MORAL PRINCIPLES AND MORAL EDUCATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Most writers on moral education see moral principles as central to that enterprise. The aim of moral education is to produce moral persons and that, it is believed, is achieved by getting students to grasp, or to develop, moral principles. It is important, therefore, for anyone engaged in moral education, or for anyone developing or assessing programs of moral education, to have a clear understanding of just what moral principles are.

This paper is an attempt to become clearer about what moral principles are and in what ways they are important to moral education. The approach taken consists in first considering the theory of moral development put forward as a basis of moral education by Professor Lawrence Kohlberg who has to date, done the most extensive work in this area.

Second, the question 'What is a moral principle?' is examined at length and arguments presented for the view that there are two distinct and equally important senses of moral principle. In the light of this examination a critique is offered of Professor Kohlberg's account of the nature of moral principles. Finally, consideration is given to the task of moral education.
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INTRODUCTION

This paper consists of an investigation into the notion of a moral principle and its relevance to moral education. Moral education has through the years named a variety of activities. These activities have at different times had such aims as producing Christian adults, or producing well-mannered adults—adults fit to be called "gentlemen"; and these aims were believed to be identical with the aim of producing moral persons. Recently, however, moral education has come to have rather different aims. Contemporary ethical theorists insist that morality is identical with neither religion, manners, nor mores. Consequently moral education cannot consist in social or religious training, nor can it consist in training in etiquette. Moral education is a deliberate activity the aim of which is to produce adults who are moral beings. It is the realization that morality is a distinct "mode of experience" that makes moral education a very different enterprise from what it was once considered to be. It is similarly, this realization that gives rise to principles as central to moral education.

An increase in the literature relating to moral education as this kind of enterprise would indicate that it is becoming of more widespread interest; however, only three writers have thus far presented anything like a comprehensive
approach to moral education. I refer to John Wilson, R. S. Peters and Lawrence Kohlberg. Each of these authors has not only written a great deal on the subject but has as well put forward an approach to moral education based on a philosophic, and in the case of Kohlberg also a psychological, theory of morality. In each of these approaches prominence is accorded to principles. This is not to suggest that their views are in accord, for it is not at all clear that they view principles in the same way. Wilson, for example, writes of the importance of teaching second-order principles which are not themselves moral principles but which represent the criteria or necessary foundations for moral principles. Peters stresses the need to teach children the fundamental moral principles as well as the basic rules which are necessary for any form of social life. Kohlberg holds that principles are natural emergents of social interaction. On his view, the task of moral education is to stimulate the development of moral principles not by teaching principles but by the presentation of arguments appropriate to the developmental level of the child.

This paper will attempt to clarify the notion of a moral principle which is so important for moral education. 'Principle' is a familiar term in our language, yet it is not at all clear just what a principle is. One must suspect that principle, and even moral principle, is not univocal in view of the fact that it can hold a place of prominence in three views at least two of which are
radically different. I shall be dealing primarily with Kohlberg's conception of moral education and specifically with the idea of a principle as it features in that conception. I have chosen Kohlberg's work as my focus because he has done by far the most work in this field, because the work he has done is so very important, and because the consequences of it are so far-reaching.

I will begin with an account of Kohlberg's theory of moral development and of his definition of morality. As will be seen, both rely heavily on the notion of a principle and the major part of this paper will be devoted to an examination of this notion. This examination will be followed by a critique of Kohlberg's own account of the "nature and functioning of moral principles". In conclusion I will look at the activity of moral education.
FOOTNOTES

1. KOHLBERG'S THEORY OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

Kohlberg's theory of moral development is grounded in the cognitive-developmental approach of Piaget. According to Piaget, cognitive development progresses through stages.

[The] cognitive-developmental assumption is that basic mental structure is the result of an interaction between certain organismic structuring tendencies and the structure of the outside world. . . . This interaction leads to cognitive stages which represent the transformation of simple early cognitive structures as these are applied to (or assimilate) the external world, as they are accommodated to or restructured by the external world in the course of being applied to it.1

The criteria of cognitive stages are: 1) there are qualitative differences in modes of thinking and problem-solving at different stages and these are age-related, 2) the stages form an invariant sequence, i.e., the only way to reach a higher stage is by having gone through the previous stages, 3) each stage or mode of thought forms a "structured whole", i.e., an individual will tend to view or handle all problems in a particular way depending upon the stage he is at, and 4) cognitive stages are hierarchical integrations.2 Both Piaget and Kohlberg are satisfied that these cognitive stages not only represent a logical hierarchy but that they designate an empirical sequence, i.e., they exist.

Piaget theorized that moral development progressed through stages but his moral stages did not satisfy the criteria of cognitive stages. Kohlberg has identified
stages of moral development which he claims are culturally universal and which do satisfy the criteria of cognitive stages. There are, according to Kohlberg, six stages of moral development which divide into three levels: the pre-conventional, the conventional, and the post-conventional or principled level. He summarizes these as follows:

I Pre-Conventional or Pre-Moral

Stage one: Obedience and punishment orientation. Egocentric deference to superior power or prestige, or a trouble-avoiding set. Objective responsibility.

Stage two: Naively egoistic orientation. Right action is that instrumentally satisfying the self's needs and occasionally other's. Awareness of relativism of value to each actor's needs and perspective. Naive egalitarianism and orientation to exchange and reciprocity.

II Conventional Morality

Stage three: Good-boy orientation. Orientation to approval and to pleasing and helping others. Conformity to stereotypical images of majority or natural role behavior, and judgement by intentions.

Stage four: Authority and social-order maintaining orientation. Orientation to "doing duty" and to showing respect for authority and maintaining the given social order for its own sake. Regard for earned expectations of others.

III Post-Conventional or Self-Accepted Moral Principles

Stage five: Contractual legalistic orientation. Recognition of an arbitrary element or starting point in rules or expectations for the sake of agreement. Duty defined in terms of contract, general avoidance of violation of the will or rights of others, and majority will and welfare.

Stage six: Conscience or principle orientation. Orientation not only to actually ordained social rules but to principles of choice involving appeal to logical universality and consistency as a directing agent and to mutual respect and trust.
The important point about these stages is that they are *forms* of moral thinking. It is as matters of form rather than of content that the moral stages satisfy the criteria of cognitive stages.

Kohlberg has a great deal of empirical evidence to support his claim that his stages meet the criteria of cognitive stages. The notions that are central to an individual's thinking, as the names or characterizations of the stages suggest, have been shown to be different at each stage. That the stages form an invariant sequence is demonstrated by experiments in which subjects display an understanding of all statements of the stage which they are at and those below but can only comprehend statements one and sometimes two stages above their own. Generally there is an inability to use statements more than one level above their own. Evidence that each stage forms a "structured whole" is found in the fact that there is stage consistency across the various aspects and in the statements of subjects, i.e., most statements are at a single stage with others being either one stage above or one below.

That the stages form hierarchical integrations again is demonstrated by the facility or increased ability of the individual to solve dilemmas as he moves through the stages. Each aspect is increasingly differentiated and integrated at each stage. What started at stage one as an "eye for an eye" notion of justice, becomes at stage six a universal principle of justice. While his stages of moral development
satisfy the criteria of cognitive stages Kohlberg cautions, "what is being asserted then, is not that moral judgement stages are cognitive but that the existence of moral judgement stages implies that moral development has a basic structural component." 4

As a result of Kohlberg's theory of developmental moral stages, it is a matter of the greatest importance to him that morality be distinguished from particular moralities or moral systems. Morality is defined by ethical principles and, he says, "the stimulation of their development is a matter quite different from the inculcation of arbitrary cultural beliefs." 5 This is so because the highest stages of moral development are 'principled', i.e., judgements and moral thought in general at the highest stages are principled. It is interesting to compare this view with that of R. S. Peters. They are in complete agreement that morality is to be distinguished from particular moral systems and that moral principles are distinct from arbitrary cultural beliefs. They likewise agree that morality is defined by moral principles. The apparent similarity between them vanishes when the reasons for their claims are considered.

Peters writes: "Morality, then, is concerned with what there are reasons for doing or not doing, for bringing into or removing from existence." 6 Principles, he says, are needed to determine the relevance of reasons. For Peters morality belongs to the realm of practical discourse—a realm which has its own distinctive concepts and procedures
for answering questions. This realm does not, in this view, owe its distinctiveness to the stimulation of the development of natural structures. Peters' story is this: "Men have laboriously learned to distinguish what they demand of the world from how things are. The development of such a differentiated consciousness is a major achievement of the human race." 7

How is it that moral principles can form the basis of two views that are so different? What are moral principles that they can be seen as developing in people in some sense, and yet also seen as the 'immanent principles' or fundamental rules of procedure of a form of discourse? What is it about principles that makes them distinct from rules in each of these very different views?

"What is a principle?" would seem to be an important question to anyone interested in assessing various conceptions of moral education. I should like to turn now to an investigation of this notion.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid, pp. 352-353.


2. WHAT IS A MORAL PRINCIPLE?

Professor Kohlberg's work on the nature of principles, which will be the subject of a critique in section six, consists mainly of contrasting principles with rules. The relation between principles and rules is frequently a problematic feature in accounts of morality and moral education and is important to consider. While many writers clearly distinguish between rules and principles others use the concepts interchangeably.¹ For some purposes it is not important to distinguish principles from rules. But, when one is concerned with the problem of just what it is to have a "rational moral code" or to be a "stage six" person, it is important to draw the distinction clearly. The need for clarity is even more acute for one faced with the task of moral education and the decision about what it means to teach, or to teach for, principles. It is not surprising then that Kohlberg should distinguish between principles and rules and an inquiry into how and why this distinction might be made should aid in the understanding of principles. It is unlikely, however, that the task of clarifying the nature of moral principles can be accomplished simply by doing this.

A more promising approach to the clarification of the nature of moral principles might be to consider the notion of a principle in general. In The Great Ideas two characteristics are attributed to principles: the first is
generality, that is, principles apply to an indefinite number of circumstances; the second is "the quality of underlying or being the source of other things". There seems to be little else of a general nature that one can say about a principle.

R. Harré devotes a section of his book, The Principles of Scientific Thinking, to the question 'what is a principle?'. Although he is specifically interested in scientific principles, a consideration of what he has to say might shed light on our problem. Harré writes:

A principle is a general statement, adherence to which determines the way we view the phenomena we study. . . . Furthermore, a principle is adhered to: we speak of adopting principles. A principle is a statement whose falsity we are not likely lightly to admit. In this it differs from other statements. . . . This difference is . . . in the attitude which we adopt towards a statement of principle. A statement becomes a principle not because of some special kind of meaning, but because it comes to play a certain role in our thinking. We may not consciously decide to pick some statement for the role of a principle, but we may come to see that our attitudes to certain statements are such that they must be functioning as principles: that is, functioning as determiners of our way of thinking.

There are three points in this account which relate to accounts of moral principles. The first two of these concern the attitude Harré claims we have towards something we regard as a principle (1) which enables that principle to determine how we interpret and think about phenomena, and (2) which makes it immune from falsification. The third point concerns adherence to principles.
As a preliminary I might mention that others, for example Charles Fried, appear to share Harré's view. In Fried's words: "The essential criterion of a rational principle is the attitude to the principle of a person who understands it and whose end it underlies". 5

This attitude criterion, part of which is the demand that what we hold as principles determine the way we view certain things, has been implicit in the writings of a number of moral philosophers. Peters shows that it is principles which determine what we see as making a claim on us in any moral situation. Of the familiar dilemma of the young man unable to decide whether he should join the forces of the French resistance or stay at home with his aged mother, Peters argues that it is because he holds concerns like freedom and the welfare of his parent as principles that these considerations present themselves as relevant to any decision about what to do. 6

Melden makes a similar point when he argues that in moral matters our evaluation of an action will depend on what description we give to the action, that is, on what we take the action to be, and what we understand it to be is determined by our moral principles. 7 And Rawls holds that without understanding and accepting principles we cannot be subject to certain moral feelings. He writes:

Resentment is our reaction to the injuries and harms which the wrongs of others inflict upon us, and indignation is our reaction to the
injuries which the wrongs of others inflict on others. Both resentment and indignation require, then, an explanation which invokes a moral concept, say the concept of justice, and its associated principle(s) and so makes a reference to a right or a wrong. In order to experience [or recognize cases of] resentment and indignation one must accept the principles which specify these rights and wrongs. 

The second point that can be related to moral principles is Harré's contention that the acceptance of a principle involves an attitude that makes it immune from falsification "in the short run". This has application to moral principles but it applies to them in a slightly different way. Before comparing the two I will digress long enough to comment on Harré's addendum "in the short run". This will, I believe, lead to an important distinction between principles.

We can think of principles in both science and morality that did play a part in determining the thinking of those who held them and which enjoyed the kind of immunity to falsification to which Harré refers but which nevertheless were, with much difficulty, admitted to be false. Examples might be found in the science of the Ptolemaics and the morality of the Ancients. Such principles are, I think, well characterized as immune from falsification "in the short run". And this is, as Harré says, different from other statements of belief which, even though strongly held, are liable to be abandoned.

Consider adherence to a principle such as 'one ought
to give special consideration to one's parents'. The fact that in many cases one is not justified in doing what would count as giving special consideration to one's parents does not count against the validity of the principle. Similarly, as Dworkin argues in regard to legal principles, the fact that in one case a principle does not prevail does not mean it is not a principle of our legal system, next time it may be decisive.\(^9\) This is at least analogous to the case in science where what constitutes a counterinstance simply isn't admitted to have negative force.

This even short run type of immunity to falsification is related to the fact that principles are general, that is, they cover a wide range of actions or happenings. Montefiore points to this when he says: "... but if today I disapprove of something as a matter of principle, whatever the principle may be, then if I change my mind about it, I am bound to change my mind about everything else to which the same reasons might apply".\(^{10}\) In addition to any one principle covering a whole range of actions, that principle is related in various ways to other principles.\(^{11}\)

This seems to suggest that it is the complications surrounding the abandonment of principles that give them their immunity to falsification. In fact, it is to their being grounded in higher principles - in the fundamental principles - that they owe this status. And this is the distinction that needs to be acknowledged. There are fundamental principles and lower-order principles and both
share the features described by Harré, the difference being in the degree to which they have those features.

Different writers use different expressions to characterize what I have called lower-order principles and some of these have already been mentioned. Jonathan Harrison calls these principles "derivative" and this is a rather informative label for these principles are derived (subject to the limitation of a factual premise the veracity of which is dependent upon the current state of our knowledge) from fundamental principles which are in turn, grounded in reason. Since they are grounded in reason they are unchanging - and this brings us to the point of this digression - and so immune from falsification even in the long run. Derivative principles, being less abstract and interpretations of these fundamental principles, have only relative immunity.

