Paper

Human Development 2002;45:104–124

Human Development

Why Be Moral? A Conceptual Model from Developmental Psychology

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Key Words

Moral development · Moral motivation · Moral identity · Conceptual models

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the relationships among moral reasoning, moral motivation, moral action, and moral identity. It explores how major figures in developmental psychology have understood these relationships, with attention to schematic models or conceptual maps. After treating Piaget, Kohlberg, Rest, Colby and Damon, and Blasi, I present a critical synthesis, a conceptual model of how developmental psychology might best answer the question, Why be moral?

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Under the powerful influence first of Jean Piaget and then of Lawrence Kohlberg, development psychology has paid relatively less attention to issues of moral motivation than of moral cognition. For Kohlberg, motivation was practically subsumed under cognition. As Kohlberg reports in his essay 'Education for Justice: A Modern Statement of the Platonic View':

> ... as I have tried to trace the stages of development of morality and to use these stages as the basis of a moral education program, I have realized more and more that its implication was the reassertion of the Platonic faith in the power of the rational good. [1970, p. 57]

Although he qualified this philosophical perspective – 'In speaking of a Platonic view, I am not discarding my basic Deweyism ...' [1970, p. 59] – many psychologists (and moral philosophers) have objected to what they consider Kohlberg's excessive rationalism (e.g., Aron, Carr, Flanagan; for a summary of 'Psychological and Philosophical Challenges to Kohlberg's Approach', see Rest et al. [1999] ch. 2). Some developmen-

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0018–716X/02/0452–0104$18.50/0

Accessible online at:
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talists have sought to shift the focus or broaden the purview of psychological research and theory beyond moral cognition to include questions not only of moral motivation but also of moral identity. This paper will approach this literature from Piaget to the neo- or post-Kohlbergians with the belief that these theories can be illuminated by exploring how they implicitly or explicitly answer the question, Why be moral?

While this question is clearly philosophical, it can also be understood psychologically. The focus for psychology is on moral functioning, on why one acts as one does in morally challenging situations, or even why one commits oneself to moral responsibility and integrity over a lifetime. This paper is concerned with the complex relationships among moral reasoning, moral motivation, moral action, and moral identity. It explores how major figures in developmental psychology have understood these relationships, with special attention to schematic models or conceptual maps. After having treated Piaget, Kohlberg, Rest, Colby and Damon, and Blasi, I will argue that Blasi provides the crucial elements of a critical synthesis, a model of how developmental psychology might answer the question, Why be moral?

Piaget

'But the relations between thought and action are very far from being as simple as is commonly supposed.' [Piaget, 1997, p. 176]

In his classic 1932 study, *The Moral Judgment of the Child,* Jean Piaget initiated much of the scholarly research, discussion, and theorizing that has characterized developmental and moral psychology until today. Of particular importance to this paper, and a fundamental element in his study of children's morality, is his understanding of the relation of thought and action. As the above quotation suggests, Piaget cannot be blamed for the common casting of the thought-action dynamic in terms of the problem of why moral action does not always follow moral judgment, the problem of *akrasia* (weakness of will) or of the failure of moral integrity or character. Philosopher Don Locke [1983, p. 160] call this 'the Thought/Action problem: the problem at once philosophical and psychological, of explicating the relationship between what a person says he ought to do, or even what he thinks he ought to do, and what he actually does'. Piaget does not seem to have been particularly interested in this issue. Rather, he was interested in the reverse issue, of thought lagging behind action. Locke [1983, p. 161] dubs this 'the Action/Thought Problem[:] ... the question is not how thought gets translated into action, but how action gets taken up into thought.' Piaget's investigations led him to believe that children's social interaction led them (eventually) into new ways of moral understanding, and not the other way around. Specifically, unsupervised peer (symmetrical) interaction, which requires cooperation and not the simple obedience, unilateral respect, and authoritarian restraint of adult-child (asymmetrical) interaction, leads children to construct modes of thinking based on sympathy, mutuality, and recognition of reciprocal rights and duties, of justice. As he wrote,

Thought always lags behind action and cooperation has to be practiced for a very long time before its consequences can be brought fully to light by reflective thought. This is a fresh example of the law of *prise de conscience* or conscious realization formulated by Claparede and of the time-lag or 'shifting' which we have observed in so many other spheres. [1997, p. 64]

Piaget offered the hypothesis

> that the verbal and theoretical judgment of the child corresponds, broadly speaking, with the concrete and practical judgments which the child may have made on the occasion of his own action during the years preceding the interrogatory [of the researcher]. [1997, p. 119]

Action lays the foundation for new thought: 'Conscious realization is a reconstruction and consequently a new and original construction superimposed upon the constructions already formed by action' [p. 177]. Children are capable of acting cooperatively before they are capable of articulating an ethic of cooperation. Thus Piaget thought it more telling to observe children behaving in real-life situations, such as a game of marbles, than to question them about their thinking about stories, although he also used this research method.

Because he thought of the relation of action (primary) to reflection (secondary) in this way, for Piaget the problem of *akrasia* was conceptually not an issue. In Piaget's children, so to speak, good will or ego strength can be assumed. He sees it in their cooperative play. Nor does he make any explicit reference to new forms of moral action to which conscious realization might lead, although he does obviously think that learning a cooperative ethic as a child is foundational to participation in democracy as an adult.

Likewise, questions of moral motivation and identity play no explicit role in *The Moral Judgment of the Child.* Children practice the ethic of constraint out of fear, respect, and affection for adults, and learn the ethic of cooperation through their capacities for sympathy, mutuality, and role-taking among their peers. In both cases, it might be said that what moves children to act is a concern to maintain (in the first case) or develop (in the second) harmonious relationships, so to foster a stable and secure context for the self, although that context is defined differently for the two contrasting moralities. Indeed, in the latter case, as pointed out by Davidson and Youniss [1991, p. 107], '[f]or Piaget, the experience of cooperation is the key to both moral development and personality formation.' Or, '[t]o put it another way, the construction of identity and the construction of morality are aspects of the same construction,' so that 'spontaneous moral judgment, or moral intuition, is an expression of a person's identity or of one aspect of the identity' [p. 112]. With the qualification that the development of identity can be seen as implicit in the same process (a theme to which we will return), Piaget's understanding of the moral dynamic may be summarized in the Law of Conscious Realization, according to which moral action precedes and leads to moral thought.

