process dictated by reason. For Noddings, it is an instantaneous

feeling. For her, it is individual feeling in the absence of reason. Reason may be employed to further the ends of an initial emotional response, but works only within that framework according to Noddings. For Kohlberg, to be human is to feel but these feelings are subservient to the role of reflection. Kohlberg, like Kant, divorces feeling from reason to find moral truth. Dewey believes it is feeling which prompts that journey toward truth. He thinks that unless an end arouses an emotional response the individual will not be drawn toward it. In this he agrees with Noddings. But unlike Noddings he believes that this initial response, while valuable in initiating the ethical process, is not as constructive as reason in bringing the process to fruition.

The closest association between the works of Noddings and Kohlberg occurs in this area of empathy and roletaking. Noddings' theory precludes many of the abstract aspects of Kohlberg's model of role-taking, but in engaging with the decision making of concrete situations their beliefs are quite similar. A hallmark of Kohlberg's formulation of role-taking in the sixth stage is the idea of reversibility. Kohlberg appropriated this concept from the work of Rawls. Reversibility states that moral judgments must be reversible; that we must live with our own judgment of another if we were to trade places with him.

This process places the person firmly in the arena of empathy. For Rawls and Kohlberg, a moral act is good if it is adopted under the guidance of the original position – chosen in ignorance of who will be affected by an action. This position ensures fairness by eradicating self interest. It also places the individual in the shoes of the other people in the situation. This idea of reversibility brings morality down from the lofty heights of the categorical imperative and places it in the realm of those directly involved in a moral

conflict. In the ideal of reversibility, Kohlberg meets Noddings on neutral ground. They both believe here in applying moral behavior to the immediate situation and to the people related to that situation. They also believe in reversibility, the ability to see both positions in a moral situation. Noddings calls this ability empathy. But what for Noddings conditions a moral response to the immediate situation – the affective – is not what prompts moral action for Kohlberg – the reflective.

What separates Kohlberg from Dewey and Noddings is that Kohlberg empirically tested his theories. Dewey, like Kohlberg, emphasized a scientific approach to the moral but only Kohlberg followed through on testing his views. Kohlberg did so through a series of surveys he conducted upon different cultures and age groups throughout the world. His tests lend a measure of credence to his claims of moral stage growth. While Dewey approached his theory of ethics with a rigorous and scientific mindset he did not take the final step toward proving it by the scientific method. Noddings also does not take this step toward confirmation of her theory. It is this empirical examination of his beliefs that gives Kohlberg a type of authority that is lacking in either Dewey or Noddings.

CONCLUSION

The moral theories of John Dewey and Lawrence Kohlberg are a continuation of the intellectual pursuits of the English and French philosophes of the Enlightenment. These men stressed the empirical study of nature and the rational foundations of man. The following century saw thinkers such as Hegel and Kant apply this scientific ideology to the study of social relations. The concern of these 19th Century rationalists, the nature of morality, and their approach to this question of ethics, the faculty of reason, has significantly influenced Dewey and Kohlberg's visions of the ethical world. Dewey and Kohlberg, like their European predecessors, believe that reason is innate in human nature. Being universal, reason is then the best tool for solving moral problems, according to Dewey and Kohlberg.

Moral problems, for both Dewey and Kohlberg, are dilemmas of relation among men. Ethical questions concern man in his present society and are solved for the betterment of that society. Dewey and Kohlberg agree on this point. For them, the moral man is the man who actively works to improve both himself and his society. To do so, men must consult prior and abstract principles of morality knowable by their ability to reason. Dewey calls this moral principle Goodness, and it is arrived at through a moral awakening he calls consciousness, which in turn has its roots in the individual conscience. This awakening progresses through three stages of moral development. Dewey's conception of stage growth is taken up by Kohlberg who posits the universal moral principle to be a goodness based on justice.

Noddings asserts that Dewey and Kohlberg's moral theories, resting as they do on

reason, are devoid of the emotional factors that color a person's ethical judgments. Noddings believes that what is missing from Dewey and Kohlberg's principles are the ideas of empathy, feeling, and caring. Like Dewey and Kohlberg, who suggest the existence of a universal faculty, Noddings too holds that there is an innate feature to all of us. But in contrast to their proposed universal, reason, Noddings offers the care response as this instinctual element. From this fact of natural caring, Noddings develops her moral principle of ethical caring. Ethical caring, Noddings asserts, is based on the memories of moments of natural caring. These memories of natural caring urge the individual onward, to actively seek out and foster caring relationships in his or her social world. Taken together, the moral theories of Dewey and Kohlberg, which center upon man's unique ability to reason, and that of Noddings, which focuses on man's unique disposition to care, present an important and inspired contribution to the field of moral development.

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