I remarked above that while moral principles are like scientific ones in having this immunity there is an important difference. This is to be found in the following claim which is true for moral principles but not scientific ones. Montefiore argues:

But what one cannot do is to disapprove at a given moment of the standards one holds at that moment, for to disapprove of them would be to disapprove of them by reference to another set of standards and these would now be the standards one held.

This difference lies in the fact that moral principles are normative while those of science are descriptive. This difference is reflected in their alternate name - laws.
These are clearly different kinds of principles which do, however, share the feature of generality, of being the source of, or grounds for, rules and actions. Both have a logical and a psychological aspect, on the one hand they are starting points in our reasoning, on the other they are not easily given up.

I turn now to the third point regarding adherence to principles and Harré's claim that: "a principle is adhered to: we speak of adopting principles". First, this statement is correct as it stands but while we speak of adopting principles I doubt if we actually adopt principles. Adopting a principle seems to imply having chosen it but as Peters says "we do not decide on our fundamental principles . . . still less do we 'choose' them".14 Bernard Williams says that "the idea that people decide to adopt their moral principles seems to me a myth".15 Harré himself says "we adopt the metaphor of 'decision'".16 There is some truth, I believe, in Harré's claim that "we may not consciously decide to pick some statement for the role of a principle, but we may come to see that our attitudes to certain statements are such that they must be functioning as principles".

While we do speak of adhering to principles, do we speak of adhering to scientific principles which is, after all, what Harré is claiming? I think that in fact we do not. Although in both cases, i.e., the scientific and the moral, principles serve as a starting point in reasoning and have a psychological aspect in that they are not easily
abandoned, there is this difference between them: we adhere to moral principles but not scientific ones. Adherence to a principle involves acting on that principle. But we cannot act on a scientific principle. Of course we can understand a scientific principle and this involves a belief. Having a belief entails acting in accordance with that belief, but this is not acting on the principle. We cannot even act in accordance with such a principle but only in accordance with a belief. We can both act on and act in accordance with moral principles.

These two ways our actions can relate to moral principles—as actions on them or as actions in accordance with them—are worth considering for a moment. When a principle is acted upon the principle constitutes the reason for which the action is done. The principle provides the agent's reason for acting; the principle is his principle. When we say that an individual acts in accordance with a principle we claim only that his action could be supported by reference to that principle but do not claim that it constitutes his reason for doing the action. On the one hand moral principles underlie action, on the other, they provide standards by which to judge both individual actions and social and political events.

There are, then, different kinds of principles, e.g., scientific, mathematical, moral, etc. and these are different sorts of things. While they have some features in common there are marked differences between them. Moral
principles have a distinguishing feature in that they can be our principles—principles we have. They have a dual role: on the one hand they are principles on which arguments can proceed and on the other they are principles on which we can act. 18

An investigation of this difference between moral and non-moral principles—that we can act on moral principles, and that they can be our principles—would seem to be a way to become clearer about moral principles and about what we are aiming at in moral education.


4. It should be clear that attitude here does not mean merely a pro-attitude or a favourable impression. Similarly it does not refer to a feeling. What is referred to is the way a principle features in our thinking.


11. S. Toulmin discusses how far-reaching the roots of our moral principles are in *The Principles of Morality, Philosophy*, 31, 1956, p. 149.

12. By "in the long run" I wish only to imply so long as we have the concept of rationality we now have. See Paul Taylor, *Normative Discourse*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961, p. 119.


3. ON HAVING PRINCIPLES

It would seem, then, to be significant that only moral principles are adhered to; that they can, in addition to being premises of arguments, be principles of conduct or principles people have. As principles of conduct they issue in action. Too little attention has been given to principles in this sense and so it is the one I will explore in this section.¹

Frequently, when philosophers are dealing with the epistemology or logic of morals some part of the discussion will refer to principles people have and often this does not square with what we have in mind when we utter phrases such as 'I don't know much about his moral principles'. In the role which has been most interesting to philosophers, moral principles are seen as major premises in practical syllogisms. In this role generalization, deduction from and application of moral principles have their proper place but these notions are then carried over to the other role in which we speak of persons acting on principles where there need not be, and typically is not, argument or giving of reasons involved.

To say that argument and the giving of reasons are not typically involved in cases of acting on principles is not to say that people don't have reasons and that such action is therefore not rational. It is to say that people have principles and do all sorts of things on principles, such as being
charitable or honest for instance, without any process of
deduction or generalization going on or the necessity of any
verbal activity such as the giving of reasons. I believe
it is misleading to object that these processes could, in
principle, be taking place. It seems to me that it is not
even necessary that a person acting on a principle that is
one of his principles be able to deduce his action from a
principle.

Mrs. Foot, in her contribution to the symposium "When
is a Principle a Moral Principle?" expresses her concern over
the tendency of philosophers, and specifically R. M. Hare, to
conflate these two uses. In reference to his Language of
Moral she writes:

for Mr. Hare is thinking both of the case in
which we say that a principle was brought
forward in an argument about what was to be
done, and of the case in which it was supposed
to be 'involved' in some other way. This
gives rise to a serious difficulty for then the
notion of a subconscious argument or 'process
of inference' becomes almost irresistible, being
forced on us by our insistence that a principle
is involved, and that a principle is a major
premise.2

In the area of moral education in particular it seems
plausible to suggest that the conflation of these two senses
of moral principle to principles of argument has led to two
radically different positions on what the nature of such edu-
cation is. It appears that those who are primarily inter-
ested in the psychology of morals (or the affective side of
morality) are highly suspicious, and in many cases deny the
validity, of the efforts of those who stress the rational aspect of morality. And the latter group hold a similar view regarding those on the "affective" side. I hope in this paper to be able to show that to at least some extent these positions are less radically opposed than they seem.

I shall approach the task of getting clearer about principles of conduct by considering such expressions as "I don't know much about his moral principles". When we say something like this we are not talking about arguments a person might give for or against some action, or how he would go about justifying his own actions and saying we simply don't know of what sort they would be. Rather, we are thinking about what sorts of actions that person would be likely to perform in certain situations or how he might react to certain actions of others. We are saying, as Mrs. Foot suggests, that we do not know when he would think a thing right or wrong. As she points out, we might also say of someone "he seems to me to be a man without moral principles" in which case "we [do] not mean that a special factor, connected with generalization, [is] absent in his case". In such a case what we do mean is that that person is wicked.

When we speak in this way about a person's principles we are referring to something very basic about him. We are not referring to an inner process of deduction, nor are we referring to claims he might make about himself or the principles he has. If, for example, we say of someone that it
is one of his principles that "one ought not cause people pain" we mean more than that he frequently says this is one of his principles or that he uses it in arguments. It could in fact be the case that he never did these things. What we do mean is that he consistently acts in such a way as to avoid causing people pain as, for example, he would be doing in driving carefully, in keeping harmful instruments or substances out of the reach of children, or in considering the possible effects of a countless number of things he might do or say which could cause people pain. Even though we may never hear this person quote such a principle we can and do talk about him having or not having the principle.

It would be helpful if we could be more specific about what we do mean when we say that someone has a principle or has principles. Burton Leiser, in his fascinating analysis of 'custom', identifies a use of custom which is synonymous with principle and sets forth conditions for saying a person has a principle. According to Leiser:

When one says that a given person, M, has the principle X, or that he acts upon the maxim X, he means that:

(1) M regularly does X under certain specifiable circumstances.
(2) M might choose not to do X, and not do X, under those circumstances.
(3) M is conscious of doing X when he does it.
(4) M does X deliberately.
(5) M believes that he ought to do X under those circumstances.

I would like to consider each of these five conditions separately but before I begin should say a word in relation
to the example I will use: the principle of non-injury. This, while perhaps not one of the fundamental moral principles, is a higher-order principle. The one Leiser used in his account, 'one ought to give alms to beggars' is of a low order. His use of a low order principle is understandable since his purpose was to map the range of the concept 'custom' and so he was interested in the point at which it shaded into 'principle'. Since our concern is with the concept 'principle' it would be undesirable to use an example which only barely comes within its range.

First, when we say of M that it is one of his principles, or he acts upon the maxim, that 'one ought not to cause people pain' we mean M regularly avoids causing people pain under certain specifiable circumstances. It is obvious that with a higher order principle the circumstances are much less easily specified than is the case with a lower order one. It is easy to elaborate the circumstances surrounding acting on a principle like 'one ought to give alms to beggars'. But, in the case of a principle like the one we are using the circumstances are likely to be many and varied. They can only be covered by a general phrase like 'when M is aware that he might cause someone pain'.

Perhaps a word should be said about the notion of 'regularity' before considering the point of this criterion. As Leiser points out, "regular occurrence" is a notoriously vague phrase. It is vague when used in reference to natural occurrences and even more vague when applied to human
action. To say that a person regularly does something does not imply that he invariably does that thing but it does imply that his action is a repetition and that he has done it frequently in the past. Since we are considering action on a principle the repeatability of the action is dependent upon the existence of certain circumstances and repetitions of the action can only take place in situations which are defined by those circumstances. Such actions, to be called regular, must not be separated by as many cases of failure to act in that way given the appropriate situation. Although the number of repetitions of an action which would qualify that action as a regular occurrence cannot be specified we can say that the repetitions must not be separated by failures to perform the action in situations in which it is appropriate.

The main point of (1) is this: it is a necessary and sufficient condition for having a principle that the principle be regularly acted on—in this case that M avoids causing injury to others. Of all the statements we might make about M's having a principle, the answer to the question "how do we know it is true?" must contain reference to M's behavior. This behavior, in addition to things he does or avoids doing, includes attitudes he expresses, and moral feelings to which he is subject.

While some of the actions which are evidence of one's having a principle or principles involve verbal expression the verbal activity of formulating, criticizing, or
defending a principle is not sufficient evidence that one has the principle. This is why it is wrong to argue, as we shall later see Harrison doing, that it is not necessary to holding something as a principle that a person act on it. I would say rather that it is not only necessary but sufficient that he act on it. Not only is it necessary that he act on it but he must do so with some degree of regularity. If in most situations which involved other people M did not avoid acts which might cause injury, or perform actions to prevent injury to others, but only occasionally performed such acts, we should be most unlikely to say that 'one ought not cause people pain' was one of his principles. Were he to perform acts in accordance with this principle in some of the situations which called for such action, we could say he acted in accordance with that principle in those situations but not that he was acting on it. It is only when, in situations where one could prevent causing pain, M regularly does acts of this sort that we could say that this was one of his principles. It is important to remember that acting on a principle means doing an action because of a principle, i.e., the principle provides the reason for the action, and also that acting on a principle is not the same as being able to, nor does it entail that one can, formulate or defend the principle.

It is certainly true that if in the absence of occasion for action on M's part, he could and did offer that principle in support of judgements and was willing to
defend it, etc., that would be evidence for us to believe that he did accept the principle of non-injury. However, it would not be sufficient evidence. One can understand the derivation of a principle and know that other people believe and accept it without accepting it himself.

(2) M might choose not to do X, and not do X, under those circumstances. There are two ways in which this condition must hold. First, to act on a principle as to act in any way it must be possible to do otherwise. If M could not help himself but was somehow driven to detect and prevent injuries from occurring then we would not say it was one of his principles that 'one ought not cause people pain'. For it to be possible for M to act on his principle it must also be possible for him to fail to act on it.

The second way in which it must be true that M might choose not to do X, and not do it, under those circumstances stems from the very nature of a principle. It is an important fact about a principle that its relevance to a particular situation does not mean that action on it is obligatory in that situation. Although one may be justified in considering acting on a particular principle which is relevant to a situation one is not necessarily either committed to, or justified in, acting on it in that situation. Whether or not one is justified in acting on a principle depends upon the particular circumstances surrounding the situation and the relative weight of other principles relevant to the situation. This is different from following or obeying a
rule.

M may have a number of principles in addition to the principle of non-injury. Suppose he also adheres to the principle of liberty and suppose further that he finds himself able to contribute to the freeing of an oppressed group which, though not brutally treated, is controlled and exploited by a second group. M may believe that it is right for him to work to free the oppressed group even at the price of causing injury to the oppressors. In such a case M might hold 'one ought not cause injury' as a principle and yet choose not to act in such a way as to ensure avoiding injury.

We must add a condition to Leiser's list which relates to the difference between not doing X in the first way referred to, that is, failing to do X although one knows one ought to, and not doing it in the second. In the second, M may well feel regret if in fact he does cause injury to someone, he will accept it with "a heavy heart" as it were, but he will not experience guilt or remorse as he must in the first case. In the second case M did what was right, that is the best he could have done in those circumstances. However, if, as in the first case, M fails to do X and with no justification causes injury, he will, if he has the principle of non-injury, feel remorse and take the appropriate steps to make amends.

(3) M is conscious of doing X when he does it. Acting in such a way that it can be said that this is one of
his principles cannot be something that \( M \) does through force of habit in the way one shifts gears or lights a cigarette. Of course many of the things we do which constitute an action on principle are themselves habits, that is to say, they can be done with or without our being conscious of doing them. But whether or not one's act of engaging the brake is itself a conscious act one's act of arresting the speed of his vehicle to prevent injury must be a conscious act.

To be acting on principle, then, \( M \) must be aware that he is doing the action characterized by the principle. For example, for 'one ought not cause people injury' to be \( M \)'s reason for driving within the speed limit it must be the case that \( M \) is aware that he is driving within the speed limit. If a passenger were to compliment \( M \) on his careful driving and note that he rarely exceeded the speed limit only to hear \( M \) respond "Oh really? I had no idea I was driving within any limit" we should doubt that he was acting on a principle.

(4) \( M \) does \( X \) deliberately. Not only must \( M \) be aware of what he is doing he must also intend to do it. It must have been \( M \)'s intention to avoid hitting Smith when he stopped at the crosswalk and not simply the case that his car ran out of gas or stalled at that particular moment for this action to have been related to his having the principle of non-injury.

This fourth condition that \( M \) must have had the
deliberate intent to do X entails the third: that he must be conscious of doing X when he does it. It is sufficient then to combine these conditions into one: it must be M's intention to do X when he does it.

(5) M believes that he ought to do X under those circumstances. Not being competent to deal with the complexities of the term 'ought' I shall ignore them but contend anyway that this is a necessary condition of having a principle and one that is closely related to the other conditions. It is not enough that M regularly avoids, consciously and deliberately, causing injury to others by such actions as driving within the speed limit to establish that he believes that he ought to do so. For M may also consciously and deliberately have tea each afternoon and not believe that he ought to do so. Believing that he ought not cause people pain demands the broader view of action expressed in condition (1) where in addition to things he does he also disapproves of actions of others which unjustifiably cause people pain; he feels remorse when he does so himself, and in all probability he urges or advises others, particularly his own children, not to cause people pain. M would do none of these things as a result of his regularly having tea in mid-afternoon. Were he to neglect his tea one day he might be annoyed at having deprived himself of the pleasure or relaxation it provided but he would not feel remorse.