Kohlberg

> '... following Jean Piaget, we see the development of moral judgment as a single-track process. In this view, moral judgment arises out of moral action itself, although there is no single causal direction. A new stage of moral judgment may guide new behavior, whereas a new action involving conflict and choice may lead one to construct a new stage of moral judgment.' [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984, p. 53]

Because Kohlberg theorizes more than two stages of moral development, there is a 'future' for new thought (conscious realization of the meaning of action, in Piaget's terms), as there is not in his predecessor's theory. New possibilities in thinking create

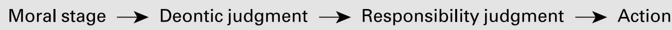

Fig. 1. Kohlberg's basic moral theory.

new opportunities for action. We can think our way into new forms of action just as we can act our way into new forms of thinking. '[T]here is no single causal direction' in the single-track moral thought/action dynamic. But even this Kohlbergian proposition does a disservice to a complex psychology, for in Kohlberg's theory not only does thought arise from and also produce action, moral thought or judgment itself is of two kinds. Drawing particularly on Frankena's classic *Ethics,* Kohlberg distinguishes between deontic judgments and responsibility judgments. The former 'is a judgment that an act is right or obligatory', 'typically derive[s] from a rule or principle', and can be called 'first-order'. By contrast, a responsibility judgment is 'a second-order affirmation of the will to act in terms of that [first-order deontic] judgment'. Quoting Blasi [1983], Kohlberg affirms that '[t]he function of a responsibility judgment is to determine to what extent that which is morally good or right is also strictly necessary for the self' [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984, p. 57]. We will see in our discussion of Blasi that this statement about the self has more extensive meaning for him than for Kohlberg. But since '[d]eontic judgments are propositional deductions from a *stage* or principle' [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984, p. 57, emphasis added], and since, for Kohlberg, moral stage determines the principles available for a deontic judgment, we may schematize his basic theory as shown in figure 1.

But this is further complicated by Kohlberg's very Piagetian discovery that some individuals act in concert with stages more advanced than their moral judgment stage. This is reminiscent of Piaget's insistence that articulate reflection lags behind action and is not necessary to it. Kohlberg addresses this phenomenon with his distinction between type A and type B moral orientations across the moral stages proper and which correspond to Piaget's heteronomous and autonomous moral types. Like Piaget's as yet inarticulate but cooperative and autonomous moral type, Kohlberg's 'type B person is someone who intuitively or in his or her 'heart' or 'conscience' perceives the central values and obligations .... articulated rationally by stage 5 and uses these intuitions to generate a judgment of responsibility or necessity in a dilemma' [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984, p. 63].

Kohlberg himself identifies moral stage/type and the two forms of judgment as three of the four functions that can be 'formalized into a model of the relationship of moral judgment to moral action.' Kohlberg and Candee's figure 4.1 [1984, p. 71] is reproduced here as figure 2.

With function IV, identified as nonmoral skills or ego controls. Kohlberg comes as close as he ever does to acknowledging the role of the virtues or of character in moral functioning, even though he does not honor them by traditional name or even grant that the personal skills needed to carry out a responsibility judgment are indeed moral. This

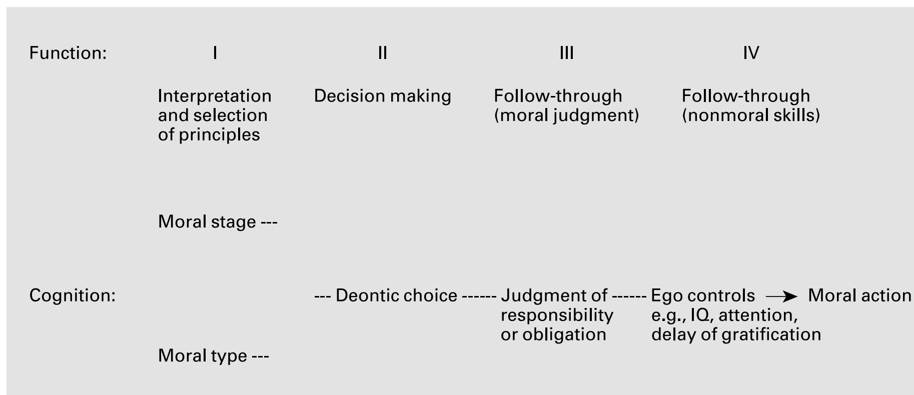

Fig. 2. Kohlberg's own schema of moral functioning.

is in keeping with his dismissal of ethics in the Aristotelian tradition with the famous epithet, 'bag of virtues' [Kohlberg, 1981, ch. 2]. In Kohlberg's view, however necessary courage (as an ego control in the face of danger) or temperance (as in delay of gratification) might be to moral action, only a judgment that an action is right or obligatory makes that action moral. A right action performed without reason is not a moral action at all.

Conversely, a right judgment that is not carried out does not figure prominently as an issue in Kohlberg's concern. Perversely, some might say, for Kohlberg such failure is really not moral at all, in that the problem is with personal attributes that are nonmoral in themselves. He points out that ego controls are morally neutral since they can be used to enact immoral as readily as moral intentions. In one study, '[h]igh school students at the preconventional level high in attention were more, rather than less likely to cheat, presumably because they had the strength to carry out their preconventional judgments' [Kohlberg, 1987, p. 308]. In the Aristotelian tradition, it should be pointed out, the virtue of courage does not stand alone but is in the service, especially, of the virtue of justice and is guided by the virtue of wisdom.

The important point for our purposes, however, is that Kohlberg does acknowledge a psychological function necessary to the implementation of moral judgment. He also acknowledges that 'situational factors are extremely important in moral action,' for '[i]n many cases peer group and institutional shared norms may be moral or nonmoral in their content.' This explains why Kohlberg's own 'approach to moral education [is] directed to making the classroom or the school a more just community' [1987, pp. 308–309]. Thus, if it did not complicate its appearance unnecessarily, situational factors might be added, at least parenthetically, under the rubric of function IV, to our Kohlbergian schema of moral functioning.

As Kohlberg himself points out, this model of the relationship of moral judgment and moral action (fig. 2) 'bears considerable similarity to the one proposed by Rest'. Although Kohlberg refers here to Rest's chapter in the same volume in which his own chapter appears, Rest first published these ideas a year earlier in another volume [Rest, 1983]. This suggests the possibility that Kohlberg may have been familiar with Rest's

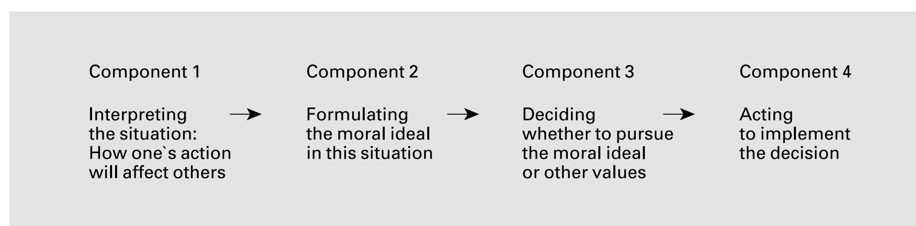

Fig. 3. Rest's four component model of morality.

four component model as he was formulating his own four function model of the relationship of judgment and action [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984]. We turn our attention, then, to James Rest's model of moral behavior [Rest, 1984].

