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STAGES OF MORAL (HUMAN) DEVELOPMENT AND IMAGES OF GOD

A b s t r a c t. In sharp contrast to views expressed in some earlier theories about life and human development, today human development is considered a "work in progress." It is a continuous journey on which a person passes through various stages. This dynamic understanding of human development also characterizes moral development. The article's first part takes up these points. The second part focuses on the contextualized nature of this lifespan approach. Nature, heredity, culture, environment, gender, religion, and spirituality constitute the context within which moral development occurs. The third part highlights the need to educate people rather than merely indoctrinate them morally. The fourth part argues that in this dynamic understanding of moral development it is important to recognize ways in which social norms and moral (religious) precepts influence people.

Key words: development; dynamic process; God; sin; cultural diversity; education; socio-religious norms and precepts.

Today human development is considered a "work in progress." This is the principal argument of psychologists Anne V. Gormly and David M. Brodzinsky (1993). They say that, "No matter how different our lives may be, we all share in the human experience of birth, growth, and change" (p. 4). Indeed, there are „physical, cognitive, personality, social, and emotional changes that occur over the lifespan" (Gormly & Brodzinsky, 1993, p. 4). Life, and more specifically then, human development, is a continuous journey on which the person passes through various stages.

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Such a view of life stands in sharp contrast to views expressed in some earlier theories about life and human development. In those views, human development was not generally considered a lifelong work in progress: "The lifespan approach to development is a relatively new one that has provided new challenges to the way we look at and study human development" (Gormly & David, 1993, p. 5; Basseches, 2003). This new, more dynamic understanding of human development can be clearly seen, for example, in recent ways in which "Adult education" is understood and carried out. In the past, an illiterate adult usually remained illiterate all his or her life. But this is not necessarily the case today. Simply being an adult is no longer considered a barrier to such learning which can occur at various stages in human development.

This article will proceed in four parts. The first part will point out that this lifespan approach to and understanding of overall human development characterizes as well the rhythm of moral development. Such moral development involves "moral reasoning – the person's judgments about the appropriateness of an action based on some set of rules – and moral behavior – the actions in which a person engages" (Gormly & Brodzinsky, 1993, p. 257 [bold in the original]).

The second part will treat of the importance of a contextualized understanding of this dynamic view of moral development. As with the understanding of human development in general as contextualized (Gormly & Brodzinsky, 1993), so too in understanding moral development one needs to take into consideration the overall context within which such development occurs. One needs to consider nature, heredity, culture, environment, gender, religion, and spirituality. The third part will highlight the need, resulting from such contextualization, to pay much attention to educating people rather than merely indoctrinating them morally. Finally, the fourth part will show that within this dynamic approach to moral development it is important to recognize the ways in which social norms and moral (religious) precepts influence people. Such norms and precepts affect the ways in which people approach and consider, among others, sexual orientation, love and sexuality, sin and evil, suicide, memory, forgiveness, reconciliation, suffering, death and the hereafter.

Just as approaching moral development from the dynamic perspective of lifespan development affects the way in which one understands it, so too such an approach affects the very way in which one envisions personal identity. For there are two ways to look at identity. One way is from a "static model," which establishes very clearly who the person is from a cultural, sociological, psychological, religious, and gender perspective. This model also stipulates how one is to behave. There is, in contradistinction to the static model,

a newer, "dynamic approach" to the understanding of identity. In this approach, one sees identity in a way that recognizes different steps in a person's development and manifestations of that development over the course of that person's life. But this newer way of looking at identity is not simply synonymous with dispersion and/or moral relativism. Friedrich Schweizer (2004) works with a post-modern understanding of development over the whole span of life. His understanding of development is not based exclusively on the chronological stages of a person's development. He writes:

> Rather, identity always changes with different relationships. So one should speak of a relational self rather than of identity [...]. The relational self is considered the more adequate account for both genders [...]. In sum, adulthood no longer is the time after the great transitional divide of adolescence. Adulthood itself now means transition – many transitions between different segments of a life cycle that no longer has a circular shape (p. 50-51, 86).

In fact, this "dynamic approach" to identity has enormous implications for an understanding of sexual identity. Thus, considering sexual identity need not be seen as something unchangeable, namely, as being defined once and for all. Rather, it could be understood in a more dynamic fashion as something which takes on different forms and manifests itself in different ways over the life-span of one and the same person. Still, taking into consideration the chronological stages of a person's life can help therapists and/or pastoral agents establish certain parameters. Such a consideration can provide a frame of reference within which to understand where the person stands from a moral (human) perspective.