We can now restate Leiser's conditions for saying
that M has the principle X. They are:

(1) M regularly does X under certain specifiable circumstances.
(2) M might choose not to do X, and not do X, under those circumstances.
(3) In those situations in which M believes he should do X, but does not do X, he will feel remorse and take the appropriate steps to make amends.
(4) It must be M's intention to do X when he does it.
(5) M believes that he ought to do X under those circumstances.

With Leiser's help we have given an account of what we mean when we say someone has a principle. But what is meant by calling someone principled or saying that he has principles? First let us consider the alleged identity between having principles and knowing the difference between right and wrong. In this rather lengthy quotation from his paper "On Knowing the Difference Between Right and Wrong," Gilbert Ryle implies this relationship. The conditions of someone's knowing this difference are the same as of his having principles.

We are unwilling to allow that a person has learned [the difference between right and wrong] who does not, for instance, care a bit whether he breaks a promise or keeps it, and is quite indifferent whether someone else is cruel or kind. This caring is not a special feeling; it covers a variety of feelings, like those that go with being shocked, ashamed, indignant, emulous, disgusted, and enthusiastic; but it also covers a variety of actions, as well as readiness and proneness to do things, like apologizing, recompensing, scolding, praising, persevering, praying, confessing, and making good resolutions. Now, if we consider what in detail a person who has learned the difference between right and wrong has learned, we do not naturally draw a line between some things, namely,
what he has learned to say and do, and other things, namely, what he has learned to feel, and relegate the latter to the class of mere after effects of his learning to say and do the proper things. In thinking about his conscience or his sense of duty, we do not naturally fence off his qualms from his acts of reparation; his pangs from his confessions or his resolvings; his prickings from his perseverings. Because he has learned the difference between right and wrong, he both makes reparations and feels contrite; and the 'because' is the same non-causal 'because'. Certainly his feeling contrite is not an exercise of a technique or the giving of a piece of information; but the same is true, though for different reasons, of his making reparations, persevering, reproaching, resolving, and keeping appointments. All are marks, though different sorts of marks, of his knowing the difference between right and wrong; all show, though in different ways, that he has principles, and what these principles are; any one of them is one of the many sorts of things that we have in mind when we say that he has a sense of duty.9

The fact that we say of a man who doesn't know the difference between right and wrong that he has no moral principles would seem to support Ryle's view.10 Knowing that a person can be described as having principles tell us that that person both knows the difference between right and wrong and does right and avoids wrong. Because of what was said earlier it might appear as though having principles implies knowing the difference between right and wrong while knowing the difference between right and wrong does not necessarily indicate that a person has principles. I believe that Ryle is correct, however, since one can know what others believe to be right and wrong and so act as if he also knows when it is to his advantage to do so. This is why a person's ability to use principles in argument and to demonstrate his understanding of their derivation, etc., is not sufficient
evidence that he has principles. It is not that this person knows the difference between right and wrong but rather that he knows what others call right and wrong. He may believe quite different things to be right and wrong if in fact he has any use at all for these notions.

If a person can be said to have a particular moral principle, then, he will, in those situations to which that principle is relevant, respond in certain ways. If he is involved personally he will act on the principle; if not, he will adopt an attitude toward the actions of those involved which is determined by his principle. If, on the other hand, a person has principles he will give consideration in all situations to those elements made relevant by moral principles.

A person's moral principles represent his moral values. It seems to me to be the case that what we recognize as our moral values (whether or not we ever think of them as principles) are to others seen and spoken of either as values we have or moral principles we have. It is certainly true that in our everyday conversation we hear reference made to principles relatively infrequently. Consider what a person who knows M might reply to another who said, when wondering what M might think about some event, "I do not know much about M's moral principles." He might say "He would disapprove of that," or "He would be indignant," or "He is a just man, he
would condemn that", or "He values justice". There are any number of notions we might propose which relate how a person acts or might act - such notions as honest, sincere, considerate, fair, selfish, treacherous, deceitful, etc. And do these not satisfy our concern over that person's moral principles? What else could we mean by a question about a person's moral principles? And surely such notions do not translate into a set of rules a person follows but to values that person has - to the kinds of reasons that move him. Whether we say of a person that he is tolerant, he values freedom, or that the principle of liberty is one of his principles, we are providing the same information about that person - we are answering the same question.

It is clear that some moral principles tell us more about a person than do others. The higher the order of the principle the more we know about the person whose principle it is. To know that a man is considerate of his parents or that he is honest is to know something of the kind of man he is, but it is to know a great deal less than, for example, to know that he has the principle that 'persons ought to be treated with respect' or that 'people's interests ought to be given equal consideration'.

When we call a man 'principled' or 'a man of principle' we mean he has moral principles. I have been speaking at one time of having principles and at another of having a principle as if the same things were true of both. To say a person is just and benevolent is to say he has principles -
that he is a good man, but to say he is considerate of his parents or loving of his children is to say much less, it is to say he has these principles and that he is a good son or a good father. Earlier in this discussion it was important to make the distinction between fundamental and derivative principles. It is this distinction which is important here. Those moral principles such as the principles of justice, respect for persons, etc., which in a justificatory context function as fundamental principles, becomes personalized as motives such as the sense of justice, the attitude of respect for persons, benevolence, etc., which move a man to act when they are his principles, that is, operative in his conduct.\(^\text{11}\)

Knowing a man to be considerate of the interests of others includes knowing a number of lower-order principles such as those relating to his treatment of his children, his wife, his parents, his fellow-workers, and so on.\(^\text{12}\)

I have tried to clarify the notion of a moral principle in the sense in which it operates as a principle of action— as a principle someone has. Using Leiser's analysis I have given an account of what it means to say that someone has a principle and this I have tried to relate to the matter of 'having principles'. Further light can be shed, I believe, on moral principles as principles people have by considering a very interesting account given by Jonathan Harrison of what it is to have principles. Following is his conclusion:

There are not one or two, but a number of logically independent criteria for saying a man holds something as a moral principle.
Thinking it obligatory is one; acting on it another. He may also feel remorse (if he has not become callous) when he fails to act on it, and self-approbation (if he has not succeeded in inhibiting it from religious motives) when he does. He may feel approval of others when they act on it (if he does not dislike them too much), and blame them when they do not (if they are not friends of his, or if they were not subject to stronger temptation than they could reasonably be expected to resist); he may also exhort others to act on it (if he is not too bashful or frightened of social ostracism or lackadaisical). Perhaps all these different marks of having a moral principle should be found together, but in fact they are not.¹³

Essentially Harrison's conclusion as to what it means to have a principle is not unlike the one presented earlier in this section. The points of difference are obvious, e.g., that the criteria are logically independent; that acting on a principle is not part of thinking it obligatory; that not feeling remorse at moral failure is still to have that principle, i.e., that such a person is still considerate, for example, and not now callous; that these "marks of having a moral principle" are not found together, and so on. How and why our account differs from Harrison's on these points should be clear from what has already been said. There are three other matters of concern in Harrison's paper that I would like to question because a discussion of them will, I believe, lend clarity to the idea of having principles.

The first of these matters was mentioned when dealing with the first criterion of having a principle—that it must regularly be acted upon. Not only does Harrison not agree that to think a principle obligatory¹⁴ requires that one act
on it, but also he does not think there need be any regularity to action on a principle. He says "it is not quite true that, as I suggested earlier, to hold a moral principle is to think it obligatory. We must also occasionally act on it."\(^\text{15}\) I opposed this view in that section but there is an extension of it in this passage: "Hence, it is not logically impossible that a man's practice may be better than his precepts; that he may, from impulse, make an exception to principles he accepts, and which a more completely adequate set of principles would have permitted, or even enjoined."\(^\text{16}\)

I am interested in the first part of this sentence: that it is not logically impossible for a man's practice to be better than his precepts. I take Harrison to mean, by precepts, principles since that is the subject of his discussion. And I would ask "How do we know what a man's principles are?" Surely our assessment of this is not made on the basis of a list of precepts (if anyone could give such a list) in response to some question such as "what kind of man are you?" or "tell me your moral principles." Even if we did glean a set of principles in this tidy manner, or from his various conversations, we should only believe that these were his principles if, in fact, they squared with his practice. It is, I believe, not logically possible that a man's practice be better than his principles for his principles are immanent in his practice. Of course people can and do have beliefs about their own values or principles, but the truth of statements about the principles a person has is not
dependent upon first-person authority. Hare is clearly aware of this and begins his *Language of Morals* thus:

If we were to ask of a person 'What are his moral principles?' the way in which we could be most sure of a true answer would be by studying what he *did*. He might, to be sure, profess in his conversation all sorts of principles, which in his actions he completely disregarded; but it would be when, knowing all the relevant facts of a situation, he was faced with choices or decisions between alternative courses of action, between alternative answers to the question 'What shall I do?' that he would reveal in what principles of conduct he really believed.\(^{17}\)

Now if all Harrison were saying is that from time to time a scoundrel may perform a decent act, that is, that he may intentionally do something good (in a rule-accepting and not just a rule-covered fashion) then we would not disagree. In fact, we have an expression to cover such a case which is interesting in this regard: we would say he acted "out of character." But this is not all he is saying; this is but a sentence from a paragraph in which he is denying that acting on a principle is a necessary condition of moral action. And further, "a man's practice" would seem to refer to his general practice and not to some isolated and exceptional action.

The second matter I want to deal with concerns the point at which a principle is involved in an action. I believe this to be the problem in accepting or rejecting the following claim: "... making an exception to a principle may take the form of not acting on it, or of qualifying it. Reprehensible as may be the former, the latter is both sen-
sible and unavoidable."\(^{18}\) This act of making an exception to a principle by qualifying it and so making it more specific is part of what R. M. Hare designates as making a "decision of principle."\(^{19}\)

It was implicit in an earlier argument that, while in specific situations we sometimes do not act on certain principles to which we adhere, neither do we qualify them or make them more specific. I follow Melden in maintaining that the notion of exceptions is not applicable to principles.\(^{20}\)

I pose this as the problem of when—or at what point—a principle is involved in an action. If we think of the principle underlying an action as coming into existence at the moment we decide what to do in a particular instance and serving us time and again in subsequent similar instances, and at the same time furnishing a basis for a new principle in less similar instances, then principles are rather like a set of mental rules. They are like a set of mental rules because once we have made a decision or judgement in a particular case we have our principle and although it may be too complicated to articulate we record it mentally to serve in the future, and so on for situation after situation. If this is the case then Hare is probably correct in saying "our moral development, as we grow older, consists in the main in making our moral principles more and more specific, by writing into them exceptions and qualifications to cover the kinds of cases of which we have had experience."\(^{21}\)

The alternative Hare envisions is the practice of the
hidebound moralist whose simple set of general principles exist "in some unexplained sense" antecedently like a "set of copy-book headings." These he has ready to see him through any situation which might arise. Hare offers examples of a moral principle each might have. "The moral principle 'one ought never to make false statements' is highly general; the moral principle 'one ought never to make false statements to one's wife' is much more specific." The first is an example of a "copy-book heading" type of principle; the second is what I have called "mental rule" type.

I believe that in each of these accounts—the mental rule and the copy-book heading—there is a failure to understand the relation of a person's moral principles to his actions. Each implies a rule in hand, a process of inference and a conclusion. The individual comes to the situation with his principles alright but they are not in the form of rules; they are personalized. It is, I believe, closer to the way Reid expresses it. "It is rather that a moral person, apprehending, feeling the goodness, 'oughtness' and obligation of justice or truth, comes to this or that particular situation with already formed sentiments, dispositional tensions in him; then, in these circumstances, he does the just and truthful thing." It is because of his principles that the individual understands an action as making a false statement and the relation of wife as carrying a special claim.

I hasten to say that Hare couldn't be more correct when he says, "on no account must we commit the mistake of
supposing that decisions and principles occupy two separate spheres and do not meet at any point. . . . Rather, decisions and principles interact throughout the whole field". Principles can never eliminate decisions; no principle can dictate a specific line of action. What they can do is enable us to determine what the alternatives are in a conflict situation and give us a basis upon which we make a decision.

Moral maturity, I would suggest, does not consist in the acquisition of more and more principles of ever increasing specificity but in becoming ever more sensitive to those features of situations made relevant by moral principles and better in one's judgement about which of the relevant considerations has greater weight and upon which action is obligatory in those situations. Moral wisdom grows with experience in using the principles a person has learned. To some extent he does add new lower-order principles and drop or modify others but what this amounts to is the application of his more fundamental principles, which are of a limited number, to an ever-widening area of experience.

The third matter I shall mention only briefly. Harrison writes, "... the goodness or badness of a man and his actions depends more upon the heart than the head, whereas the adequacy of his principles depends as much upon the head as the heart." I am quoting this passage only because it expresses a popular notion which, I believe, rests on a misunderstanding.
If what I have been arguing about having principles is correct, then the goodness or badness of a man and his actions depends upon his moral principles. If his moral principles are "adequate" then he and his actions are good. When we are speaking of a person's principles we are commenting on his reason to be sure, but equally, we are talking about his sentiments. For as Peters says the fundamental principles are personalized in the form of the rational passions, "... adherence to such principles is a passionate business and they can and should enter in a very concrete way into a man's activities, roles, and more personal dealings with other men." 27

The adequacy of the principles a person may grasp well enough to be successful in argument or in finding solutions to hypothetical situations may fail, and understandably so, to impress someone who is sincerely concerned with preserving or extending the existing moral order. The actions of such persons may well lead a man like Williams to conclude that the education of the emotions might produce better results than the inculcation of principles. If, however, the inculcation of principles results in people having principles, that is, if these principles are operative in their behavior so that they function as motives that move them to act, then the inculcation of adequate principles is also the education of the emotions.
FOOTNOTES


3. As an example of one of those unable to accept the "major premise" notion of principles and so downplay the importance of principles in moral education is Bernard Williams who claims that "... we are concerned with something not so aptly called the inculcation of principles, but rather the education of the emotions". p. 20, *Morality and the Emotions* in John Casey (ed.) *Morality and Moral Reasoning*, London: Methuen and Company, Ltd., 1971.


7. John Rawls in "The Sense of Justice" shows how the acceptance of principles involves liability to moral feelings and how "it is a necessary condition and a defining feature of moral feelings that the person's explanation invokes a moral concept and its associated principle(s) and thereby makes a reference to an acknowledged right or a wrong". *Philosophical Review*, 72, 1963, p. 295.