Rest

'Reasoning about justice is no more the whole of morality than is empathy.' [Rest, 1984, p. 32]

Although Kohlberg claims similarity between his four function model and Rest's four component model, Rest himself clearly believes that Kohlberg's development theory of moral reasoning addresses only one (or perhaps two) of those components and that therefore his own model is more comprehensive. Such comprehensiveness is his stated goal. He observes that the conventional division of labor in moral psychological research has been tripartite: depending on one's theoretical orientation, one studies either moral thought, or moral emotions, or moral behavior. He proposes instead that we think of moral functioning as involving four inner processes or components all of which must perform adequately to produce moral behavior and all of which involve 'cognitive-affective interaction' [1984, p. 27]. Rest's model can be represented as in figure 3.

The first component or process (Rest uses the terms interchangeably) is 'To interpret the situation in terms of how one's actions affect the welfare of others' through processes of empathy and role-taking. Important research in these areas has been conducted by, among others, Hoffman and Selman. Component 2 is 'To formulate what a moral course of action would be [and] to identify the moral ideal in a specific situation.' Important researchers here are Piaget and Kohlberg. Although much of his own research, with the Defining Issues Test, has been in this area, Rest advises 'that this kind of data base zeroes in on Component 2 and is ill-suited for providing information about the other components' [1986, p. 9]. Such exclusively cognitively focused scholarship Rest 'would not consider ... to constitute a total theory of moral development' [1986, p. 8].

Component 3 is 'To select among competing value outcomes of ideals, the one to act on', and also to decide 'whether or not to try to fulfill one's moral ideal' [1984, p. 27]. Relevant research here includes work on decision-making and moral motivation, including such diverse perspectives as those of psychologists Bandura and Hoffman but also the author of *A Theory of Justice*, philosopher John Rawls. Interestingly, one of

Kohlberg's early papers is mentioned here, suggesting that his cognitive-developmental theory has something to say about Component 3 as well as Component 2. This would be no surprise to Kohlberg himself, of course, since he would see these two components as comparable to his deontic and responsibility judgments. The difference would seem to be that for Kohlberg the relationship between these two judgments (or components) is isotonic (convergent) as one advances in moral reasoning, so that, especially at postconventional stages, which are increasingly clear about individual responsibility, deontic judgment essentially *is* responsibility judgment. For Rest, however, the two components are distinct, since 'moral values are not the only values that people have' [1986, p. 13] and must be considered in Component 3. The obvious question then is, 'What motivates the selection of moral values over other values?' [1986, p. 14]. Rest lists eight theoretical answers to this question (including that of Blasi, to which we will come shortly) but contends that '[n]one of these views is supported by very complete or comprehensive research evidence at this point' [1984, p. 33]. Kohlberg has suggested that '[t]he basic motivation for morality is rooted in a generalized motivation for acceptance, competence, self-esteem, or self-realization.' [1987, p. 312]. Confronted with such as sweeping and unelaborated statement, one can readily agree with Rest that 'research has not proceeded very far along any one of these lines' [1986, p. 14].

Component 4 is 'To execute and implement what one ought to do' [Rest, 1984, p. 27]. Rest is less reluctant than Kohlberg to put success or failure here in explicitly moral and even religious context:

> Perseverance, resoluteness, competence, and *character* are attributes that lead to success in Component 4. Psychologists [such as Kohlberg] sometimes refer to these processes as involving 'ego strength' or 'self-regulation'. A biblical term for failures in Component 4 is 'weakness of the flesh'. [1986, p. 15, emphasis added]

Kohlberg would be pleased to see, despite this slight nod to the Aristotelians, that Rest nonetheless makes the same point in this regard as he (Kohlberg) has made:

> Firm resolve, perseverance, iron will, strong character, and ego strength can be used for ill or for good. Ego strength comes in handy to rob a bank, prepare for a marathon, rehearse for a piano concert, or carry out genocide. [Rest, 1986, p. 15]

Since, according to Kohlberg, 'moral stage structures *interpret* morally relevant features of a situation' [~ Component 1] as well as 'influence behavior through two judgments, one deontic [~ Component 2] ... and one responsibility (a judgment of commitment *to follow through*' [~ Component 3] and take action [~ Component 4] [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984, p. 70, emphasis added], one can see why Kohlberg believes there is 'considerable similarity' between his four function model and Rest's four component model.

Nonetheless, because stage (and/or type) of moral reasoning is fundamentally determinative for Kohlberg through three of the four functions (or components), as the above quotation makes clear, and as the fourth function is not properly moral at all in Kohlberg's estimation, Rest is also right to point to the difference between the two models. From his perspective, 'moral behavior is an exceedingly complex phenomenon and no single variable (empathy, prosocial orientation, *stages of moral reasoning*, etc.) is sufficiently comprehensive to represent the psychology of morality' [1986, p. 18, emphasis added]. It may be said that in their models of moral psychology, Kohlberg and

Rest converge to a remarkable degree, but they do so while diverging in significant ways on how to interpret those models. Kohlberg's model is staunchly cognitively determinative whereas in Rest's model, motivational factors beyond moral rationality but yet to be scientifically identified are also substantially involved in the production of moral behavior. For Kohlberg, despite his nod to general motivational factors such as 'acceptance, competence, self-esteem, or self-realization', reasons are also motives, and the primary ones at that.

To use the philosophical terminology of Roger Straughan [1983], Kohlberg tends toward an 'extreme internalism' in the Platonic tradition, in which knowledge of the good is both necessary and sufficient to produce moral action. Rest, on the other hand, would seem to be closer to Straughan's own 'moderate internalism', in which moral knowledge is necessary but sufficient *only* when there are not other 'countervailing factors' at stake [1983, p. 134]. Straughan points out that Kohlberg's own empirical evidence, as well as that reviewed in an oft-cited and extensive article by Blasi [1980], reveals 'only a "modest"' relationship between moral judgment and moral action [1983, p. 132]. That is, Kohlberg seems to draw stronger theoretical support from the empirical evidence than it really allows. Straughan's argument is that a moderate internalism (a chastened cognitivism), but not a full-blown Platonism, can be defended both logically and empirically. In effect, in the Kohlberg/Rest convergence/divergence, Straughan gives the nod to Rest. The empirical evidence [Kohlberg & Candee, 1984; Blasi, 1980] suggests that we must look beyond reasoning to a broader range of motivational factors if we are more adequately to understand the linkage between moral thought and moral action. Thus, Kohlberg's model (fig. 2) of the psychology of the moral domain should be read with the qualifications suggested by Rest and Straughan and with the understanding that it is incomplete in the area of moral motivation.

