

KOHLBERG'S MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Kim Jinyoung, Chung Kiwon

The Heinz Dilemma

Scenario 1

A woman was near death from a unique kind of cancer. There is a drug that might save her. The drug costs \$4,000 per dosage. The sick woman's husband, Heinz, went to everyone he knew to borrow the money and tried every legal means, but he could only get together about \$2,000. He asked the doctor scientist who discovered the drug for a discount or let him pay later. But the doctor scientist refused.

- 1) *Should Heinz break into the laboratory to steal the drug for his wife?*
- 2) *Why or why not?*

Scenario 2

Heinz broke into the laboratory and stole the drug. The next day, the newspapers reported the break-in and theft. Brown, a police officer and a friend of Heinz remembered seeing Heinz last evening, behaving suspiciously near the laboratory. Later that night, he saw Heinz running away from the laboratory.

- 1) *Should Brown report what he saw?*
- 2) *Why or why not?*

Scenario 3

Officer Brown reported what he saw. Heinz was arrested and brought to court. If convicted, he faces up to two years' jail. Heinz was found guilty.

- 1) *Should the judge sentence Heinz to prison?*
- 2) *Why or why not?*

Stages of Moral Reasoning

Level One: Pre-conventional Morality	Stage 1: Punishment-Obedience Orientation
	Stage 2: Instrumental Relativist Orientation
Level Two: Conventional Morality	Stage 3: Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation
	Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation
Level Three: Post-Conventional Morality	Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation
	Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

Kohlberg's Level One: Preconventional Morality

Stage 1: Punishment-Obedience Orientation

“Physical consequences of an action determine its goodness or badness regardless of the human meaning or value of these consequences. Avoidance of punishment and unquestioning deference to power are valued in their own right, not in terms of respect for an underlying moral order supported by punishment and authority.”

The concern is for self – “Will I get into trouble for doing (or not doing) it?” Good behavior is associated with avoiding punishment.

Possible Stage 1 responses to Heinz Dilemma:

- Heinz should not steal the drug because he might be caught and sent to jail.
- Heinz should steal the drug because if he doesn't then his wife might scold him.

Stage 2: Instrumental Relativist Orientation

Right action is “that which instrumentally satisfies one's own needs and occasionally the needs of others.” “Human relations are viewed in terms like those of the marketplace; elements of fairness, reciprocity and equal sharing are present, but they are always interpreted in a physical or pragmatic way. Reciprocity is a matter of ‘you scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours,’ not of loyalty, gratitude or justice.”

The concern is “What's in it for me?” Still egocentric in outlook but with a growing ability to see things from another person’s perspective. Action is judged right if it helps in satisfying one’s needs or involves a fair exchange.

Possible Stage 2 responses to Heinz Dilemma:

- It is right for Heinz to steal the drug because it can cure his wife and then she can cook for him.
- The doctor scientist had spent lots of money and many years of his life to develop the cure so it’s not fair to him if Heinz stole the drug.

Kohlberg's Level Two: Conventional Morality

Stage 3: Good Boy-Nice Girl Orientation

”Good behavior is that which pleases or helps others and is approved by them. There is much conformity to stereotypical images of what is majority or ‘natural’ behavior. Behavior is frequently judged by intention. ‘He means well’ becomes important for the first time. One earns approval by being ‘nice.’”

The concern is “What will people think of me?” and the desire is for group approval. Right action is one that would please or impress others. This often involves self-sacrifice but it provides the psychological pleasure of ‘approval of others.’ Actions are also judged in relation to their intention.

Possible Stage 3 responses to Heinz Dilemma:

- Yes, Heinz should steal the drug. He probably will go to jail for a short time for stealing but his in-laws will think he is a good husband.

- Brown, the police officer should report that he saw Heinz behaving suspiciously and running away from the laboratory because his boss would be pleased.
- Officer Brown should not report what he saw because his friend Heinz would be pleased.
- The judge should not sentence Heinz to jail for stealing the drug because he meant well ... he stole it to cure his wife.

Stage 4: Law and Order Orientation

“Right behavior consists in doing one’s duty, showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake.” A person in this stage “orients to society as a system of fixed rule, law and authority with the prospect of any deviation from rules as leading to social chaos.”

The concern now goes beyond one’s immediate group(s) to the larger society ... to the maintenance of law and order. One’s obligation to the law overrides one’s obligations of loyalty to one’s family, friends and groups. To put it simply, no one or group is above the law.

Possible Stage 4 responses to Heinz Dilemma:

- As her husband, Heinz has a duty to save his wife’s life so he should steal the drug. But it’s wrong to steal, so Heinz should be prepared to accept the penalty for breaking the law.
- The judge should sentence Heinz to jail. Stealing is against the law. He should not make any exceptions even though Heinz’ wife is dying. If the judge does not sentence Heinz to jail then others may think it’s right to steal and there will be chaos in the society.

Kohlberg's Level Three: Postconventional Morality

Stage 5: Social Contract Orientation

Right action tends to be defined in terms of general individual rights and in terms of standards which have been critically examined and agreed upon by the whole society ... with an emphasis upon the possibility of changing law in terms of rational consideration of social utility (rather than rigidly maintaining it in terms of Stage 4 law and order).

The concern is social utility or public interest. While rules are needed to maintain social order, they should not be blindly obeyed but should be set up by social contract for the greater good of society. Right action is one that protects the rights of the individual according to rules agreed upon by the whole society.

Possible Stage 5 responses to Heinz Dilemma:

- Heinz should steal the drug because everyone has the right to life regardless of the law against stealing. Should Heinz be caught and prosecuted for stealing then the law needs to be reinterpreted because a person's life is at stake.
- The doctor scientist's decision is despicable but his right to fair compensation (for his discovery) must be maintained. Therefore, Heinz should not steal the drug.

Stage 6: Universal Ethical Principle Orientation

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 and are not concrete moral rules like 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 individual persons.

The concern is for moral principles ... an action is judged right if it is consistent with self-chosen ethical principles. These principles are not concrete moral rules but are universal principles of justice, reciprocity, equality and human dignity.

Possible Stage 6 response to Heinz Dilemma:

- Heinz should steal the drug to save his wife because preserving human life is a higher moral obligation than preserving property.