10. P. H. Nowell-Smith takes exception to this and claims that such a person in fact adopts and adheres to bad moral principles. On this view what we mean when we say that a person has principles is that he has good moral principles. There is some plausibility to this view for consider just what it is we know about a person when we know his principles. For example, we might refer to a man who has the principle of honesty as an honest man and to one who doesn't as a cheat or swindler. Such a characterization would suggest not that the man didn't know the difference between right and wrong but that he chose to do wrong—at least that which others call wrong. There is, of course, the case of the man who may not be accurately describable either as honest or as a cheat but so conducts his life as to be honest on this occasion and dishonest on that. Such a man might literally be without principles. See P. H. Nowell-Smith, *Ethics*, London: Cox and Wyman Ltd., 1969, p. 265.


14. I am using Harrison's expression "to think a moral principle obligatory" to mean that which a person thinks ought to be done. A moral principle is an "obligation-meeting consideration." Although Harrison does not use this distinction, he does distinguish between someone thinking a principle obligatory and it actually being obligatory. I would hold that a principle cannot be obligatory but rather that an action in a particular situation is obligatory because it is in accordance with the most important principle relevant to that situation.


19. R. M. Hare, *op. cit.*, pp. 65, 56-78.


4. MORAL PRINCIPLES AND ACTION ON PRINCIPLE

Moral principles were found to be similar to other principles in a number of respects including those emphasized by Harre: that a principle is a starting point in reasoning and is not easily given up. In spite of this parallel there is a significant difference between moral principles and other principles that relates to the fact that we adhere to moral principles. We have and act on moral principles. I would like now to consider a challenge to this view. This challenge is put forward by Julius Kovesi in a most interesting chapter in his book *Moral Notions*. The chapter is entitled "Moral Notions and Moral Judgements" and the section with which I will mainly be dealing is subtitled "Men of Principles and Moral Principles". The significance of this subtitle will be apparent by the end of this section.

Kovesi denies that there are moral principles; this is contrary to what has been assumed throughout this paper. He contends that moral judgements like "lying is wrong" or "one ought not lie" are not, as is commonly held, moral principles. He allows that there is a sense in which such judgements do provide a principle but such a principle cannot be a major premise of a deductive argument nor can a person who refers to a principle in this sense be acting on principle. I will try to explain what Kovesi means and argue against him in insisting that judgements like "lying is wrong" are principles in a strong sense: that they can serve as
major premises or as the reason or motives underlying someone's action on principle. Before I do this, however, I would like to discuss Kovesi's examples of behaving on principle and what he distinguishes as patterns or ways of doing this. This will I hope reveal what, if anything, distinguishes moral action on principle from other action done on principle.

Consider the following:

(1) He refrains from buying and eating tomatoes on principle.
(2) But I put the heater out on principle.
(3) When I observe someone counting a series of numbers I may ask on what principle he is counting the series.\(^1\) While only (1) and (2) are examples of action on principle I will be making reference to (3) in this discussion and will begin by commenting on it.

Sentence (3) is a clear-cut case of following a rule. The answer offered as the "principle" on which the counting is being done might be "I am giving every second number starting from number '2'". Here the "principle" and the rule being followed are identical. Another case where this might occur (i.e., where the rule and the principle are identical) is when we speak of the principle on, or according to which, a robot or traffic light is operating. The crucial difference here of course, is that the person counting is following a rule or principle while the machine is operating according to some rule or principle.\(^2\) Although the expressions exhibit a parallelism there is a difference from the point of view of
causality between the principles which underlie the behavior of a robot, for example, or a human body, and those which underlie and account for deliberate action. This may sound exceedingly trivial but the similarity in expression makes this an easily confused notion. The only real similarity between the two cases in which something is operating according to some principle and someone is acting in accordance with some principle (counting on some principle) is that in each case the notion of action on principle is out of place.

Action on principle, as in (1) and (2), also shares a condition with physical occurrences accountable for by reference to principles. This is the condition of regularity. It is certainly true that if one put a kerosene heater out when leaving a house empty, on principle, this implies that he regularly puts it out just as someone who refrains from buying tomatoes, or does anything on principle, must do it more than once (or at least would do it again were similar circumstances to recur). These, for the present at least, are not the most important points to be made about action on principle and so I will go on to what Kovesi has to say.

Kovesi describes what he calls three ways or patterns of behaving on principle. First, is the type of action suggested in example (1) where an individual expresses his sincerity by his action but is not part of an organized movement for change. Second, is the case where the point of the action is to change a policy and so not a private, individual action. Third, is the action typified by
example (2). Now Kovesi's claim is this: "being a principle is not a property of certain judgements; it is people who regard certain things as matters of principle, who adopt certain principles or behave according to principles".\(^3\) It is clear that he takes principles to be involved in matters of principle and that in each action on principle there is a person behaving according to a principle. It is also clear, however, that he does not understand these to be like the principles we have been discussing. A consideration of what the principles Kovesi refers to are like seems in order.

Evidence that Kovesi believes a principle to be involved rather than simply being a label for a manner of doing something is the following: "It is people . . . who make and have principles or live according to principles". And, "we can decide to make a principle about almost anything. We can decide to get up every morning at the crack of dawn, or not eat tomatoes, or never to leave kerosene heaters alight in an empty house, on principle".\(^4\) Just what then is the principle? He suggests that getting up early and not eating tomatoes because one believes these are ways to be healthy are not done on principle because medical evidence can be summoned to dispute them. If they are done on principle they are not open to challenge on empirical grounds, i.e., no amount of empirical evidence can invalidate them. He says that people have reasons for adopting principles but that these are not based on the actual situations in which the acts are performed; " . . . there are reasons for making
things matters of principle". From this it would seem that Kovesi is saying that we have reasons for making and adopting principles and when we do make or adopt a principle, i.e., do something on principle, it becomes a matter of principle. But it is still not clear what counts as a principle. He excludes the reason for the act and in fact appears to consider the act itself, e.g., not eating tomatoes, putting out the heater, etc., to be the principle. When discussing one "pattern" of behaving on principle he explicitly says, "He must make the principle universal: 'nobody should eat tomatoes'". I suggest that what Kovesi is saying is that the rule we follow in doing the action on principle is the principle. He writes, "Whenever reference is made to a principle the argument is shifted away from the merits or demerits of the action in question to a different field". 6, and again "An appeal to a principle functions as a lever that shifts the reason for one's acts to a different ground". 7

So, it would seem, Kovesi is saying that when we do something on principle the particular rule we follow (e.g., refusing to buy tomatoes) constitutes the principle on which we act; however, the fact that the action is done on principle implies that our reason for doing the action does not lie in the action itself but in a different field and in fact gives the act a new description (e.g., boycotting).

But surely when we act on principle the particular rule we follow does not constitute the principle on which we are acting. In Kovesi's example of refraining from buying and eating tomatoes because one disapproves of the policies
of the Marketing Board the principle has to do with one's disapproval — it is the reason for the disapproval. The principle on which one might be acting if not the principle of justice itself would at least be based on that principle. The reason for not buying tomatoes might be a reason such as 'one ought to boycott the products of an unjust Marketing Board'. When an act is done on principle the reason for which it is done is the principle. In the tomato case the action is not not eating tomatoes (because it is done on principle) but expressing disapproval and/or attempting to change the policies of the Marketing Board. The principle on which the agent is acting is identical with his reason for disapproving of the Marketing Board.

At the beginning of his chapter Kovesi says "'Being a principle' is not a feature of statements of judgements. It is people ... who ... have principles". I think this is correct but being capable of being a principle is a feature of certain reasons in normative discourse. For what is it for a man to have as one of his principles that 'people's interests ought to be considered equally' or derivatively that 'producers ought to share in profits' if it is not for him to hold, in cases where they do not, that the Marketing Board is unjust? And what is this, if it is not for him to hold this as a good reason not to support the Board by buying its products. 8

When such things as not eating or buying tomatoes become matters of principle and are done on principle, the
principles involved simply are not such things as "don't eat or buy tomatoes" or "nobody should eat tomatoes". Once this is seen it is easy to question Kovesi's claim that "we can decide to make a principle about almost anything". Of course we can do almost anything on principle but the principle, as in this case, is not one we have decided to make.

Now we are ready to consider Kovesi's different patterns of behaving on principle. My argument will be that these are not different ways of doing the same thing but are different things and only appear to be the same because of the presence of 'principle' in each case. The three ways or patterns of behaving on principle again are: pattern 1 - an individual doing an action for reasons outside the field of that action as an expression of his own sincerity and not as an attempt to bring about change. (E.g., an individual refraining from buying tomatoes marketed by an unjust Board whether or not anyone else was doing likewise);

pattern two - an action performed as part of a group action, for reasons outside the field of the action, to instigate change. (E.g., refraining from buying tomatoes as part of a boycott on products of a corrupt Marketing Board);

pattern three - an action performed routinely "because one does not want to rely on the actual reasons [for doing the action] each time". (E.g., always putting out the kerosene heater before leaving the house; mothers routinely closing safety pins; putting cold water in the bath before hot, etc.)
These patterns of behavior are "matters of principle" because the reasons for which they are done lie outside the field of the action - not so far out in the case of the third pattern but outside nonetheless. In the first two patterns the reason is found in the disapproval of the Marketing Board, in the third, in the efficiency provided by not dealing with each case individually.

Kovesi does not find pattern one very interesting so we will be concerned with patterns two and three. He points to the sense of universality in these two patterns as being different. In the first, where the action amounted to an attempt to change the policies of the Marketing Board, "it was a question of all or most people doing something, now it is a question of always doing something or doing something in all cases of such and such". The difference extends far beyond this however, and is more obvious when he calls these actions on different types of principles rather than "different patterns of behaving according to principles".

It was my contention that the principle in each case was to be found in the reason for doing the act. In pattern two the reason had to do with disapproval of the Marketing Board and, I would suggest, was a moral principle. But what type of principle is at work in pattern three? If the reason for such action was "cautiousness" then perhaps we would say it was a prudential principle. But surely one could act on a principle of prudence and, for example, still not put the heater out every time he left the house but only on those occasions when there was a danger of fire. The
point of this type of behavior is rather to make the consideration of each and every case unnecessary. There is, in fact, no principle at work. When someone says that he is doing such and such on principle as in pattern two it is reasonable to ask "what principle?" - at least one has the feeling that there is a principle behind such action. When it is said that someone is acting in the way described by pattern three, however, no such question or principle comes to mind.

If the point of describing the action of putting the heater out as an action on principle is cautiousness then there is a principle involved but the strict regularity feature can be dropped. But it is this sense of universality - that something is done in all cases - that characterizes this pattern and the point is not cautiousness but rather that one does not have to deal with each case or each type of case individually. Of course the reason for making it a rule always to put out the heater has to do with cautiousness but it is not this reason that is being emphasized in referring to such a manner of behaving as action on principle - it is the strict regularity feature that is being emphasized. This is not so in pattern two type behavior where a principle as opposed to a manner of behaving is the point of saying the action is done on principle.

It seems to me correct to say that there are different senses in which one can act on principle. In one sense, as in pattern two, one is obeying a principle, i.e., accepting it
as binding; in the other, there is no principle at all but one is making it a rule to do something. These are quite different things.

Pattern three-type behavior can be described as habitual behavior. One puts out a heater, or closes pins, etc., as a matter of habit. This is not so in pattern two-type behavior: it is not the habit of the person involved not to buy or eat tomatoes.

Burton Leiser, in the same work on which I relied in the previous section, identifies a 'habit' as well as a 'principle' use of custom. According to Leiser when someone acts on or has a principle the following conditions must hold:

- (1) M regularly does X under certain specifiable circumstances.
- (2) M might choose not to do X, and not do X, under those circumstances.
- (3) M is conscious of doing X when he does it.
- (4) M does X deliberately.
- (5) M believes that he ought to do X under those conditions.11

When someone has a habit the following are true:

- (1) M regularly does X (sometimes under certain specifiable circumstances).
- (2) M might choose not to do X, and not do X (under those circumstances).
- (3) M is (usually) not conscious of doing X when he does it.12
- (4) When M does X, he does not do it deliberately.13

Leiser's account of the distinction between acting on a principle and acting habitually is, I believe, quite compatible
with the one given here between pattern two and pattern three-type behavior. Consider either pattern one or two behavior with Leiser's conditions for acting on principle. To be refusing to buy tomatoes on principle the individual--call him M--must do so regularly when the circumstances prompting his action are present. M also must do this consciously and deliberately or his action would not be on principle. This would also be true if M did not think he should be refusing to buy tomatoes marketed by a corrupt Board. Pattern one and two type behavior do not fit the habit conditions however.

Similarly pattern three-type behavior incorporates the conditions for having a habit but not those for action on a principle. The whole point of this "pattern" is that it is done routinely--under all circumstances. M may or may not be conscious of his action. Again, it is definitive of this pattern of behavior that prior deliberation does not occur in each case. There are reasons for the behavior but the agent does not have the reason each time he acts.

It should not be thought that having habits--in the sense of making it a rule to do certain things--is in any way reprehensible. As Peters says, "the art of living consists to a large extent, in reducing most things that have to be done to habit; for then the mind is set free to pay attention to things that are interesting, novel and worthwhile." Making it a habit to do certain things is different from doing them through "force of sheer habit," i.e., for no reason. And it is, I think, with this in mind that Kovesi
says "there are special situations and cases where acting on principles of this type is called for". (What I would dispute in this is the notion that there are any principles being acted on. Had he said, "there are special situations and cases where acting on principle in this way is called for", I would be in complete agreement.) He goes on to make what I consider to be a very important point. He says: "Our literature is full of examples of people who extend this to cases and situations where such a pattern of behavior is not called for". It is certainly true that people frequently extend this type of action to situations where it is not called for and rigidly follow a predetermined set of rules. That is, they confuse one sense of behaving on principle with the other: the sense in which it is unnecessary to consider each case on its own merits with the sense in which it is important to do so. It is this very problem that makes public discussion of morality and moral education so difficult, that is, this common, and frequently immoral, behavior is confused with rational action - action on principle.

Again I will point out a reason why Kovesi can so readily claim that we "decide to make principles". Of course we can make principles if by that we seriously mean such things as 'always put the heater out'. 'To make something a habit' or 'to make it a rule to do something' is much more fitting and appropriate a phrase to describe what is meant in such a case than is 'to make a principle'.