In this regard, Straughan [1983, p. 136] makes a provocative move by drawing on a 1976 paper by James Gilligan on shame and guilt as motivational factors in morality. Gilligan proposes, based on his analysis of Kohlberg's own data, the distinction between an 'other-directed ...' "shame ethic"' and a 'self-directed ... "guilt ethic."' Gilligan further claims that development moves from the former to the latter, a pattern that Straughan interprets to explain why Kohlberg has found evidence for an isotonic relationship between advances in moral reasoning and the likelihood of action consistent with those higher levels of judgment. As Straughan [1983, p. 137] put it, '[o]ther-directed sanctions are avoidable; self-directed ones are not.' As one's social perspectives move from personal individual (preconventional) to member-of-society (conventional) to prior-to-society (postconventional), one's motivation moves from the avoidance of punishment (stage 1) and the obtaining of rewards (stage 2) to the avoidance of disapproval and dislike (stage 3) and the avoidance of censure by legitimate authorities (stage 4) to the maintenance of respect from the community (stage 5). All of these motivating sanctions depend on public perception and are therefore potentially avoidable.

> But the feelings of guilt, remorse, anxiety and inadequacy which result from the agent's violation of his *own* self-accepted moral principles (on which stage 6 judgments are based) cannot be escaped, and this is a logical 'cannot'. The principles are *his* principles, indicating obligations, which *he* acknowledges as weighing upon him and justifying the doing of *x* rather than *y*. If he then goes ahead and does *y*, he knows that as long as he continues to accept the normative authority of those principles self-castigation is inevitable. 'I wouldn't be able to live with myself afterwards' is a typical response of Stage 6 subjects to Kohlberg's moral dilemmas. [1983, p. 137, emphasis in original]

Remarking that the shame-guilt contrast should not be thought of as 'too stark' but rather as on a continuum throughout the stages, Straughan nonetheless argues that 'there is still an important sense in which the motivation for moral action at Stage 6 is more guilt-based and less dependent upon sanctions *originating* from 'outside' the agent than it is at lower stages' [Straughan, 1983, p. 137, emphasis in original].

Whatever one makes of the particulars of this approach, it does seem that Gilligan and Straughan are on to something crucial and heretofore neglected in the area of the development of moral motivation. That 'something' is the role of the self, of what might be called the self's increasing 'ownership' or 'personalization' of, or sense of accountability for and to, its own moral reasoning and acting. Kohlberg alludes to this reality when he writes that 'the basic motivation for morality is rooted in the general motivation for acceptance, competence, self-esteem, and self-realization,' [1987, p. 312], and that judgments of responsibility may involve 'judgments of personal moral worth ... of the kind of self the actor wants to be ... or would be if he or she failed to perform the action' [Higgins et al., 1984, p. 80], but he does not explore this at any length. Indeed, there seems to be in that apparent progression of motives from social acceptance to self-realization something akin to the developmental trend from shame to guilt as suggested by Gilligan and as extrapolated by Straughan. Martin Hoffman [2000], in his *Empathy and Moral Development,* buttresses this emphasis on the motivational role of guilt in moral behavior, where guilt is understood as 'a painful feeling of disesteem for oneself' [p. 114]. What Hoffman calls 'mature guilt' [p. 119] becomes possible 'when one has internalized and committed himself to caring or justice principles, realizes one has choice and control, and takes responsibility for one's actions'. At this new level, 'one may now consider and act fairly toward others, not only because of empathy but also as an expression of one's internalized principles, an affirmation of one's *self*' [p. 18, emphasis in original]. It would be consistent with Hoffman to argue that the development of moral identity, the capacity for and habit of moral self-reflection and therefore the possibility of self-esteem or self-disesteem, is central to the development of a mature morality. Hoffman himself indicates that 'the self ... plays a central role in [his] empathy development theory' [p. 21]. As philosopher Jonathan Glover [2000] reminds us, recognition of the motivational power of the desire to be at peace with oneself by behaving well goes back at least as far as Socrates.

With this explicit attention to the phenomena of guilt and self-esteem, we are on the threshold of the realm of the moral self, especially as focused in the concept of moral identity. Our prime guides to this territory will be psychologists William Damon, Anne Colby (in partnership with Damon), and Augusto Blasi.

Damon

> 'A person's level of moral judgment does not determine the person's views on morality's place in one's life. To know how an individual deals with this latter issue, we must know about not only the person's moral beliefs but also the person's understanding of self in relation to these moral beliefs.' [Damon, 1984, p. 110]

William Damon sees his approach to the study of moral development as an 'alternative' to that of Kohlberg [Damon, 1984, p. 110]. Damon points out that

If children are presented with conflicts of authority drawn from the adult world, as in the case of Kohlberg's dilemmas, they are likely to acquiesce to the press of adult constraint and keep their moral principles to themselves. This is why we find Stage 1 responses to the Heinz dilemma all through childhood. But, as a number of developmentalists back to Piaget have demonstrated ..., Stage 1 obedience has little to do with the lively 'other morality of the child', expressed often in peer settings and based on principles of equality, cooperation, and reciprocity. [1984, p. 113]

According to Damon, Kohlberg's research methodology may actually distort our understanding of childhood morality by, in effect, ignoring the insights of Piaget into the counterproductive role adults may play in the development during childhood of an autonomous morality of justice. For Damon the 'split between the two moralities of the child' – Stage 1 obedience, the morality of constraint, and 'the other morality of the child', the morality of cooperation – is very real and 'provides us with a clue about the nature of social knowledge during childhood' [1984, p. 113].

Pursuing that clue, Damon recasts Piaget's insistence that the morality of constraint actually reinforces childish egocentrism and that the morality of cooperation, because it requires reciprocal respect, is a developmental advance. Damon observes that in childhood, 'morality and self-interest ... interact in various ways as children at different developmental levels construct their real-life decisions'. In particular, a central finding of his two rounds of longitudinal testing with children and adolescents [Damon, 1977; Gerson & Damon, 1978] was that 'only at the oldest age group (10) did we see some real consistency between hypothetical moral judgment and actual conduct ...'. Furthermore, 'morality does not become a dominant characteristic of self until ... middle adolescence'. [Damon, 1984, p. 116]. This indicates that at this developmental crux 'self-interest and morality were beginning to be integrated conceptually' [p. 118]. This notion of integration is the key to Damon's alternative understanding of moral development. He considers 'morality and the self as two separate conceptual systems' which are unrelated in childhood but which come together, however incompletely,

... during adolescence, when changes in each system open the way for new forms of integration between the two ... which leads to the self becoming more defined in moral terms. One's moral interests and self-interests become more clearly defined and connected to each other ... [p. 109].