1. THE THEORY OF GUY DURAND ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT

People's perceptions of God run parallel to their personal growth and moral development (Martínez de Pisón, 2002). Guy Durand (1986) has helpfully posited four stages of moral development: authority, law, self, and alterity (otherness). Four images of God and four conceptions of sin correspond to these four stages.

As just mentioned, for Durand the first stage of moral development centers or focuses on the role of authority. He writes that in this first stage "the criteria of our behavior, our parameters of coherence, can be conceived of globally as *authority*, that is, the authority that approves or disapproves,

rewards or punishes" (Durand, 1986, p. 225 [italics in the original])[1]. Even though this attitude more typically characterizes six-year old child, it can also so up or manifest itself in adults. There is an identifiable image of God corresponding to this stage of moral development. That image of God involves a conception of an "authority God," something seemingly more magical. God is, so to speak, a police officer, "An all-powerful God whom one tries to conciliate with good deeds, an all-powerful God that one makes every effort not to irritate" (Durand, 1986, p. 225). In this first stage of moral development, the sin is understood as the violation of a taboo that produces pollution:

> Sin is experienced as the violation of a taboo. It pollutes the soul and disrupts both the interior and cosmic realms. It gives rise to anguish and flight. One can escape from it only by a kind of magical rite that reconciles one with this authority God and re-establishes order. It is therefore experienced chiefly in the form of inauthentic guilt (Durand, 1986, p. 225-226).

The second stage of moral development is characterized by the importance given to the law, to what is prescribed by a commandment. In comparison with the first stage, this second one already represents progress in moral reasoning (Goetz, 1960; Ricœur, 1967). It characterizes the moral reasoning of a nine-year old child. But, as was the case with the first stage, this one can also be found manifesting itself in adults. This second stage involves more especially a concern for what is allowed and/or forbidden by law and commandment (Durand, 1986). The idea of God corresponding to this stage of moral development is that of a legislator God who is the "foundation of the law" (Durand, 1986, p. 226). In this stage, sin is considered as "disobedience to the law or to a commandment of God" (Durand, 1986, p. 226).

> The third stage of moral development centers on the importance of self. At this stage, the priority in life is the realization of self and its personal expansion [...] Let us think of the adolescent who is searching for his identity, who sees everything through his own emotions, and is moved by the ideal of the hero. Many adults have the same attitude (Durand, 1986, p. 226).

In this stage, God appears "as the foundation of values and virtues. There is the risk of his [*sic*] being reduced to the ideal of the self and confined to my service. He [*sic*] is the guarantor of my justification and liberation. It is

[1] The author of the current article is responsible for the translation and the adaptation of different sources into English.

he [*sic*] who makes me who I am" (Durand 1986, p. 226). Here, sin is conceived as "a kind of failure or mutilation of the self" (Durand, 1986, p. 227). This stage can be exemplified by referring to two of Jung's archetypes (1959/1969). For him, all men have an "anima" and all women an "animus." What happens when an adolescent falls in love? He or she does not fall in love with a "real" human being, but with the projection of his "anima" or her "animus" onto the other person. Afterwards, if they continue beyond adolescence to remain at this stage of moral development centered in the self, they can easily fail in their relationship. They blame the other person's limits for the failure. They do not realize that they are projecting their own idealized images of a man or a woman onto another human being.

Finally, at the fourth and highest stage of moral development, there is the discovery of alterity, namely, of the importance of otherness and of connectedness. It is the relation to the other, as a real human being, that is at the heart of human maturity and the encounter with a personal God:

> The point of reference is no longer the authority or the law or the self, but other persons […] At this level God is seen as a person, as someone living, as the partner in dialogue, as an instigator of communion with himself and other people who calls on us to build a human world (Durand, 1986, p. 227).

In this last stage of moral development, "sin is perceived as a cessation or evasion of dialogue, the breaking of a relationship, unfaithfulness to a love, a refusal of God's plan for myself and the world. This is therefore the order of real guilt" (Durand, 1986, p. 227; Pieruz & Tallarico, 2009).

Though Durand's (1986) theory has been followed here, it is important to note that, independently of the specific theory of moral development which one may embrace, there are three elements common to all of them. They are that: a) moral development does not happen from A to Z "out of the blue," but follows stages; b) moral development does not proceed automatically "in crescendo," namely, it does not always follow the chronological age of the person (Martínez de Pisón, 2011); and c) most people do not reach the last stage of moral development.