I would like now to consider Kovesi's views on the
sense in which certain judgements provide us with the moral principle. He holds that the way in which a judgement like "lying is wrong" can provide us with a moral principle is the same way that "the mathematical notion of 'even' gave the principle" (in "I am counting the series of even numbers") in the answer to the question in example (3) (i.e., "on what principle is he counting the series?"). That is, it is the formal element of the moral notion 'lying' which provides the principle. I don't want to deny the importance of moral notions to moral principles, prudential notions to prudential principles, etc. A moral principle cannot be a moral principle without one, i.e., it gives the principle its point. However, I cannot agree that that is the only principle connected with such judgements. What I am conceding is this: any judgement which qualifies as, or contains, a moral principle contains a moral notion. This is as true of 'lying is wrong' as it is of 'one ought not to cause unnecessary suffering'. The formal element of such a notion does give us a principle in the sense Kovesi says. It provides the point of the notion as it were and is the same sense of principle that one encounters in sentences like the following:

He has grasped the organizing principle of the work.

We approve your proposal in principle.

This thermometer is sometimes varied in its form and arrangement, but the principle remains the same.

'Principle' in this sense cannot be a principle of action or a principle on which arguments can proceed. What I am
contesting is: that this is the only sense in which there are moral principles. I shall argue that there are moral principles and these feature in the ways we distinguished above as principles on which arguments can proceed, i.e., as major premises, and as principles of action, i.e., as motives.

Kovesi has the expression "complete moral notion" for those moral notions which can provide a moral principle in his sense. Such a notion applies to acts "selected completely from the moral point of view"—notions such as 'murder' in conjunction with which right and wrong function only as reminders of the point of forming such notions.19

'Lying' is not a complete moral notion; if it were, and he suggests it could be by the inclusion in our language of a term like "savingdeceit", then we could on principle never lie. Kovesi offers as an analogy: threat is to promise as savingdeceit is to lying in the respect that threat maps out a field such that "the term threat covers now all those performances ... that someone could have cited as examples of promises when promises ought not to be kept, [And] we can now freely say 'promises ought to be kept'".20 But this is absurd. Imagine a case of a man having incurred a debt and promised to repay it at time t. Suppose that at time t a quite unforeseeable circumstance had arisen in which his child was very ill and all his resources were required to meet the emergency. Surely it isn't the case that he should keep his promise. "Threat" does not help one bit. Furthermore, it is the case that 'promises ought to be kept'
continues to be a good reason for keeping one's promise in such a situation and also a moral principle on which an agent could act. That 'promises ought to be kept' is a reason for keeping one's promise in a situation does not make it a sufficient reason for doing it in that situation.

Kovesi's contention is that making a principle about lying would involve a decision to never tell a lie under any circumstances. That is to say, if it were the case that a person was refraining from telling a lie on principle he would have made a decision never to tell a lie. And that is to say further that a person acting in this way would not have to consider each situation in which lying was relevant on its own merits but make it a habit in all situations not to lie. Now a person would have a reason for such a decision and his reason may be that 'lying is wrong', but it need not be. In this type of case of acting on principle one has made it a principle never to lie and in this type of case Kovesi is correct in insisting that there is a difference between the judgement 'lying is wrong' and someone's not lying on principle. This is a case of pattern three-type behavior on principle, a pattern I shall distinguish as action or behavior on principle, to indicate its affinity to habit.

Kovesi's claim as to the possibility of this type of behavior is undeniable. The difficulty is that he sees this as the only type of action on principle when in fact there is another more interesting type. Here a person may not lie on principle but in no way commit himself never, under any
circumstances, to tell a lie. In this case his not lying on principle and the judgement lying is wrong are not different, for his reason for not lying in a particular situation is the relative importance in that situation of the fact that doing such and such would be telling a lie. This is the difference between making it a rule never to lie and acting on the principle 'one ought not lie'. I shall designate this type of action action on principle to indicate the importance of a principle in this kind of case.

Let us consider an example of action on principle in which the principle 'one ought not steal' is involved. Suppose you are telling me about how very much you need and would like to have a particular book. Suppose also that we are in the library looking at the book and both know it would be relatively easy simply to walk off with it. If I say to you "But why are you returning the book to the shelf? You want it very much; why don't you take it?" You might well reply "It is a matter of principle" or "I'm doing it on principle." Three points: first, this is an action on principle. Second, the rule according to which you return the book to the shelf is your action; the principle on which it is done is "one ought not steal" or perhaps simply "stealing is wrong." Third, the fact that this is one of your principles and that in this situation you have acted on principle does not entail that in another situation, for instance one in which you or your family are starving, you would not steal; nor would it be the case that in such a situation this had ceased to be one
of your principles.

Kovesi has correctly drawn our attention to one type of action on principle, however, his belief that moral principles cannot function as major premises or as principles of action, or in other words, that this is the only thing we can mean by action on principle is false. Similarly, his contention that only complete moral notions provide us with moral principles in any sense and that these do away with situations of moral conflict and decision is untenable. A. I. Melden's account of what considerations such as 'lying is wrong' are, and how they function in the thought and action of one who is morally wise or has a healthy moral understanding, shows just how untenable this is. 22

Finally, I would like to consider a matter which, in view of the above discussion, makes Kovesi's subtitle "Men of Principles and Moral Principles" particularly interesting. He writes:

Reference to a principle does not make an act a moral act. Whether the act is moral or not cuts across the distinction between doing something on principle or not on principle: it depends on the sort of reason we have for doing something either way. 23

And I think I agree with Kovesi on this. By far the greatest majority of actions on principle are not moral acts. But what about actions on principle? The cases that would seem to qualify, cases like eating certain foods for reasons of health, are not, according to Kovesi, cases of action on principle. (See page 51) Whether or not there are non-
moral cases of action on principle (and I see no reason why there couldn't be) there is an interesting and important feature about moral action on principle. It is this: we call those who act on principle "men of principle". Consider this sentence:

Jones is a man of principle.

By such an expression we might be saying one of two things about Jones — one derogatory, the other commendatory. Should we be doing the former we would be referring to certain specific actions the performance of which would be highly predictable. The situation in which the action occurs contains some factor which when present always furnishes Jones with a reason to do that action. For example, any situation in which to do x would be to tell a lie, Jones will refrain from doing x. What is implied is rigidity or inflexibility. It is this implication that is carried by such an expression as "these are men of strong principles", and also frequently by reference to someone's being "a man of high principles" or "high principled". Griffiths refers to this connotation when he says "A man of principle is sometimes thought of with distaste, as a man who acts in accordance with a fixed set of rules ignoring the complexities of situations and failing to adapt his behavior to changing circumstances". This also seems to be the understanding Kovesi has of "man of principle" given his subtitle, "Men of Principles and Moral Principles".

In calling Jones a man of principle it is much more likely that we are praising him. The Oxford English
Dictionary gives an example of the use of "man of principle" under 7b which is characterized thus: "An inward personal law of right action; personal devotion to right; rectitude, uprightness, honourable character." (This is very similar to the definition given of the appropriate use of "principles": "having good or right principles; actuated by moral considerations; devoted to rectitude; upright, honourable. (The opposite of unprincipled.)" Examples of this meaning are not difficult to find. Melden's use of it in section IX of Rights and Right Conduct--"Kant was right, then in insisting as men of principle have always insisted. . ."--is both familiar and unambiguous.

These opposing meanings of "man of principle" have two common elements in that they refer to moral matters and they render prediction of certain actions and attitudes possible; the difference between them is marked on the one hand by action on principle, and on the other by action on principle. In the critical use, the characteristic feature of the agent's behavior is that particular actions are done without fail. When, however, we are praising someone by referring to him as a "man of principle" it is not the case that particular actions will be carried out without fail but that he is a certain kind of person--one who is moved by certain considerations and these considerations are moral considerations. We simply would not call a man a "man of principle" because he invariably put out heaters. Kant was not a man of principle because of the regular afternoon walks he took but
because of the moral principles he had. Surely Peters is correct when he says, "Certainly some kind of firmness is suggested by the phrase 'a man of principle'. But here again there are misunderstandings. A man of principle is one who is consistent in acting in the light of his sensitivity to aspects of a situation that are made morally relevant by a principle. But this does not preclude adaptability due to differences in situations, especially if there is more than one principle which makes different factors in a situation morally important".\(^26\)

A man of principle is one who is guided by moral principles, that is, one who has moral principles, who makes the proper things matters of principle and who acts on principle.
FOOTNOTES

1. These three examples are from Kovesi's book *Moral Notions*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967. Example (1) can be found on p.110, (2) on p.99 and (3) on p.94.


4. Ibid., p. 94.

5. Ibid., pp. 94-95.

6. Ibid., p. 94.

7. Ibid., p. 98.


10. Ibid., p. 102.


12. Leiser acknowledges that distinctions concerning degrees of consciousness might be drawn here. He does not elucidate these as he feels such an exercise would contribute little to his subject and, I believe, it would contribute little to ours.

13. Ibid., p. 17.

14. It was necessary in the previous section to restate Leiser's conditions for saying someone is acting on a principle and that restatement would make the case for this argument stronger. I do not think it is necessary to repeat it however as the point can be made using Leiser's conditions.


18. Mrs. Foot points to the importance of the "background" to whether a principle is a moral principle. This background is, I believe, supplied by a moral notion. See P. R. Foot, Symposium: When is a Principle a Moral Principle? *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 28, 1954, (supplement) p. 108.


MORAL PRINCIPLES AND MORAL RULES

Before offering a critique of the philosophic basis of Kohlberg's approach to moral education there is a thorny problem that must be tackled or, rather, tread over. That is the problem of the distinction between principles and rules. I indicated at the beginning of this paper that I thought it was important to make this distinction and referred to ways in which it has been handled by various writers. I also took the liberty of making here and there in my paper such statements as "this is a case of following a rule and therefore different from acting on a principle". While we feel intuitively that there is a difference between principles and rules it is quite another matter to specify just what the difference is. Part of the problem is, of course, that they are both common terms encompassing diverse kinds of things. In the following discussion, which will consist of few arguments and much speculation, I will be referring only to moral rules and moral principles unless I specify otherwise.

There is little trouble getting agreement that 'everyone's interests ought to be given equal consideration' is a principle and 'the maximum speed on this roadway is 30 mph' is a rule. We might not all agree that the latter is a moral rule however. In fact, it is difficult to come up with an uncontroversial example of a moral rule. Shwayder points out that moral rules seldom gain explicit formulation for the following reason: "The moment we trap a moral practice in a
prescription, we are almost bound to specify sanction and clarify the application. The result is usually either a law of the land or a law of the church or something comparable.2 One can, I think, argue that the example given can legitimately be called a moral rule on the grounds that it is a rule regulating behavior which necessarily affects the welfare of others, but I admit that it is not a happy example.

It might be suggested that injunctions such as 'don't lie', 'keep promises', etc. are surely common enough examples of moral rules. While I don't want to deny that these can be examples of moral rules, I must deny that all would agree on calling them such for they might as readily be seen as examples of moral principles. It is my opinion that whether an expression such as 'keep promises' is a rule or a principle depends upon how it is held and obeyed. More will be said on this subject presently. Here I am concerned about an example of something we accept as a rule but not as a principle. If the example given is unacceptable perhaps a rule regulating sexual behavior - prohibiting incest for example - would be more acceptable since it is less likely a law of the land. Whether or not we agree on a particular example we can probably agree that certain things are true of the rule that are not true of what we have taken as a paradigm case of a principle. For example, that the principle is abstract and the rule is concrete; that they are general in different respects - while one covers a vast number of different actions, the other covers an unlimited number of
actions of one kind; that the rule is derivable from a principle and that the principle, since it is a fundamental principle, is not justified in that way; that while we can speak of breaking the rule it is less clear what we could mean by breaking the principle; that we can speak of having the principle or it being our principle but not of having the rule or it being our rule; and so on. But what of 'one ought not lie' or Melden's example 'one ought to give special consideration to one's parents'? Can we agree on which they are? They appear to be less abstract than the principle and less concrete than the rule; they cover fewer kinds of actions than the former and yet more than one kind of action; they are derivable from a principle as was the rule, yet the idea of breaking them fits less comfortably than it did with the rule; and we can speak of these as our principles or as rules, e.g., Commandments.

Perhaps it would be useful to reconsider the point of distinguishing between principles and rules. It is common for derivative or lower-order principles to be called rules and typically what is meant by moral rules is the sort of thing we find listed in Gert's book *The Moral Rules* - don't kill, don't deceive, etc. Wilson's "first-order principles" are alternately called rules and Peters often calls derivative principles "rules of a more relative sort". This simply isn't a problem in so far as everyday understanding and communication are concerned. Where the problem lies is in the adequacy of the model of rules for understanding and teaching
such considerations as 'one ought not to cause injury to other persons'.

The main problem centres on whether or not these so-called rules have exceptions. The possibility of exceptions seems to be very close to the notion of a rule. What we are reluctant to allow is that at least what we call fundamental principles, are exceptionable; that is, that there are occasions when persons ought not to be respected, when not everyone's interests should be considered equally, and so on.

The most satisfactory attempt so far to distinguish between rules and principles and so save at least our highest principles from exceptions is the one made by Marcus Singer. Singer distinguishes between logical principles - the "generalization argument", the "generalization principle", the "principle of consequence" and the "principle of justification" - and derivative, substantive principles such as "it is always wrong to cause unnecessary suffering". The former are unexceptionable, while the latter are made so by a qualification such as "unnecessary", "unless there is a reason to the contrary", or the like. Moral rules are divided into three kinds: local rules, e.g., rules governing taxation, neutral norms, e.g., traffic regulations, and fundamental moral rules, "a special class" including such things as rules against lying, stealing, etc. Moral rules are exceptionable and it is this primarily which makes them distinct from principles. This attempt has its problems, however, as Baier points out in his review:
Singer's own statements of various moral principles make them indistinguishable from moral rules . . . . What is the difference between the principle, "if not everyone has the right to act in a certain way, then it is wrong to act in that way unless there is a reason to the contrary or a justification" and the rule, "if not everyone has the right to act in a certain way, then it is generally wrong to act in that way"?  

On the one hand we want principles, themselves unexceptionable, which can provide grounds for rules to which there are exceptions; but on the other hand we don't want to be in the position of having to obey such principles when they dictate unjust actions. One ought not cause people injury works very well in providing grounds for all sorts of traffic rules to which we can admit of exceptions in unusual circumstances. But what happens when there is no rule to which we can appeal and we confront a decision in which we must either cause injury or allow a disaster of much greater magnitude?  