Or more simply, 'during adolescence ... we see an integration of previously segregated conceptual systems: morality and the self.' [p. 119]. Because Damon casts moral development primarily in terms of this integration, we can chart his theory as follows:

Four comments on this figure and the theory it tries to represent are in order. First, moral reasoning per se is clearly not the focus, as it is in Kohlberg's theoretical schema (fig. 2). Rather, cognition is subsumed under morality generally, and presumably develops according to Kohlberg's stages. This, then, is the crucial point: Damon's approach does not so much seek to replace Kohlberg's theory as to place it in a larger context which calls attention to a personological dynamic not treated by Kohlberg at all. But this shift has major ramifications, which leads to our second observation. As Damon himself puts it,

One implication of this alternative position is that persons with the same moral beliefs may differ in their view on how important it is for them to be moral in a personal sense. Some may consider their morality to be central to their self-identities, whereas others may consider it to be peripheral. [1984, p. 110]

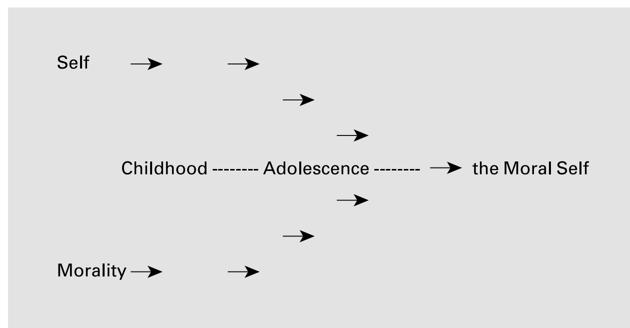

Fig. 4. Damon's theory of moral development/integration.

That is, figure 4 is meant to express a general development pattern toward integration of the moral self, especially during adolescence, but is not meant to suggest that this integration is always complete by adulthood or even at anytime during the adult years. Indeed, according to Damon's later work with Colby [Colby & Damon, 1992], such robust integration seems rare. Conversely, however, a complete lack of integration would effectively define moral-social pathology (morality and self on parallel tracks). More commonly, a partial integration (morality and self do not consistently converge) would account for why most people in fact do not always act according to their moral beliefs, according to what they actually regard as right. To put it simply, it's just not important enough to override other considerations.

A third observation draws out the Piagetian correspondances in Damon's theory. As Davidson and Youniss remind us, Piaget in *The Moral Judgment of the Child* made a crucial distinction between the egocentrism of heteronomous morality and the genuinely social and relational personality of autonomous morality. In the former, morality lies outside the self in external adult authority. In the latter, according to Piaget himself,

> the self takes up its stand on the norms of reciprocity and objective discussion, and knows how to submit to these in order to make itself respected. Personality is thus the opposite of the ego ... Cooperation being the source of personality, *rules cease to be external.* They become both the constitutive factors of personality and its fruit ... In this way autonomy succeeds heteronomy. [quoted in Davidson & Youniss, 1991, p. 110; my emphasis]

In light of their discussion of the theories of James, Baldwin, Mead, Turner, and Csikszentmihalyi, Davidson and Youniss prefer the terms 'primary identity' and 'autonomous identity' to Piaget's 'ego' and 'personality' and propose 'a conception of the two identities that is somewhat different from Piaget's' [p. 118]. That conception is expressed in a hypothesis about the nature of moral development:

> Moral development is the primary identity's progressive acquisition of facility in entering, or opening up to, and eventually becoming explicitly aware of, the autonomous identity ...

and a corollary:

... the autonomous standpoint would eventually become the dominant identity, superceding the previous primary identity. This conception of the normal direction of development is thus in line with Piaget's view of personality, except that we expect it to involve a number of partial constructions and also to require a more extended period of time than Piaget's writings imply. [pp. 119–120]

Although the terms are different, Davidson and Youniss could almost be describing Damon's theory of progressive integration of self and morality, which begins in early adolescence and extends into adulthood, but which even then may be 'partial' and incomplete. In this process, 'rules cease to be external ... [and] become both the constitutive factors of personality and its fruit'. By 'fruit' I take Davidson and Youniss to mean 'spontaneous moral judgment' and behavior as an expression of personality or autonomous identity. This Piagetian 'like between moral judgment and moral identity' as the 'normal direction of development' corresponds precisely with, and gives additional credibility to, Damon's theory as depicted in figure 4.

The fourth and final observation about Damon's theory is that it provides an alternative explanation to the Thought/Action Problem, the problem of weakness of will, 'weakness of the flesh', or akrasia. It is not so much a problem of 'ego controls' or the influence of 'situational factors', as Kohlberg suggests. Rather, according to Damon, while

Some may consider their morality to be central to their self-identities, ... others may consider it to be peripheral. Some may even consider morality to be a force *outside of the self,* a socially imposed system of regulation that constrains or even obstructs one's pursuit of one's personal goals. [1984, p. 110, emphasis added]

In such cases, moral authority remains heteronomous, which is to say not integrated into one's own identity. People sometimes fail to act on their moral beliefs because those beliefs are not really their own. Moral 'oughts' may then seem oppressive and refusal to abide by them liberating. This may help to explain the romance of the outlaw or anti-hero in popular culture.

Colby and Damon

'When there is perceived unity between self and morality, judgment and conduct are directly and predictably linked and action choices are made with great certainty.' [Colby & Damon, 1993, p. 150]

Happily, it is also the case that some people seem to act as if morality were the most important consideration consistently, passionately, and even heroically over a lifetime. That is the subject of Anne Colby and William Damon's book *Some Do Care: Contemporary Lives of Moral Commitment* [1992] and their follow-up chapter [1993], 'The Uniting of Self and Morality in the Development of Extraordinary Moral Commitment'. Colby and Damon, with the counsel of 'twenty-two moral philosophers, theologians, ethicists, historians, and social scientists,' identified five criteria believed to characterize persons who could thereby be regarded as 'moral exemplars':

1. A sustained commitment to moral ideals or principles that include a generalized respect for humanity, or a sustained evidence of moral virtue.
2. A disposition to act in accord with one's moral ideals or principles, implying also a consistency between one's actions and intentions and between the means and ends of one's actions.