If one looks at Durand's (1986) theory of moral development in relation to these three elements, one can surely say that a great majority of people remain at stage two of moral development. That is, they remain at the stage characterized by the importance given to law. The attitude characteristic of this stage is quite widely present in Western societies. For many people, if the law prescribes a behavior as legal, then it is also moral. Nevertheless, if

one looks at this from the last stage of moral development, such is not automatically the case. Here are three examples:

a) Military service. Until recently, military service was obligatory for men, and sometimes for women as well, in so many countries. However, during the middle of the 1960s there appeared the phenomenon of "conscientious objectors." They were persons who refused to serve in the army based on their strongly held moral principles. Initially, they were condemned as traitors to their countries and put in jail. But after a while, being a "conscientious objector" came to be recognized as a valid moral position one might honestly take. Rather than being condemned, those who refused to serve in the military because of their moral principles were required to serve the wider community in another way. It is of importance to note again that these conscientious objectors would previously have been considered traitors to their countries and would have been jailed because they refused to act against their consciences. Societies and their members had often in effect previously considered military service as moral without going further to consider the important role of conscience-based objection to such service.

b) Assisted death. Currently, some understand assisted death as being synonymous with "the right to die with dignity." In this understanding, under certain circumstances a person considers it a right to be helped to end that person's life. The right to die in accordance with this point of view is now in several countries confirmed in law and no longer considered illegal. Still, there are others who do not share this point of view and religious traditions which do not accept it. They see exercising this legal right as immoral.

c) Legal unions and sexual orientation. Until more recently, homosexuality was considered a kind of disease or pathological behavior. Marriage in turn was seen exclusively as the union between a man and a woman. Various religious denominations still hold such positions. However, today many consider homosexuality to be a natural state, neither a disease nor a pathology nor, again, something immoral. Many no longer regard marriage as limited to the union of a man and a woman. Rather, they also accept it as a union between two men or two women.

In each of these cases, though in varied ways, the question of conscience comes into play. Within Christian moral traditions, Saint Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274) enunciated a basic moral principle which has since become quite universally accepted: "Each person has to behave according to his or her conscience, even if that person's conscience is, from an objective point of view, wrong" (Aquinas, 1256-1259 [free adaptation]). Of course, this principle does not imply that one's conscience cannot be properly formed. In fact, the principle presumes that it should be properly formed. So, in looking

at questions of morally appropriate behavior, it is important to take into consideration three elements in or aspects of behavior in order to evaluate its quality as morally acceptable or unacceptable. These elements concern:

a) The subject (person): Does the person know of the gravity of the behavior in question? Is the person behaving consciously and intentionally?

b) The object (action) itself: Actions do not have the same gravity and effects. For example, to kill someone is not the same as to steal an apple. While both are bad and one should neither kill nor steal, there is no moral equivalency between the two.

c) The circumstances of the behavior: To kill someone because one loses control of a car in winter due bad road conditions caused by freezing rain is not the same as taking a gun and intentionally taking someone's life.

An additional consideration at play here is the fact that each person must assume moral responsibility for his or her behavior. No one can take up that responsibility for what another does. It is very important for counsellors and pastoral agents to keep this in mind when they are asked, "What do I have to do?" They can and indeed should help people come to better understand their behavior and what it involves. But they should not tell people how to behave.

Before various other factors influencing human development and in particular human moral development are considered below, it will be helpful to recall Durand (1986) has indicated that human development influences one's images of God and vice versa. Ana-María Rizzuto (1979) has likewise brought this insight to the fore. For her, from the point of view of psychoanalysis one cannot speak about God merely in general. Rather, one must take into consideration the stage at which a person has arrived in that person's development. In summary, one's perception of what it means to be a man or a woman, indeed the very way in which one esteem's oneself, has repercussions on the ways in which one comes to represent God to oneself (Rizzuto, 1979). In addition, one's representations of God are also affected by other factors such as positive or negative experiences one has in life. Consequently, the image of a kind God or of a God as merciless judge depends on one's own experience of kindness or on the fact that others have judged one without pity. This is especially true when those others play a significant role in one's own life (Kane, Cheston, & Greer, 1993; Martínez de Pisón, 1998; Nydam, 1992; Preston & Viney, 1986).

But age and the various stages in life are not the only factors influencing human and moral development. It is time now to turn to other factors.