Ronald Dworkin has argued that the model of rules is inadequate in legal philosophy. He is concerned to show that the law is not only a system of rules but consists also of other standards such as principles and policies which operate differently from rules. Clearly, the problems of legal philosophy and those of moral philosophy are not the same. No one is suggesting that morality is just a system of rules so Dworkin's success is not central to our concern, but his support for his claim that principles and rules are standards which operate in different ways might be. He claims that there is a difference in the character of the direction given by legal rules on the one hand and legal principles on the
other. Rules, he says, "are applicable in an all-or-nothing fashion". When there are exceptions these can be written into the rule for a more complete statement of it. This is not the case with principles. Principles do not dictate results of their being followed in the way rules do. "A principle like 'no man may profit from his own wrong' does not even purport to set out conditions that make its application necessary. Rather, it states a reason that argues in one direction, but does not necessitate a particular decision". Furthermore, in any case where a principle is relevant a decision to act may not be based on it, "... but that does not mean our principle is not a principle ... because in the next case, when these contravening considerations are absent or less weighty, the principle may be decisive". Failure to act on a relevant principle in this situation does not make it any less a principle but neither do such instances count as exceptions to the principle as they do with rules. Dworkin goes on, "we could not hope to capture these counter-instances simply by a more extended statement of the principle. They are not, even in theory, subject to enumeration, ... listing these ... would not make for a more accurate or complete statement of the principle".10

Is there also a difference in the character of the direction given by moral rules and that given by moral principles? Do moral rules apply in an all-or-nothing fashion? Here we run into problems for it seems to depend upon what we are willing to allow as a moral rule. Two of Singer's types
of moral rules—local rules and neutral norms—seem to be like legal rules but this is not surprising since, as we saw in the case of the example given at the beginning of this discussion, they are also rules of law. The third type—the fundamental rules—of which 'don't steal' is an example may or may not be like Dworkin's legal rules. It seems to me that whether or not they operate like legal rules depends upon how we use them, that is on whether or not we apply them in an all-or-nothing fashion as for example is done in what I called action on principle in the previous section. When we use them in this way they are indeed rules. If they dictate what is to be done in any situation and a failure to obey requires an exceptional circumstance which could be made part of the rule then they are moral rules. If, however, we see them as considerations relevant to a situation without their mere relevance determining what must be done in that situation, then they are more like principles. If, that is, one has to justify one's action on the particular consideration rather than his failure to act on it, it is unlike a rule.

The point that these "so-called moral rules" or moral principles should not be conceived of as rules was made by A. I. Melden in his very important contribution to moral philosophy: Rights and Right Conduct. While it is important to understand that there are situations in which it would be wrong to act on a particular principle, it is a mistake to think that for this reason there are exceptions to the principle and so it must be a rule. The mistake lies in a
failure to understand the difference between being justified in presenting a principle as a moral consideration and being justified in acting on it in that situation. This is to confuse two distinct notions—obligation meeting actions and obligatory actions. For example, one is always justified in presenting the fact that an act would constitute stealing as a reason against doing that act; however, that is not the same as saying that because the only way to procure an essential drug is to steal it, a man is justified in depriving his wife of the drug and allowing her to die. This does not affect the validity of the principle one bit—it is still the case that one ought not steal. As Melden puts it "Kant was right, then, in insisting as men of principle have always insisted that a consideration like 'one ought to give special consideration to one's parents' is categorical. . . . the notion of exceptions is simply not applicable here. To suppose that it is and either that there are no exceptions or that there are exceptions derives from the confusion of such considerations with rules or, as in Kant's case, with the notion of Law."11

In legal philosophy the question regarding principles and rules was "does the law consist of any standards that are not rules?"; the question in moral philosophy seems to be "does morality consist of any standards that are, strictly speaking, rules?". The answer to the latter question must surely be that there are moral rules but we must specify what we would mean in saying this. One possibility is that we call all moral standards 'rules' but within this category of moral
rules there are standards which operate differently from one another. For one set we have the name 'principles' while the others are simply called rules. Another possibility is to adopt the position taken by Shwayder.

A moral rule is some particular group's application of a maxim. That is, a rule is a way of placing particular acts as murder, thievery, adultery, deceit, indecency, and the like. If this is all we mean by a rule, then the concept does indeed have an important place in moral philosophy.12

I have been questioning the adequacy of the model of rules for understanding and teaching moral principles and up to now have been talking about the misunderstandings which can result from thinking of principles as rules. These are: one, concluding that there must be exceptions to principles and two, failing to see the difference between being justified in considering those aspects of a situation made relevant by a principle and being justified in acting on that principle in that situation.

I would now like to say a word about the adequacy of this model for teaching moral rules or moral principles.

Certainly in the process of teaching such considerations as 'one ought to keep promises' to children these considerations have, at least in the early stages of such teaching, many of the features common to rules. They appear to have authors in the form of either parents, teachers, or legal authorities. They can be broken and there are penalties for breaking them. In addition they seem to come with exceptions written in: a child may be told always to keep his
word except when his promise was made to another child and an adult is requesting that he break it. And, it would seem, such teaching could happen in no other way. This is where the opportunity for the child to make what R. M. Hare calls "decisions of principle" is vital. What the child will do is not make this rule more and more specific for it is specific when he is introduced to it. He will rather, if he is lucky and/or well-taught, come to understand the point of the rule and it will become less a rule with an ever-increasing set of exceptions and more a principle—a good reason for doing certain sorts of things and not doing others—but never a precise answer to the question "what is it I must do now?" If it becomes his principle it will become a value he has—a motive that sensitizes him to particular features of situations and moves him to act in accordance with those sensitivities.

Perhaps there is more than meets the eye in the rather trivial-looking point that we have principles but don't have rules. If there is, we can hark back to all that has been said in earlier sections of this paper. When a person has a principle it constitutes his motive for doing certain things and the reason why he sees certain kinds of situations as calling for certain kinds of action. Following rules certainly involves doing what there are reasons for doing but it need not involve the personal commitment that is part of having a principle.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. A. I. Melden, Rights and Right Conduct, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959, p. 42. See also sections V and VII. It should be pointed out that while Melden was arguing that considerations such as 'one ought to give special
consideration to one's parents' should not be conceived of as rules he chose to call these considerations not principles but maxims.

6. KOHLBERG'S ACCOUNT OF MORAL PRINCIPLES—A CRITIQUE

Professor Kohlberg claims to have defined an approach to moral education which (1) is based on the psychological and sociological facts of moral development, (2) involves educational methods of stimulating moral change, (3) is based on a philosophically defensible concept of morality, (4) is in accord with a constitutional system guaranteeing freedom of belief, and (5) unites philosophic and psychological considerations. It is the third claim, that his approach to moral education is based on a philosophically defensible concept of morality, that will be considered in this chapter. This critique will be based entirely on the paper entitled "Stages of Development as a Basis for Moral Education" as Kohlberg's attempt to set forth the philosophic basis of his work is the chief focus of that paper.

Since Kohlberg's theory of moral development and his moral theory were set out in the first chapter they will only be summarized here. Kohlberg holds that moral development proceeds through stages which form an invariant sequence and are hierarchical. Each stage in the sequence represents a more adequate structure or way of handling experience than the one before it. His theory is interactionist; he holds that it is through interaction with his social environment that the child develops structures of progressively higher stages. Although all six stages are necessary stages in
moral development only the highestones are fully moral. The criteria according to which these highest stages are judged to be more adequate developmentally are the criteria of increased differentiation and integration. These criteria, Kohlberg believes, correspond to the formal criteria of prescriptivity and universalizability which are held by many philosophers to characterize moral judgements.

In this paper Kohlberg is explicitly concerned with setting forth the philosophic basis for his definition of moral maturity. He says, "we define morality in terms of the formal character of a moral judgement or a moral point of view, rather than in terms of its content." He agrees with those philosophers who hold that derivation from moral principles is the central characteristic of judgements that are fully moral. To refer to a stage of moral development as a mature stage is to say that moral thought at that stage has the feature of judgements that are genuinely moral and, in fact, Kohlberg refers to these mature stages as "principled stages."

Kohlberg says that to understand morality it is necessary to understand the nature and functioning of moral principles. It is mainly with his account of the nature and functioning of moral principles that I shall be concerned in this chapter.

He begins this account by pointing to the uniqueness of moral judgements. Their uniqueness, Kohlberg believes, lies in the fact that they are principled. He goes on to
clarify his conception of moral principles by contrasting it with what he calls misuses of the concept of moral principle. He says "all the misuses of the concept of moral principle thus involve a failure either to universalize a 'principle' or to reduce it to a guide to the perception of the claims of persons in a moral situation." My critique of Kohlberg's account will centre roughly on these issues: on the so-called "misuses of the concept of moral principle" and on the alleged uniqueness of moral development.

I shall begin with Kohlberg's attempt to clarify the nature and function of moral principles. As was mentioned above Kohlberg does this by contrasting what he calls misuses of the concept of moral principle with its proper use. The first misuse consists in confusing rules with principles, that is, in failing to universalize principles.

Kohlberg begins: "A moral principle is a universal mode of choosing, a rule of choosing which we want all people to adopt in all situations. By 'principle' we mean something more abstract than the ordinary rule." He proceeds to outline, as an example of this first misuse of principle, a case where "rules like the Ten Commandments" are labelled principles or reference is made to the principle of loyalty to your family. The reason these are not principles, says Kohlberg, is that one cannot universalize or generalize them to all situations. The reason one cannot universalize such rules as "be loyal to your family" is that "not everybody has a family."
Now, on our interpretation of principle the above example does not constitute a misuse of principle. If the principle of loyalty to one's family were a justifiable principle it would be universalizable by virtue of being true for anyone who did have a family. A principle of this very sort was considered in an earlier part of this paper as a fine example of a moral principle; it was the one borrowed from Melden: 'one ought to give special consideration to one's parents'.

Not only can principles such as that of loyalty to one's family not be universalized—in Kohlberg's opinion—they also admit of exceptions. He contends that loyalty to one's family cannot be a principle because had Hitler been a member of one's family one would not have been bound to loyalty to him. Arguments have already been presented to show how it is that principles are unexceptionable: i.e., that although a principle's relevance to a particular situation makes it a consideration that ought to be taken into account this does not mean that action on that principle is necessarily obligatory in that situation. So, it is certainly true, as Kohlberg suggests, that if Hitler were a member of one's family, loyalty to him would not be obligatory. The reason for this is that 'one ought to prevent unnecessary suffering' is also a relevant principle in such a situation, and one that takes priority over the other—one simply would not be justified in acting on a principle of loyalty in that situation. Similarly, if the Ten Commandments are not principles it is because of the
way they are often held as inflexible injunctions issued by a divine authority or that they are simply not valid, that is, not backed by reason. It is not because they fail to specify the particular situation of every person at every point in time (e.g., by referring to parents which not everyone has), nor is it because action on them in some situations may not constitute right action.

I don't believe Kohlberg has succeeded in exposing a misuse of the concept of moral principle in this case. I am not suggesting that the Ten Commandments and "loyalty to one's family" name moral principles but that Kohlberg has not shown us why they do not. So far, he has done little to clarify the notion of a principle or to distinguish principles from rules. More serious, it seems to me, is his misuse of 'universalizability'. When he can say that the reason the principle of loyalty to family cannot be universalized is that not everybody has a family, one can only wonder what he means when he says that moral judgements are principled.

What does Kohlberg mean in saying that a misuse of the concept of moral principle involves a failure to universalize a principle? What does he mean by universalizability? This is, after all, a very important notion in his theory since it is one of the criteria allegedly held in common by the psychologist (as integration) and the philosopher as characteristic of judgements that are fully moral. It is the key to the unification of the philosophic and psychological considerations which he sees to be the great strength of his approach.
to moral education. It is vital to his claim that this approach is based on a philosophically defensible concept of morality.

Kohlberg's statement that "a moral principle is a universal mode of choosing" could have been interpreted to mean that everyone could or should base his decisions and choices on moral principles in situations of moral conflict. On this interpretation his use of the singular, "a moral principle is . . . ", would be insignificant and 'universal' would have a perfectly ordinary meaning. But this is not what Kohlberg is saying. He is saying that a principle is not universal or universalizable unless it applies to all people in all situations and his use of the singular is very significant. This gives rise to three questions: one, is or are, there any such principle(s)?; two, what sense can be made of Kohlberg's criticism of failing to universalize a principle"; and three, does this notion of universalizability "fit" the philosopher's criterion of universalizability?

The first question of whether there can be any moral principles given Kohlberg's view is too complicated to receive a detailed treatment here. Certainly, many of the likely candidates, e.g., 'one ought not cause injury to others', 'one ought not deceive', 'one ought to give special consideration to one's parents' etc., are ruled out either because they do not apply to everyone (e.g., those who don't have parents) or they don't apply, i.e., aren't obligatory, in all situations. It is easy to think of situations in which deception and even
causing injury could represent the best course of action.

Such principles as 'people's interests should be con­
sidered equally', 'people's welfare should be cared for',
'persons should be treated with respect' seem as though they
might qualify. Actually Kohlberg rules out the principle of
benevolence. He says, "while benevolence can be universalized
in the sense of 'everyone should care for the welfare of all
others', when there is a conflict between welfares, benevolence
can provide no criterion except that of maximization." And
he holds that the principle of justice is the only true moral
principle. It seems to me that one could certainly argue, as
Peters has done, that other principles are also involved in
applying the principle of justice. It is also at least
arguable that the principle of justice is based on the princi­
ple of respect for persons and so surely the status of this
principle as a moral principle cannot be denied.

Secondly, Kohlberg's accusation of those who fail to
universalize principles is either vacuous or nonsensical. One
simply cannot universalize (in his sense of universalize) what
we ordinarily take to be principles as he points out in the
case of "the principle of loyalty." How then can anyone be
blamed for failing to universalize them? On the other hand,
what he takes to be principles, i.e., the principles of jus­
tice, are already universal so there really is nothing to be
done.

It is perhaps to his credit that he is not entirely
loyal to this view of universality. His notion of more
integrated judgements is the notion of judgements regarding
particulars which are applicable to all others who are not different in a relevant way from the judge. He does, in a passage discussing a stage one response, say: "... he does not answer with a moral judgement that is universal (applies to all situations of *this kind*) or that has any impersonal or ideal ground". \(^8\) (the italics are mine)

In regard to question three I quote from Kohlberg's paper: "Corresponding to the criterion of integration is the moral criterion of universality ... The claim of principled morality is that it defines the right for anyone in any situation". \(^9\) This notion of universalizability cannot be claimed to "fit" the philosopher's criterion of universalizability. The claim of principled morality is that if an action is right, or if action on a principle is obligatory, for one person in a particular situation, the action is right, or the principle obligatory, for anyone in that situation. More will be said about this in the discussion which follows regarding Kohlberg's claim as to the uniqueness of moral judgements and of moral development.

Kohlberg's belief that the uniqueness of moral judgements, and therefore of moral development, lies in the fact that they are principled is evident in the following paragraph.