3. A willingness to risk one's self-interest for the sake of one's moral values.
4. A tendency to be inspiring to others and thereby to move them to moral action.
5. A sense of realistic humility about one's own importance relative to the world at large, implying a relative lack of concern for one's own ego. [1992, p. 315]

The same 22 consultants nominated 84 individuals as meeting all these criteria. Twenty-three of these individuals, highly diverse as to age (35–86), occupation, religion, geographical location (but all within the US), mission, sex (10 men, 13 women), and education (8th grade – PhD), were interviewed as moral exemplars (see Colby and Damon [1992], pp. 35–36, table 2.1 for a complete listing of the subjects' identifying characteristics.) Five of the twenty-three were interviewed again and are the subjects of a chapter each in *Some Do Care.*

Among several fascinating insights drawn from these interviews, Colby and Damon emphasize that what characterizes these moral exemplars most deeply is their exceptionally high degree of the uniting of self and morality:

> ... all these men and women have vigorously pursued their individual and moral goals simultaneously, viewing them in fact as one and the same ...
> Rather than denying the self, they define it with a moral center ...
> *None saw their moral choices as an exercise in self-sacrifice.* [1992, p. 300, emphasis in original]

And because of this extraordinary integration of self and morality,

> Time and again we found our moral exemplars acting spontaneously, out of great certainty, with little fear, doubt, or agonized reflection. They performed their moral actions spontaneously, *as if they had no choice in the matter*. In fact, the sense that they lacked a choice is precisely what many of the exemplars reported. [1992, p. 303, emphasis added]

When self and morality are so closely intertwined as in these moral exemplars, 'ego controls' or 'situational factors' are beside the point. If there is no choice, in the sense presented here, there is no Thought/Action problem. When the Self/Morality problem is resolved as successfully as in these twenty-three individuals, the Thought/Action problem is, one might say, dissolved. When moral beliefs are deeply and personally 'owned', when moral authority becomes autonomous, the will is strengthened and the usual gap between belief and action is 'healed' by the wholeness of the personality. It is not a question of ego strength overcoming temptation, for when self and morality are so united as in these exemplars, temptation, in the normal sense of giving in to self-centered desires, simply ceases to be a factor. The self now has a moral center and its identifying desires are guided by morals goals. If there is temptation for a moral exemplar, it is not to give in to the self's fundamental desires, but to deny them. Moral exemplars, that is, seem to turn our (conventional) notions of the (postconventional) moral life upside down.

They also seem to challenge Kohlberg's insistence on the centrality of moral reasoning. The spontaneous moral action of these exemplars does not simply reflect the increasingly isotonic relationship Kohlberg discovers between moral judgment and action as the former develops and becomes more principled. Colby and Damon administered an abbreviated moral judgement interview (the Heinz dilemma and its follow-up) to all of their morally exemplary subjects (one result was subsequently judged unscorable). The scores ranged from stage 3 (2 subjects) to stage 5 (4 subjects) with the majority (13 subjects) scoring at 4 or 4/5 [1992, p. 328, table C.1]. Even in such a likely

cohort, there were no stage 6 individuals, despite the fact that inclusion in the cohort depended on what seems to be a stage 6-defining 'generalized respect for humanity'. Kohlberg's theory, as it were, seems to be saved from irrelevancy to actual moral *conduct* by his acknowledgment of a type B intuitively principled and autonomous morality. Presumably all of Colby and Damon's moral exemplars represent this type, and certainly the 11 of 22 who scored at the conventional level do, although the authors themselves do not allude to this dimension of Kohlberg's theory. But if this is the case, then type B morality (or personality?) may be of greater interest than Kohlberg (or anyone else, to my knowledge) has acknowledged, at least explicitly.

In other words, Kohlberg's moral *stages* per se do not adequately predict moral behavior, although the chances seem better when stages are qualified by type. At least this seems to be true when moral behavior is defined as an actively benevolent respect for one's fellow human beings, which is a fair summary of Kohlberg's final formulation of stage 6 [Kohlberg, Boyd, & Levine, 1990]. Moral stage per se may correspond more directly to the *form* that active respect takes. The moral exemplars who scored at conventional levels were often devoted to direct service to the poor, while those at postconventional levels were more likely to work on behalf of justice at more systemic levels. But the direction of influence is not obvious. It may be that involvement in such systemic work fostered postconventional development, rather than the other way around [Colby & Damon, 1993, p. 172].

However, if Colby and Damon's small sample (23) is representative in this regard, we can count on Kohlberg's stages to reflect level of education, for that is the only characteristic of the exemplars (other than mission, as just noted) consistently positively related to level of moral judgment. The more education (instruction and practice at moral reasoning), the higher the level of moral judgment: doctoral students in moral philosophy and political science as a group have scored highest on the Defining Issues Test [Rest, 199, pp. 68–69]. But, according to Colby and Damon's study, individuals without extensive formal schooling can be morally gifted. That 'gift' is not edified talent for moral reflection, but rather something that apparently goes deeper, a unity of self and morality.

But looking back at their study's five criteria, one might observe that having defined moral exemplariness from the outset primarily in terms of a unity of self and morality, Colby and Damon should not have been surprised to find it in those who meet the criteria. Only the first of the criteria, a Kantian 'generalized respect for humanity' or an Aristotelian 'sustained evidence of moral virtue' (with respect defining virtue) is substantive. That is, only criterion 1 characterizes the *content* of the moral beliefs of an exemplar. The other four criteria address more personal attributes, three of them pointing to relations to the self. Criterion 2, a disposition to act on one's moral beliefs, is about integrity, about taking one's own moral principles and commitments seriously. Criterion 3, a willingness to risk one's self-interest for the sake of one's moral values, is, in retrospect, simply another way of speaking of the unification of the self and morality. When one's moral-interest defines one's self-interest, the risk to self is in *not* acting on one's moral beliefs and not the opposite. And if there is no risk to self, there is also no perceived need for courage, whatever the risks involved in pursuing one's goals. 'Twenty-one of the twenty-three exemplars disclaimed entirely the experience of moral courage' [1992, p. 71]. Criterion 5, humility, in effect distinguishes the moral self as the true self from the ego as the false or nonintegrated self.

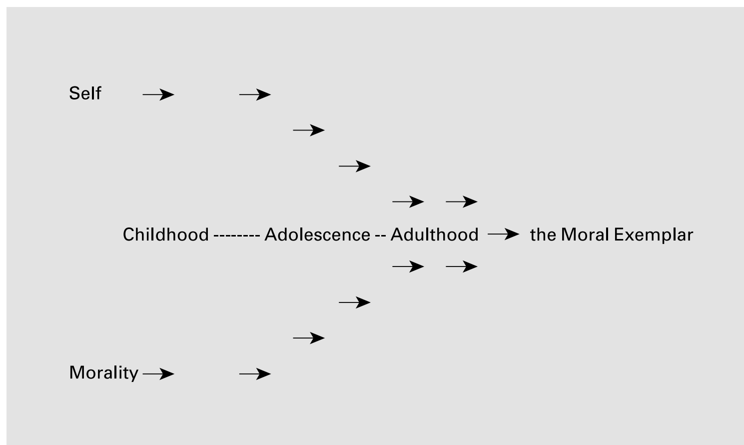

Fig. 5. Colby and Damon's theory of moral exemplariness.