2. A PROCESS INFLUENCED BY NATURE, CULTURE AND GENDER

Natural, socio-cultural, gender, and religious environments (Craig, 1984; Denys, 1997) affect human identity and development. For example, the image that one has of one's own parents and of one's identity as male or female condition one's perception of God (Balthazar, 2007; Heller, 1986; Stucky-Abbott, 1993).

Indeed, moral development is also shaped by one's socio-cultural, gender and religious environments (Gormly & Brodzinsky, 1993). In particular, it is important to note the influence of gender, which has been almost forgotten, perhaps better ignored, until recent times. Martin (2003) refers to what Carol Gilligan (1982) says regarding the difficulties women have in affirming themselves and making moral judgments:

> What Gilligan brought to developmental studies – startling at the time – was the idea that women and men not only develop differently but they have significantly different issues in development. What was truly radical about her study was the fact she listened attentively and, to an extent, exclusively to the voices of young women. In some ways, from our postmodern, Western perspective, it is easy to think that this is an old problem, one that has been addressed with provincial and federal legislation and more general practices of equality. After all, in Canada equality issues characterize much of our governance and workplace ethics. However, as more recent findings demonstrate, these gender concerns are still problematic and, in some cases, only beginning to be confronted (p. 71).

Besides, as Martin (2003) goes on, gender influences the language one uses to describe God and in establishing the images of God. This surely affects the ways in which women develop and relate to God. For example, the almost exclusively male categories that have been projected onto God in and due to a given patriarchal culture have impaired women's spiritual development. In such cases, the almost exclusive use of male categories has had a negative impact on women's ability to discover their own ways of relating to God.

From a psychological perspective, Leona Stucky-Abbott (1993) shows how the use of almost exclusively male images of God has negatively influenced women in the development of their identities. When believers create a male image of God and then project it onto God, they are stressing dimensions of the human that are typically male. Such dimensions include power, force, strength, and the like. Women will not easily recognize this image and these characteristics either in themselves or as being relevant to them. They will come to recognize their identity as women, at least in part, by learning that,

unlike men, they do not necessarily give special stress to these male characteristics. The images and features of God envisioned as male affect women's sense of self-identity. They feel diminished in their sense of identity and self-worth. So, in effect the image of a male God brought about in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim patriarchal cultures makes it hard for women to develop images of God which help them find ways to express their experience of the Divine based on characteristics they more positively recognize in themselves.

Today, ecology, feminism, and especially eco-feminism, challenge the patriarchal ideology that in a very negative way influenced women's relationships with creation and the consideration of who women are (Martínez de Pisón, 1997). Such critiques have led to the development of a more inclusive spirituality. Feminism is a fecund perspective on life, attitudes, and even overall ways of seeing reality. It represents one of the most significant upheavals in Western culture. It has touched all realms of life – culture, socio-economic and political structures, biblical hermeneutics, religion and, certainly, ecology. Male human beings cannot continue to subject the rest of created beings to their own possessive impulses, which in fact arise as the result of personal insecurity. Men must learn to live with women in ways that take into account their equality and their right to experience the sacred in their own ways, and to recognize the importance of learning how to live in harmony with creation. Such acting and learning are essential elements in the move from patriarchy to gender equality.

At the present moment, many aspects of life are being deeply challenged (Martin & Martínez de Pisón, 2005). Among them are, for example, Western epistemological conceptions of the world and, in a particular way, metaphysical presuppositions that advance the theory of the primacy of knowledge and reason, rooted in patriarchy. These conceptions and presuppositions have so deeply and negatively affected understandings of creation, of human beings, and the ways in which learning takes place. Acknowledging the ways in which these conceptions and presuppositions have affected knowledge, wisdom, and education is a part of the process of overcoming Modernity's destructive patriarchal and rationalist paradigms.

3. EDUCATING VERSUS MORAL INDOCTRINATION

There is an unbreakable link between human maturity and moral and religious development, between personal growth, the experience of God and the sense of sin. Consequently,

> the representation of God and Christian moral understanding correspond in large part to the degree of a person's psychic maturation. In the same way, moral experience (including the experience of sin) depends in large part on our representation of God (Durand, 1986, p. 227).

The relationship between human growth, representations of God and awareness of sin (moral development) assumes a special importance at the pastoral level. As Guindon (1989) emphasizes, that relationship invites educators

> to put more effort into the structural development of young people than into their moral indoctrination. The development of forms of discernment and moral commitments appears to be much more decisive for the spiritual development of a person than the transmitting of moral codes (p. 181).