Many, although not all, philosophic treatments of morality view the central characteristic of adequate moral judgement as its derivation from 'moral principles'. It is evident enough that most of our value judgements are not directly based on principles. When we judge a martini or a painting or a scientific article as good, we do not attempt to derive our judgements from principle. If a bad
painting is made according to principle, so much
the worse for the principle. Nevertheless, the
whole notion that there is a distinctively moral
form of judgement demands that moral judgements
be principled. . . . When an effort is made to
formulate a judgement which is prescriptive and
universal, the judgement almost of necessity
will be made in terms of a moral principle.
To understand stage-6 morality, therefore we
need to understand the nature and functioning
of moral principles. 10

Clearly Kohlberg believes that what is distinctive
about moral judgements is that they are principled. This
very important characteristic is, however, held in those
philosophic treatments to which he alludes to be common to
all value judgements including such judgements as "this is a
good painting". 11 This, in Hare's thesis, is the feature of
universalizability and is a characteristic that value judge­
ments share with descriptive judgements. It is because
value judgements belong to a rational structure that, in
order to be justified, they depend on principles in this way.
It is not the case that moral judgements are distinct from
other value judgements in that moral judgements are rational,
that is, they are backed by reasons, while all others are
emotional and irrational.

Kohlberg rightly points out that while moral judgements
are judgements about the right and the good, not all judge­
ments of right and good are moral judgements - they may be
aesthetic, prudential, religious, political, etc. Where he
goes wrong is in assuming that judgements from other points
of view (than the moral) are not principled. The distinction
that is a valid one in this respect is the distinction between
expression of opinion or of like or dislike and judgements of value. We do frequently use the same expression to make known a like or dislike as we do to make a judgement of value. The expression of favour is most typically the intent behind such phrases as "this is a good martini". When this is the case we mean simply "I like this martini". However, we also express our delight over an action, rather than our moral evaluation of it, by calling it good, as for example we might when a member of the team for which we are cheering tramples an opponent in order to score.

Another feature of moral judgements is prescriptivity. This too is a feature common to all value judgements and not just moral ones in so far as we choose those things, e.g., paintings, scientific articles, etc., that are good over those that are not good. (I realize that prescriptivity is not a feature of all value judgements as straightforwardly, or in quite the same way, as it is a feature of moral judgements. It is not, however, that which distinguishes moral from non-moral value judgements.)

Paul Taylor, in his important work *Normative Discourse*, distinguishes between the various value "languages", such as moral, economic, aesthetic, religious, intellectual, and shows that while they represent different "points of view" their logic is the same; they all belong in the realm of normative discourse. Taylor holds that it is the rules of valid inference common to all normative languages which distinguish normative from other realms of discourse (e.g.,
It is rules of relevance only that separate one normative language, such as moral language, from another, such as aesthetic, religious, political, etc. That is to say, they are all alike in being rational. Taylor says:

What I do wish to make clear is that the difference between the two points of view lies in the relevance of the reasons accepted in justification of a given value judgement, not in the goodness of the reasons. . . .all normative languages are used in fundamentally the same ways for the same purposes, but different normative languages are being used in these ways for these purposes.12

It would seem that the validity of Kohlberg's claim that the "whole notion that there is a distinctively moral form of judgement demands that moral judgements be principled" depends upon his showing not that moral judgements are principled but that judgements of value from all other points of view are not principled; that is to say, they are not rational—they cannot be rationally justified. Now if Taylor is correct there is no distinctively moral form of judgement. What distinguishes a moral from, say, an aesthetic judgement are the rules of relevance which determine what makes the judgement a moral and not an aesthetic one. So far as his moral theory is concerned, the uniqueness Kohlberg claims for moral judgements must be found in these (rules of relevance) and not in denying that there are normative principles other than moral ones.

R. S. Peters has attempted to show that the principle of justice is a presupposition of all practical discourse—it
is "the principle that there should be principles".\textsuperscript{13} John Rawls has argued that justice as fairness is the fundamental concept of morality.\textsuperscript{14} In this sense the principles of justice are the rules of relevance defining the moral point of view. Now showing that all adequate moral judgements are derivable from these does not in any way preclude judgements not derivable from them being principled or rational but merely from being moral.

I think that Kohlberg is, in fact, very much interested in the rules of relevance of morality and sees moral judgements not simply as judgements with a distinct form but as judgements having to do with justice and welfare. Evidence of this is found in his many statements of the sort: "There is no moral situation that does not involve considerations of people's happiness or welfare and considerations of equal treatment between people".\textsuperscript{15} Although I have quoted him saying "we define morality in terms of the formal character of a moral judgement . . . rather than in terms of its content" he leaves no doubt about his conception of morality as justice and says at another point in his paper "Now it is clear . . . that one cannot ultimately separate form and content in moral analysis".\textsuperscript{16} It would seem that although he may be correct about the content of morality, he is wrong in construing it as distinctive because of its form. His claim that "When an effort is made to formulate a judgement which is prescriptive and universal, the judgement almost of necessity will be made in terms of a moral principle" is just
false and if his further claim that "To understand stage-6 morality, therefore we need to understand . . . moral principles" follows from it, it too is open to question.

I do not wish to deny the importance of moral principles to mature morality or moral education but only to point to the problem in construing morality as unique because moral judgments are principled. And if this mistaken notion forms the basis of Kohlberg's theory of moral development it would point to problems there as well. The uniqueness of moral development is in question if the highest stages of development are principled simply because moral judgments made at these stages are principled.

Kohlberg believes that there are developmental levels of moral discourse and the higher stages of moral thought are revealed in the more advanced levels of discourse. But Kohlberg's developmental levels of moral discourse are very like Taylor's stages of justification and these stages apply to all normative discourse. The question then arises whether what Kohlberg has discovered and interpreted as uniquely moral development is not in fact normative development or one aspect of the development of rationality. This question becomes more pressing when claims like the following are put forward seriously by developmental psychologists. William Kay writes "... we all agree on the essentials - children develop morally just as they develop intellectually, spiritually, and physically". And Kay cites references to work done on religious development. The point is: how
unique is moral development and what is unique about it? It cannot be, as we have seen, that at the highest stages of moral development judgements are principled.

It would seem, then, that Kohlberg's moral theory, in so far as he insists that morality is unique because moral judgements are principled, is wanting. His argument for the uniqueness of moral development is in need of defense precisely because of its dependence on the former. A couple of points that came up earlier in this paper might lend support to Kohlberg's claim as to the distinctiveness of moral development while in no way denying that there are non-moral normative principles. The points are, first, that moral principles may be unique in having a dual role as principles of action and as principles of argument, and second, that we can only call a person principled on the basis of his moral principles and the moral judgements he makes. A person is not principled because of the religious, economic, aesthetic or prudential principles according to which he makes various judgements of value, and choices in the course of his life. If, however, moral development is unique Kohlberg has yet to demonstrate that it is.

The second misuse of the concept moral principle which Kohlberg criticizes is the failure "to reduce [a principle] to a guide to the perception of the claims of persons in a moral situation". In a positive vein he writes: "By 'moral principle' all thoughtful men have meant a general guide to choice rather than a rule of action." and, "In our empirical work we have started by considering the term
'principle' as referring to considerations in moral choice or reasons justifying moral action". 21

Kohlberg describes this misuse in the following lengthy passage:

From our point of view there is a logical fallacy parallel to elevating the group above its members: the fallacy of treating a principle as elevated above the individuals in the situation to which it applies. Put in different terms, most of us feel a cold chill at the notion that mature moral obligation is fundamentally directed to an abstract maxim or principle as Kant held. Moral obligations are toward concrete situations. The notion of a Kantian feeling obligated to the principle of the categorical imperative and so refusing to tell a lie to save a human life (i.e., refusing to modify the means for a concrete human end) is as chilling as a utilitarian Bolshevik letting 10,000,000 Kulaks starve for the greater happiness of the unborn greater number (i.e., refusing to modify the ends for the concrete human means). True principles guide us to the obligating elements in the situation, to the concrete human claims there. The case is always higher than the principle, a single human life is worth more than all the principles in philosophy to the mature man. Principles simply tell us how to resolve these concrete claims, when claims compete in a situation when it is one man's life against another's. 22

I would certainly agree with Kohlberg that treating principles as more important than people is a very great fallacy and one which has been mentioned earlier in this paper. I am less sure that it can properly be called a misuse of the concept of principle, however, even though the action referred to is unjustifiable. It would seem that Kohlberg is more correct in referring to holding principles in the way described as a fallacy - at least in so far as they are held
to be moral principles or connected with moral action. As we saw in section four there is a sense of principle in which principles serve as rules of action making it unnecessary for the holder to rely on the reasons for their being held and so unnecessary to consider particular instances falling under them. We called this the habit sense of principle. There is a meaning for the label man of principle corresponding to this sense and in reference to moral matters it is a derogatory label. Whether or not it is appropriate to call this a misuse, he is correct in giving it no part in his conception of moral principle.

I would again agree with Kohlberg that moral obligations are toward other people and not to a principle and that principles guide us to the obligating elements in situations. I do not agree, however, that they simply tell us how to resolve conflicting claims in a situation. As principles in argument they lead to conclusions that can be judged more or less justifiable. A person who has principles is sensitive to the morally relevant features in such a situation and chooses on the basis of his principles but his principles do not tell him what to choose. There is, I believe, much more to the phrase "principles guide us ..." than Kohlberg seems to realize. Since this was largely the subject of an earlier chapter I will not go too deeply into it here.

While most of us would share Kohlberg's abhorrence at the thought of innocent lives being lost for the sake of a principle I do not see that the reduction of principles to
guides to the perception of claims in moral situations is an alternative to using principles in that way. In the first place, what sense can be made of the notion of guiding our perception let alone of reducing something to such a guide? Surely what we perceive as claims in moral situations does depend on what our principles are but we are not in the position of being able to select or call upon a principle in a particular situation after which time we begin to perceive what morally relevant features are involved. Our perceptions come "guided" and I believe principles play a part in this but they do so as principles that we have - as that which sensitizes us to particular features of situations. I shall refer to this, on the basis of the distinctions made in section three, as principle in the motivation sense and mark the distinction by the use of a subscript, calling this sense of principle $\text{principle}_M$. Principles $\text{principle}_M$ play a role in our perception or understanding of actions - in what we take an action to be, and in moving us to act. The other sense of principle, that in which they function as principles of argument in the context of justification I shall call principle $\text{principle}_A$. I believe that Kohlberg's claims that principles are to be reduced to guides and that they tell us how to resolve claims in situations of moral conflict stem from a failure to distinguish between these uses of the concept - between principle $\text{principle}_M$ and principle $\text{principle}_A$.

Throughout Kohlberg's account of principles we find principles referred to one time as guides to choice or
considerations in choosing, and another as reasons for justifying moral action; first as guides to morally relevant elements, and then as the elements themselves. This dual role in which moral principles function has already been discussed and it is these roles that have been distinguished by referring to them as principle \( M \) and principle \( A \). As considerations in choosing and guides to morally relevant elements they are functioning as principles \( M \). In this sense they are principles the person has and as such guide his perception to morally relevant elements that is, determine what his understanding of a situation will be and what the alternatives are between which he must choose.

As reasons justifying moral action - answers to the question "Why is it right to do such and such?" - or as ultimate terms or states of affairs, or meta-rules, they are principles \( A \). In this role they are used to justify actions and evaluations of the moral agent and as tools of the moral philosopher and moral judge, and it is here that notions of deduction and generalization have their place. When it is clear that he is dealing with principles \( A \), I find very little with which to disagree in Kohlberg's account.

Unfortunately it is obvious that Kohlberg is frequently speaking of principles as motives or sensitivities, i.e., principles \( M \), but proceeding as if there were no difference between the roles. Because of this he does an inadequate job of relating principles to action, i.e., showing how they operate. This is evident when he considers the derivation
of judgements from principles (and speaks of our attempting to derive or making an effort to formulate them) and is even more obvious here where he speaks of principles as guides to the perception and integration of morally relevant elements in a situation. As has already been stated, I believe that principles are such guides and in fact what we mean when we say that a person has a certain principle is that he will perceive a certain kind of situation as calling for a certain action. And as to the suggestion that we should reduce principles to such guides - I repeat, we cannot guide our perception much less reduce something to a guide. Principles are involved in our perception of claims in a radically different sense. We do not borrow the principles of justice from philosophy, or wherever, and then they point to those relevant claims; rather, if they are our principles we perceive those claims as relevant - as demanding our consideration. Having principles is picking out certain claims as relevant; it is not first reducing a principle to a guide and then beginning to perceive. In the same way they are operative in our resolutions of conflicts without telling us how to resolve them.

Kohlberg uses an interesting expression in relating the misuse of a principle when he says "here is an eighteen-year-old boy who uses the 'higher principle of humanity' in this disembodied and unprincipled way ... ". There are, I believe, two ways this might be understood. 'Unprincipled' might refer to the fact that the subject was not consistent
in his application of the principle, i.e., he was not applying it to all cases. This is likely what Kohlberg means by it since the response in question involved using the principle of humanity as justification for theft in order to save a life as well as a justification for taking a life to save that of another. 'Disembodied and unprincipled' points to another interpretation, namely that that subject is unprincipled. 'Being principled' involves something more than using even a higher principle, it involves having principles, which is, in a way, 'embodying' them. The important point relating to this interpretation is that the subject could have been using his principle in an unprincipled way even if he had not failed to see it as applicable to all persons if it were a principle he used in argument but which made no claim on him in actual situations with which he was faced. One may in hypothetical situations use principles and reason perfectly well but be thoroughly unprincipled. This is easily overlooked when there is a failure to distinguish between principle, and principle.

Kohlberg does at times recognize that being moral involves more than the capacity for making principled moral judgements as is evidenced in his statement of the aims of moral education as the encouragement of a capacity for principled moral judgements and of the disposition to act in accordance with this capacity. The question is whether the capacity for making principled moral judgements purely in the sense of being good at moral theorizing is a necessary
condition of being moral. This has already been answered in the negative.

Kohlberg has not taken seriously enough the distinction between having the ability to make principled moral judgements and having the disposition to act on moral principles. That he has not is evident in his frequent reference to subjects who make principled judgements, i.e., those who are at principled stages, as "principled subjects." It is a mistake to identify those who make principled judgements as principled subjects for, as has been repeated over and over throughout this paper, there is no necessary connection between the ability to make principled judgements and the tendency to act morally. It is sufficient for a principled moral judgement to be based on a valid moral principle(s); it is not necessary for that principle(s) to actually be operative in the personal choices and actions of the person doing the judging. Just as we know that people can have principles without necessarily being able to articulate or defend them, we know that others can articulate and defend principles which they do not have. For this reason it is risky to move too quickly from expressions such as "principled stages" and "principled judgements" to "stage-6 consciousness" and "principled subjects." "Principled stages" can mean stages at which the best theorizing is done but "principled subjects" means much more.

