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Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg

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In discussing the issue of whether students must salute the flag (pp. 148-149), the authors respond, "No, they do not have to salute the flag if they have a *genuine religious objection* to such an act" (emphasis added). They based their assessment on the landmark case, *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnett*, 319 U.S. 624 (1943). I would argue that the major issue was not religious, per se, although it was an alleged violation of religious belief which precipitated the case. In quoting Mr. Justice Jackson in the majority opinion, "the sole conflict is between authority [of the state] and rights of the individual. He stated, "Nor does the issue as we see it turn on one's possession of particular religious views or *the sincerity with which they are held* (emphasis added). Thus, I would disagree with the authors by responding that the issue of a genuine religious objection to a required flag salute is irrelevant to the primary issue of the authority of the state vis a vis the rights of the individual.

These observations are not intended to demean the value of the book, but rather to reflect honest differences

in interpretation or style. Such is usually the case with legal writing and reflects the nature of law and the legal process. Although a trivial issue, I did object to the authors use of the term liberal on three occasions to describe certain California courts. I typically find nothing gained by describing courts in such loaded terms as liberal or conservative. Finally, I was surprised that the authors failed to mention the problem of sexual harassment in the sections on sexual discrimination. This growing problem should be examined in the context of such a book.

I believe the authors have accomplished their goal of promoting legal literacy for public school teachers. This book provides the information for teachers to understand better the complexities of the law and, as a result, to stay out of court by practicing preventive law. *Teachers and the Law* will be a valuable addition to the professional collection of teachers, administrators, school board members and other laypersons interested in public school law.

William Sparkman
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Review

Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg

Richard H. Hersh, Diana P. Paolitto and Joseph Reimer.
Promoting Moral Growth: From Piaget to Kohlberg. New York: Longman, 1979.

The prime goal of *Promoting Moral Growth* is to facilitate educators' comprehension of the theory and implications of moral issues within school settings. The approach presented in this volume has its roots in the writings of John Dewey, the stage development work of Jean Piaget, and the conceptual synthesis and research of Lawrence Kohlberg.

As a Harvard psychologist, Kohlberg for the past 25 years has been expanding, refining, and honing the work of Dewey and Piaget. He perceives that humans function at different stages of moral maturity and that understanding how and why individuals respond as they do is vital to education.

Values such as fairness, justice, rights, equality, honesty, responsibility, human dignity, truthfulness and consideration for others whether they exist in the classroom or in the general society are considered to be moral issues. The authors of this volume observe the importance of the school's role in the basic orientation of children and young adults.

Teachers are instrumental in the transmission of values. As human beings they cannot be value neutral. Indeed, arguing for value neutrality is itself a value position. Teachers, by their pedagogical choices and their modeling behavior, are of necessity moral educators, regardless of the subject matter they teach. Thus, when the question is raised, "Should schools engage in values and moral education?" we have no choice but to answer that schools are necessarily institutions of significant moral enterprise.

Moral education should not be confused with simple value clarification. The authors believe that values clarification focuses on the question "What is good?" via assisting teachers and students with strategies for becoming more fully aware of the values of others, what is to be valued, and their own personal values. However, it is noted that the values clarification model lacks the ability to help teachers and students cope with value conflicts. The viewpoint that all values are relative and of equal value is rejected in this study.

The process forwarded by Kohlberg and examined in this volume represents a way of understanding how children and adults think about the critical issues of morality. The teaching process described is based on the belief that children need the opportunity to examine complex decision-making situations; be permitted to formulate a position specifying their reasons for endorsing that position; and subsequently comparing their position to the rationale and reasoning espoused by others regarding the same problem.

Emphasis is placed on the belief that a person's response to a given situation does not represent their moral worth, but is rather an indicator of how he/she thinks about a critical moral issue at that time. Participants in a moral discussion may arrive at the same conclusion yet have diverse reasons for their recommendations.

An individual's reasoning may be codified according to its appropriate place in Kohlberg's three level six stage paradigm. The stages are thought to represent a pattern of thinking based on a person's experience and perspectives on specific moral issues. Kohlberg argues for the invariance of the stage development, that is, each successive stage builds on the preceding one and that no stage may be skipped.

According to Kohlberg's research techniques, indirect methods are not needed to "trick" people into revealing their perceptions about moral issues. To ascertain a person's stage of moral judgment one has only to pose to them moral dilemmas that will arouse their interests and ask them what the best solution to the dilemma would be, and why.

Classroom application of moral reasoning requires that teachers actively create cognitive conflict and stimulate student's social perspective. Additionally, this appli-

cation must set in motion selected patterns of social interaction including the development of moral awareness, the art of asking questions, and the creation of a positive classroom atmosphere conducive to moral development.

Three elements are fundamental to the moral judgment paradigm: (1) the necessity of increasing the teacher's own awareness of moral issues prior to expecting students to do so, (2) the recognition that many teacher-student interactions have moral dimensions, and (3) the acceptance that selected kinds of social interaction discussions are more conducive than others to promote moral development.

Despite the initial appeal of Kohlberg's paradigm and its reliance on the theories of Dewey and Piaget several criticisms have been advanced by educators. Hersh, Paolitto, and Reimer address several of these criticisms, however, in their zeal to promote the theory of moral development they dismiss the plausibility of the stated criticisms leaving their own credibility mildly abridged. But, on the whole *Promoting Moral Growth* is a text which warrants reading by educators interested in the concept of moral development.

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Guest Viewpoint continued

Awareness, obviously, is the beginning of the solution, but this naturally breeds more questions. How is a responsive school to know that students receive all the communications training they need? How can an amateur writer be made to understand that valuable work is lost in muddled English? How does a conscientious editor discover that improvements in rhetoric obscure the meaning of research results?

If teachers or schools are represented in these publications, it is invariably through their science departments. Science journals—social, biological, and physical—do not admit to having language specialists on their executive (policy), review (selection), and editorial staffs. Technical writers in industry have progressed to the stage where they do little more than to immortalize gobbledygook in grammatically correct sentences. Without the benefits of interdisciplinary guidance and enforced literacy from the ground up, degeneration will continue to accelerate and hasten the day when each select group will inevitably work in its own sequestered language community.

Literate communication is an imperilled resource. What can you do for yourself and others to prevent its extinction?

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