In other words, the interviews confirmed that the nominated individuals did indeed conform to the selection criteria developed by the nominators! It might be said, to try to obviate any charge of circular reasoning (the researchers assumed what they then discovered), that we have two sources for thinking that the unity of self and morality does indeed characterize moral exemplariness. We have, on the one hand, the general reflections of twenty-two diverse experts *about* morality and, on the other hand, the autobiographical reflections of twenty-three diverse experts *in* morality. The power of their collective insight, as articulated by Colby and Damon, to illuminate the psychology of moral behavior persuades me that this two-pronged approach is more convergence than tautology. Their work leads to a slight modification of figure 4, which was meant to portray the results of Damon's 1984 research. Figure 5 assumes continuity with that theorizing, although Colby and Damon do not address adolescent development in their collaboration.

Figure 5's difference from figure 4 is meant to express not only the importance of adolescence as the crucial period for the integration of self and morality [Damon, 1984] but also the insight that such development is an ongoing challenge in adulthood whose ideal or end is realized as moral exemplariness [Colby & Damon, 1992, 1993]. This would seem to be Colby and Damon's alternative to Kohlberg's stage 6. It has the advantage of being grounded in actual data (interviews reflecting the lives of 23 individuals) and of making room for moral reasoning without making moral living dependent on it.

Finally, I think of figure 5 and the theory it represents as a salute to the type B moral individual whom Kohlberg acknowledges but cannot explain in any depth. And as previously noted, attention to the Morality/Self problem also corrects our vision of the Thought/Action problem raised but not persuasively answered by Kohlberg. Colby and Damon, I would conclude, illuminate shadowy areas of Kohlberg's theory even as they offer an alternative to it.

Despite Damon's and Colby and Damon's major contributions to our understanding of the importance of the concept of self to moral development, no one has pursued this line of research and theory as consistently and with as much conceptual clarity as Augusto Blasi, to whose work we now turn.

Blasi

'We need a psychological theory to explain how and why moral understanding leads, when it does, to the desire to act morally.' [Blasi, 1990, p. 53]

In a research project[1] on the degree of personal integration of moral responsibility and accountability among three groups of children with average ages of 6, 12, and 17, Blasi confronted each child, in an interview, 'with a number of stories, each representing a typical conflict between one's wish and obedience, between one's wish and reciprocity, between obedience and altruism, and so forth.' [Blasi, 1989, p. 125]. Blasi concluded from an analysis of their responses that

> the sense of personal obligation is largely absent among 6-year-olds, but is well understood by the large majority of 12-year-olds and is closely related by them to what they believe to be objectively right. In many 17-year-olds the sense of obligation is tied to personally held beliefs and the sense of personal integrity. [Blasi, 1989, p. 126]

Blasi refers to a series of studies by Nunner-Winkler and Sodian [1988], in which children between the ages of four and eight were interviewed about 'common situations of wrongdoing' and were asked 'questions concerning the moral value of the actions and the emotions that the story character would experience'. Blasi reports that 'children of all ages understood that certain actions are unacceptable and wrong', but that 'there were clearcut age differences in the responses concerning emotions' [1989, p. 124]. Younger children

> don't seem to experience emotions in connection with what they understand to be wrong as such. Or, more precisely, their moral understanding does not seem to acquire the type of motivational power that is needed to counteract their present motives. In sum, moral understanding appears to be possible without it being integrated with the appropriate emotions and motives. [1989, p. 125]

In younger children, it seems that knowing right from wrong would not *in itself* necessarily lead to right action. Blasi concludes from these findings that 'what is needed is a certain kind of integration of moral understanding in one's personality' [1989, p. 125].

Clearly Blasi and Damon are on the same wavelength: the integration of morality and personality is key. Blasi, however, has been more concerned, first, to preserve the centrality of reasoning within morality generally, and, second, to enhance our understanding of the relationships among moral reasoning, moral motivation, and moral identity specifically. The former of those purposes puts him solidly in the Kohlbergian

[1] The resulting paper was published in 1984 in German but to my knowledge is not available in English. It is summarized in Blasi (1989), 125–126.

tradition while with the latter he is clearly attempting to expand it. In pursuing these joint purposes, Blasi [1983, 1984] has proposed what he calls the Self Model which focuses on 'the transition from moral cognition to moral action and on the issue of judgment-behavior consistency' [1983, p. 194], and is detailed in a set of seven propositions. The fifth of these is crucial:

> Proposition 5: The transition from a judgment of responsibility to action is supported dynamically by the tendency toward self-consistency, a central tendency in personality organization. [1983, p. 201]

Why act on one's moral judgments? Because 'not to act according to one's judgment should be perceived as a substantial inconsistency, as a *fracture within the very core of the self,* unless neutralizing devices are put into operation' [1983, p. 201, emphasis added]. Daniel Lapsley has succinctly captured the difference this proposition makes between Kohlberg's and Blasi's theories of moral motivation:

> *For Kohlberg*, moral motivation to act comes from one's fidelity to the prescriptive nature of moral principles ... Hence *not to act is to betray a principle. For Blasi*, in contrast, moral motivation to act is a consequence of one's moral identity, and *not to act is to betray the self.* [1996, p. 86, emphasis added]

The significance of this difference can hardly be overstated. It seems intuitively apparent that fidelity to self – or the threat of self-betrayal, of self-*dis*-integration – has an inestimably greater motivational potential than does fidelity to abstract principle belonging to any individual only by virtue of its belonging to every (rational) individual. Simply put, why act on a principle unless that principle is experienced as making a claim on one's very self?[2]

But this contrasting of the motivational theories of Kohlberg and Blasi may be misleading if it suggests Blasi has enhanced our understanding of the importance of self or identity to moral motivation and action but at the cost of downplaying the role of moral judgment. Blasi's own proposal at this point is only suggestive:

> It would appear, then, that the only hope of grounding morality on the essential self without losing morality's reason is to hypothesize that the self's very identity is constructed, at least in part, under the influence of moral reasons ... Fundamentally, ... *the direction of influence would be from moral understanding to moral identity, rather than the other way around ...* [1984, p. 138, emphasis added]

That is, 'the construction of ... [a moral identity] ... is indeed a genuine moral issue, more important than altruism, honesty, or truthfulness; ... morality and the good life, to use a Kantian distinction, cannot be separated' [Blasi, 1984, p. 139]. In an essay published 1 year later than his 1984 seminal essay on moral identity, Blasi asks 'whether it makes sense to ask, not only "What kind of person do I want to be?" but also "What

[2] The significance of the difference between Blasi and Kohlberg is also philosophical. Theoretically linking moral principle with moral action through the mediation of the self, of moral identity, suggests the possibility of a reconciliation between rule-based ethics (whether deontoloy or teleology) and virtue ethics. Exploration of that possibility is beyond the scope of this paper.