It is important, I think, that acknowledgement of this distinction be insisted upon and that assumptions like the
following be given careful consideration:

The first assumption behind our approach has been that the key to understanding a man's moral conduct or character is to understand his moral philosophy, that is, the assumption that we all, even and especially young children, are moral philosophers.25

We know that a man's character, and therefore his moral conduct, defines and is defined by his moral principles. We also know that those who have principles display mature conduct in conflict situations. If by understanding a man's 'moral philosophy' Kohlberg means the form of his moral judgments I am not satisfied that this is the key to understanding someone's moral conduct or character. In fact, it seems fairly obvious that it is not, for as has been pointed out here and elsewhere, people can do good and reasonable moral theorizing which plays no part in their moral practice.26 A man's moral philosophy, if in fact we are, as Kohlberg says, all moral philosophers, must include so much more than judgments made on a given number of hypothetical dilemmas that it would be as complex a matter to understand as is his having principles.

That Kohlberg's claims are exaggerated in this way, and that there is still much to be done by way of clarification of central notions, should not be allowed to distract from the very valuable work he has done in the area of moral reasoning. Encouraging students to develop the capacity for principled moral judgement whether by stimulating a natural development or by teaching them how to justify moral and non-moral value
judgements is most worthy as an aim of moral education, and perhaps the most that can be expected from moral education in school. It is not however, identical with producing morally mature students.
FOOTNOTES


2. Ibid., p. 55.

3. Ibid., p. 62.

4. Ibid., p. 58.

5. See sections V and VI of this paper.


9. Ibid., p. 46.

10. Ibid., pp. 57-58.

11. Kohlberg mentions such philosophers as Hare, Baier and Aiken in the course of his discussion of the definition of the moral.


13. R. S. Peters, Ethics and Education, p. 51. See also M. Singer, Generalizations in Ethics. Singer identifies the principle of justice with the generalization principle and refers this use to non-moral as well as moral contexts, (e.g., p. 41).


16. Ibid., p. 60.
17. Both Kohlberg's levels of discourse and Taylor's stages of justification are outlined along with a discussion of the similarities between them in an unpublished paper by Professor L. B. Daniels, "Professor Kohlberg's Use of the Concept of Levels."


20. Ibid., p. 58.


22. Ibid., p. 61.

23. Ibid., pp. 61-62.

24. Ibid., p. 4.

25. Ibid., p. 34.

26. Derek Wright offers the example of what he classifies as the 'normally amoral' person. Such a person is admirably skilled at using moral discourse while his actions are highly immoral. See his Psychology of Moral Behavior, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971, pp. 209-210.
7. THE TASK OF MORAL EDUCATION

If the aim of moral education is to enable children to become morally mature adults and moral maturity consists in being principled or having principles the moral educator must ask how it is that one comes to be principled or to have principles. In looking to those philosophers and psychologists whose concern is to understand and improve the moral order, and so to enlighten the would-be moral educator, one finds a bewildering assortment of verbs relating to moral teaching which seem to suggest a variety of different teaching activities not all of which are compatible. For example, one finds Kohlberg urging him to stimulate the development or growth of moral principles and referring to students "developing moral principles". Peters speaks of the importance of "passing on" rules and principles or giving students a "grasp" of fundamental principles. The "inculcation" of principles is one of the most common phrases used by those expressing common-sense views of moral teaching as well as those working from within some theoretical framework. Still others speak of getting children to accept, adopt, choose, decide on, understand, and appreciate principles.

Not only is the variety of possible activities likely to arouse suspicion as to the comparability of teaching moral principles to teaching physical principles, for example, but so too is the fact that these verbs relating to the acquisition of moral principles are used, at the same time, in a
broader connection. Kohlberg speaks of developing principles and of children developing morally. Others move from the inculcation of principles to the inculcation of morality and equate this to learning the language of right and wrong or learning the difference between right and wrong.

The following questions, posed by Gilbert Ryle, are important to our concern. "What sort of teaching, then, is the teaching of the difference between right and wrong? What sort of learning is the learning of this difference? What kind of knowing is the knowing of it?" That such learning, knowing and teaching is different from other types in which principles are involved (e.g., physics or farming) is observed by Ryle in the fact that notions like "forget" and "be reminded of" do not go with knowing the difference between right and wrong. Ryle points out that we forget all sorts of things that are learned, information as well as skills. The idea that we should say we once learned the difference between right and wrong but have now forgotten it, he argues, is absurd.

Another concept related to teaching, learning and knowing does not fit comfortably with moral knowledge. That is the notion of 'mastery'. We speak readily of mastering a principle of physics or logic or of mastering a field of study or a skill. There is nothing odd about calling someone who has mastered chess a chess master or one who has advanced knowledge of a field of study, e.g., English, an English master. In so doing we are referring, as Broudy has
suggested, to the control they have of their subject. However, we speak neither of mastering morality nor of a moral master. The thought of mastering a moral principle does not rest easily. While it is perfectly reasonable and meaningful to talk of mastery of moral concepts, mastery above this level, that is, of moral principles or of morality, seems inappropriate. This is not so in fields which primarily involve information or skills. What kind of learning and knowing is it then, that we are interested in bringing about in moral education?

The conclusion Ryle comes to is that knowing the difference between right and wrong or having principles is that sort of attainment we call appreciation. He writes: "To have been taught the difference [between right and wrong] is to have been brought to appreciate the difference, and this appreciation is not just a competence to label correctly or just a capacity to do things efficiently. It includes an inculcated caring, a habit of taking certain sorts of things seriously". To be sure when one has this appreciation which is one with having principles, one also has competences involving the recognition and understanding of facts as well as a number of skills. The learning of these, however, would seem to be of the sort with which notions like forgetting and mastery, belong. Whatever it is that, in addition to these, yields appreciation is important to our concern. Ryle suggests in this regard that "the notions of learning, studying, teaching, and knowing are ampler notions than our academic
epistemologies have acknowledged. They are hospitable enough to house under their roofs notions like those of *inspiring*, *kindling*, and *infecting*.”

Ryle claims that coming or ceasing to appreciate the difference between right and wrong, for example, marks a change in the individual, whereas coming to know or forgetting information or how to do something does not. Learning or being taught to enjoy, to care, to love, to be kind, or just, for example, point to changes in a person— to his personal qualities— which are different from his "equipment" which he gets from "learning that" or "learning how". Broudy suggests that the reason we don't use 'mastery' in describing attitudinal or emotional learning is perhaps "because to learn an attitude is not to control it, but rather to be controlled by it, that is, one *is* one's attitudes in a way that one is not identified with his knowledge or skills".

Once again, this is not to suggest that appreciations, and especially moral knowledge, are not heavily dependent on one's "equipment" in the form of factual knowledge and skills; obviously they are. On this matter Ryle writes, "Learning to appreciate requires some studiousness, judiciousness, and acuteness. The judge has reasons to give for his likings, his verdicts, and his choices". In a similar manner Broudy points out that one could not appreciate a Shakespearean play without knowing how to read Shakespearean English and knowing a great deal about drama; that is to say, he must have done some mastering in order to now appreciate it. Broudy writes:
"But when we use 'appreciate' in this sense we mean not only that X 'likes' Shakespearean drama, but also that X evaluates it according to certain standards."^9

Admittedly, the knowledge, if Ryle is right, that having principles involves appreciation does not tell us how to do moral education. It does, however, enable us to look critically at statements such as the following, once again from Kohlberg.

What is the difference between people acting in accordance with principles of physics which they know and their acting in accordance with moral principles? I would say that while people do not always act in terms of their knowledge of physical principles, on the whole they do. I would say the same thing is true of their action with regard to the moral principles that they accept, their moral cognitions. However, the difference between physical and moral principles is that the latter embody certain affective components in themselves. You cannot have a conception of justice without some sort of affective reaction being involved, whereas you can have such a conception of a physical principle.^10

There are differences between acting in accordance with one's knowledge of principles of physics and acting in accordance with moral principles. Over and above the affective components that may be embodied in the latter is the difference in the knowing of the different kinds of principles. Knowing in the case of physical principles involved understanding and this implies belief and therefore action. Understanding in the case of moral principles may take the form of understanding their derivation or knowing that some people believe them. If moral knowledge, or knowledge of moral principles,
involves appreciation and it is this that issues in action, then the theoretical grasp which is adequate in the case of physical principles simply is not adequate for moral principles. Or rather, it is adequate for the acquisition of principles, but not for principles. The reason we feel uneasy at the suggestion of mastering moral principles but not of mastering scientific or logical principles might be just this: that having a theoretical grasp of the latter is sufficient to knowing and understanding, while in the case of the former it is not. On the basis of developing this kind of theoretical grasp alone one could not claim to have been successful at moral education as one would in science. Success in science perhaps means mastery of principles, in moral education it is more likely that it means something closer to what Peters suggests:

... a steady but intense sensitivity to the consequences of actions, a constant and imaginative realization that in interpersonal relations one is dealing with persons who also have their unique point of view on the world and that there is something about them which matters supremely. In other words, it means the development of motives which personalize fundamental principles. It means also the development of judgement about particular moral matters that only comes to a person who has really got on the inside of this mode of experience.

The very considerable problems of moral education then are: just what components or competences make a person principled, i.e., one who has those motives which personalize fundamental principles and the judgement about moral matters
to which Peters refers? And how are they achieved? What is involved in appreciation? Let us consider Kohlberg's claim that people "develop" morally - "that the goal of moral education is the stimulation of a "natural development of the individual child's own moral judgements and capacities" or "that 'ethical principles' are the end point of sequential 'natural' development in social functioning and thinking". Certainly we do speak of developing appreciation and if knowledge in the moral realm is that type of attainment then this would seem to support Kohlberg's contention. The problem, however, is that "develop" and "development" are ambiguous terms so that just what is meant by any particular use is not immediately apparent. Depending on its object 'develop' invites interpretation ranging from unfolding or evolving, to elaborating or expanding. Kohlberg does insist that he does not refer to a "natural biological unfolding" but to "universal and natural trends in development". Moral principles are the "interactional emergents of social interaction". To say ethical or moral principles develop is not enough for, as I have been arguing, there is a difference between moral principles when they are principles of argument and when they are principles of action - principles and principles. Principles seem to fit with the notion of development in referring to the way a person comes to be while principles fit with another idea of development, that of working out, elaborating, etc.

John Rawls shows how the "sense of justice" may be seen
as the result of a natural development—through its connection with, and dependency on, such natural attitudes as love and trust. He is, however, speaking of the development of the sense of justice which, in Petera' words, is the motive which personalizes the principle(s) of justice. In Rawls' theory of justice the capacity for a sense of justice is the fundamental aspect of the moral personality. Kohlberg doesn't appear to make this distinction and when he speaks of developing principles he gives one the impression he means principles. For example: "... the development of moral character is in large part a sequential progressive growth of basic principles of moral reasoning and their application to action."

While it makes sense, I believe, to speak of teaching and learning principles as part of the process of developing the motives which personalize moral principles, i.e., the development of principles, I find it difficult to make sense of talk of stimulating the development of principles. The very word "stimulate" seems to fit with the notion of development as biological unfolding. If Kohlberg sees his educational methods of presenting arguments and challenges as passing on, or getting students to understand moral principles as principles of argument and in turn sees this as conducive or preliminary to their developing principles in the other sense, then his position would not be unlike that of Peters who contends that "moral education is centrally concerned with the development of certain types of motives especially ..."
It seems fairly certain, however, that what Kohlberg believes develops are mental structures and not motives or dispositions.

There are many things we must be clearer about before we can say how a person comes to be principled or have principles and the relationship between moral principles as principles of argument on the one hand and principles of action on the other, would seem to be one such thing. Before we know more precisely what it is we are aiming at in moral education we cannot say much about what methods we might use. It is, however, interesting and as I suggested at the outset, somewhat perplexing, to look at various suggestions that have been put forward.

The variation in methods seems to reflect the problem of the different senses in which moral principles can be understood. On the motivation side there are such expressions as stimulate development, inculcate, bring to appreciate; on the major premise side are expressions like give a grasp of . . . , get students to choose or decide on, pass on, etc. It is somewhat paradoxical that it is Peters, to whom the development of the rational passions is of the essence, who speaks of giving students a grasp of principles; and Kohlberg, to whom sophisticated theorizing is the crucial thing, who claims that the only way to do moral education is to stimulate the development of principles. It looks very much like both aspects have an important place in moral education.

Although they might differ about what is involved, all
the writers I have considered, with the exception of Kohlberg, agree that teaching is important in bringing about moral maturity. And Kohlberg's claim that his approach to moral education "involves educational methods of stimulating moral change" must at least make one suspicious, in spite of his denial, that he too sees teaching as essential to moral maturity.

The fact is that Kohlberg's method for stimulating the development of moral principles, that is, argument and discussion at a level which the child can understand and yet be challenged, describes the activity that is at the very heart of the teaching concept. Thomas Green, in his analysis of teaching locates 'instruction' at just that point. He writes: "Instruction seems, at heart, to involve a kind of conversation, the object of which is to give reasons, weigh evidence, justify, explain, conclude, and so forth. It is true that whenever we are involved in giving instruction, it follows that we are engaged in teaching; but it is not true that whenever we are engaged in teaching we are giving instruction."18 And further "Instruction is an activity which has to do not with what people believe but with how they believe it. It has to do not so much with arriving at the 'right answer' as with arriving at an answer on the right grounds."19 This, it seems to me, is just the activity Kohlberg recommends as the only way by which a person can be stimulated to move from one stage to the next and finally to the principled stages.
It might look, on the other hand, as if some of the other activities suggested, e.g., training, inculcating, imparting, and so on, lie outside the field of teaching. In the early years of childhood some of these necessarily take the form of conditioning. These too, however, as Green points out can be activities of teaching. Some of these activities, ones like conditioning at the one extreme and indoctrination at the other, can typically "only be justified as the nearest approximation to teaching available at the moment." That is, they "may be sanctioned only in order that beliefs adopted may later be redeemed by reasons, only that they may be vindicated by teaching." 20

It is not improbable that most if not all of the activities suggested will have some role to play in a program of moral education. Which ones, and the point at which they are best employed, must wait upon answers to questions regarding what is involved in being principled and how people come to have principles.
FOOTNOTES


5. Ibid., p. 154.

6. Ibid., p. 156.

7. H. S. Broudy, op. cit., p. 73.


13. Ibid., p. 33.


17. R. S. Peters, op. cit., p. 47.


19. Ibid., p. 303.

20. Ibid., p. 312.


15. Foot, P. R. *When is a Principle a Moral Principle?* Aristotelian Society, 28, 1954, 95-134, (supplement)