kind of person should one, or must one, be",' thereby suggesting that the subjective is indeed subject, in some measure, to the objective, to 'the language of universal prescriptivity' [Blasi, 1985, p. 438]. A decade later still, Blasi elaborates this subjective/objective tension by reference to two complementary components of '... the integration of moral understanding in one's motivational system ... The first [of which] concerns the ability to bring one's moral understanding to bear on one's already existing motives ...' [Blasi, 1995, p. 236]. Blasi's own 1984 study of children aged 6, 12, and 17 demonstrated developmental progress in this regard [and receives support from Damon, 1984, and Nunner-Winkler & Sodian, 1988]. That is, while a large majority of the first-graders given a hypothetical dilemma chose the altruistic alternative over the obedient alternative, only a small minority acknowledged an obligation to carry it out. Large majorities of the older children, however, not only chose the altruistic alternative but also acknowledged an obligation to act on it. [Blasi, 1995, p. 237]. In a recent paper, in order to bring greater conceptual clarity to this empirical evidence, Blasi draws on philosopher Harry Frankfurt's argument that

> people do not only have desires concerning objects, other people, and events (first-order desires, in [Frankurt's] terminology); they also have reflexive desires, namely, desires about their own desires ... [and] by reflecting and taking a stance on what in us is spontaneous, we take what is natural and make it wanted; by doing so, we agentically structure our motives and desires (we structure our will, in Frankfurt's language) and begin *to establish our identity*.' [Blasi, 1999, p. 11, emphasis added]

Having second-order volitions would seem to be the way the integration of the objective, the universally prescriptive, and the uniquely subjective takes place without losing the tension between them. The objective, the morally rational, is not imposed but rather *chosen* by the subject in the subject's freedom of will. By such free choosing the subject shapes his or her own identity, and thereby his or her own will itself, in light of objective moral reality but not in simple obedience, internalization, or socialization.

That this choosing is indeed rational and not mere submission to social pressures to conform seems to depend on acknowledgment of the 'second component of the integration of moral understanding and motivation [which] concerns the investing of moral understanding with motivational force.' Blasi assumes – and here his Kohlbergian sympathies come to the fore – 'that moral understanding eventually acquires *its own* motivational power, one, namely, that is intrinsic in the nature itself of morality' [1995, pp. 236–237, emphasis in original]. Blasi's difference from Kohlberg would seem to lie in his insistence that moral understanding *acquires* motivational power *through its integration into the structures of the self*, into one's moral identity, and not simply because such motivational power is intrinsic to morality. To put the matter concretely, the intrinsic motivational power of moral understanding is not evident in research in children, for whom it remains extrinsic until early adolescence. Perhaps only in moral exemplars do we see that power fully appropriated in uniquely personal and consistent ways.

We might represent Blasi's theoretical insight as shown in figure 6. According to this theory or model, moral understanding gives shape to personal identity even as that identification with morality shapes one's sense of personal responsibility *and* unleashes moral understanding's motivational power to act in a manner consistent with what one knows and believes. In this way, the objective and the subjective, the universal and the personal, the rational and the affective and volitional, are integrated. Such integration – or integrity – is the mark of the morally mature individual.

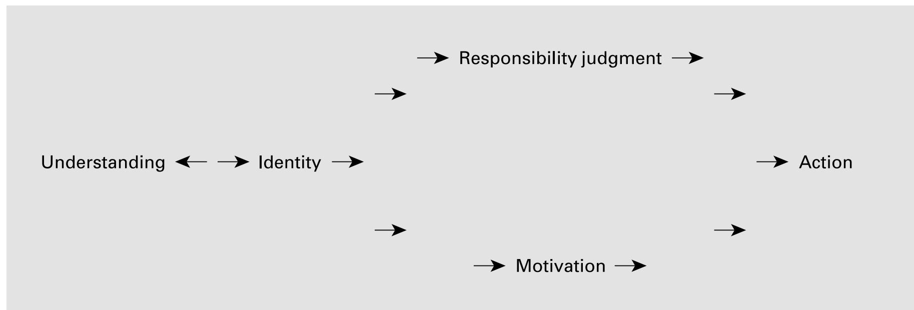

Fig. 6. Blasi's theory of moral identity and motivation.

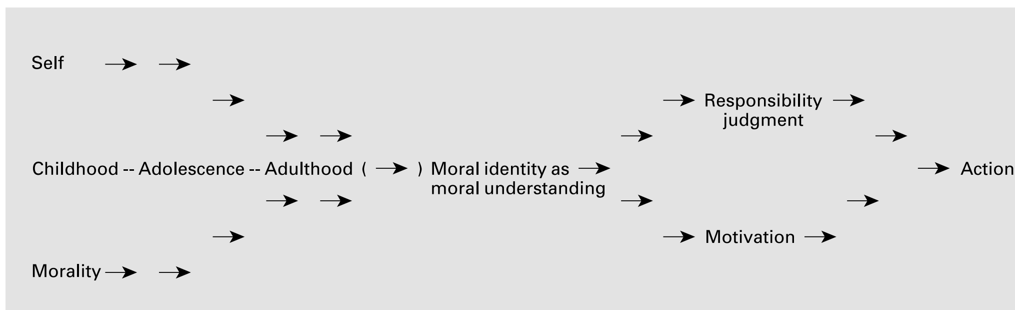

Fig. 7. A synthetic developmental model of exemplary moral functioning.

Conclusion

The advantages of this model over previous models are several. One might say that it combines the insights of both Kohlberg and Colby and Damon. That is, it preserves the centrality of moral reasoning but does not try to explain moral psychology by reference to reason only. Or conversely, it takes individual differences, personal responsibility, and motivation seriously as independent factors in morality without succumbing to a purely subjectivist perspective. It preserves Kohlberg's two moments of moral judgment (deontic and responsibility) while distinguishing them and explaining their relationship, through the innovative concept of moral identity, more substantially and clearly than Kohlberg himself was able (or interested) to do. It articulates the motivational *potential* of moral understanding, rather than assuming its nearly inevitable expression in action, as did Kohlberg, and thus provides a new context for thinking about the problem of *akrasia,* so inexplicable for a Platonist (at least in matters of motivation) like Kohlberg. And while figure 6 itself does not spell out the insights of Colby and Damon, as portrayed in figures 4 and 5, into the importance of adolescence as a period in which identi-

ty and morality become progressively unified, it does make room for that understanding. Thus, a synthetic model in which moral identity is central might be presented as shown in figure 7.

This figure should be understood as suggestive, since the two halves of the figure are not really commensurable. The developmental process outlined on the lefthand side has a long-term temporal framework; the righthand side, on the contrary, is a highly schematic 'snapshot' of how we might think about the functioning of a morally exemplary individual, one who has substantially integrated, over the long-term, moral understanding into his or her sense of personal identity.

The best answer to the question, Why be moral?, may thus be, Because that is who I am, or, Because I can do no other and remain (or become) the person I am committed to being. Commentators on the Shoah often observe that both rescuers of Jews and those who refused to take such risks on behalf of desperate and hunted strangers have explained their behavior in similar words: *What else could I do?* Everything depends on how the 'I' understands itself and its responsibilities.

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