And therapists in general need to pay more attention to gender issues when accompanying and educating those whom they are counselling (Martin, 2003; Mickens, 2012).

One of the more important challenges for education (at all its levels) is to move away from "instruction." Instruction, which we might call the Army model, is a model in which one is trained according to the standards and the rules of the institution. Such training involves following the manuals and being obedient to the commands of the superiors. In moving away from such instruction, one shifts to a more complex notion of "education." As Fernández-Armesto (2006) points out,

> A well-taught course is always self-undermining, because it imparts the gift of a rational, critical response. The best teachers produce unruly and heterodox disciples. [...] But those who think of teaching as instruction will never see that, nor perceive the potential education has for enhancing lives and changing the world (p. A2).

Education consists in forming mature human beings, namely, ones who are autonomous, free, responsible and fulfilled. Good education promotes "interdisciplinarity," "religious pluralism," and "critical thinking" (Martínez de Pisón, 2013). Seeing critical thinking as an essential component in good education and nurturing such critical thinking requires that one takes into consideration the difference Felipe Fernández-Armesto (2006) makes between "teaching" and "instruction":

> Strictly speaking, education and instruction are mutually exclusive. You instruct soldiers. You teach students. An equipment manual contains instructions, but they are not instructions for instructing. An instructor lays down rules to be obeyed;

> a teacher strews ideas to be subverted. Instructions prescribe; education provokes. Instruction is regimentation; education is liberation […] Fundamental to the notion of "instruction" is the doctrine that students must believe what teachers say. Fundamental to education is that they should question and quarry and challenge and harry it (p. A2).

To provoke and to liberate, educators need to be more personally involved in the overall learning process (Sherman, 2008). Mark Kingwell (2011) highlights the fact that intellectuals have in the process of education a duty to foster critical thinking and learning. They do so by collaboration and not by competition. In doing so, they contribute to a socio-cultural context in which democracy and freedom are a reality. It is said that the philosopher is a "friend of wisdom." Yet, "Wisdom," Eastham (1992) adds, "is not a form of knowing, but of *being*" (p. 18 [italics in the original]). Such wisdom is not opposed to but is fostered by critical thinking and reasoning. It permits human beings to live in freedom. It dismantles fundamentalist dogmatic presuppositions and overcomes ideological constraints.

The shift in emphasis from instruction to a notion of education which involves more active participation by those implicated in the process of education has an impact on the way in which religious education is understood and carried out. It is no longer seen as simply being a process consisting in correctly presenting true doctrine understood as a sort of rational religious system. Rather, it aims to move the one learning from a theoretical acceptance of religious knowledge to an encounter with the Divine and to a subsequently better-integrated way of living (Martin & Martínez de Pisón, 2005). This does not imply that one falls into some form of individualism or sentimentalism. For what is most personal and experiential is also what can be shared more deeply with others. The idea is to give more attention to that which is primary, namely, life and experience. In this revised way of carrying out religious education, one no longer remains enfolded, so to speak, in abstractions (Van Roo, 1985). As Martin (2003) underlines, "Religious education by its very nature is involved with the development of the whole person. [...] It is a study that recognizes human beings as persons created to be in relationship with the Divine and in harmony with creation" (p. 69). To foster this mission, educators are invited to find ways to provide access to a more holistic and inclusive understanding of knowledge. This understanding is one that integrates the unconscious and imagination. In effect, educators are encouraged to find ways to lead those with whom they work to wisdom.

4. CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS NOTIONS TOUCHING ON ESSENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF LIFE

Social norms and religious moral precepts have always played a fundamental role in the ways in which people encounter, understand, and come to terms with what might be called essential aspects of and challenging moments in life. Among these, for example: love and sexuality; sin and evil; suicide; memory, forgiveness, and reconciliation; suffering, death and the hereafter.

First, culture and religion deeply influence how one takes a stance vis-à-vis sexual orientation. This influence helps explain why people belonging to LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer) communities often continue to be stigmatized and condemned. This is the case despite an increasingly respectful individual and societal acceptance of others' orientations. It should be noted that adolescents who identify with one or the other of these LGBTQ orientations are more frequently at risk of engaging in suicidal behavior or even of committing suicide (Martínez de Pisón, 2006). The "official" positions of some religious traditions on such orientations often continue to create conflicts both within the individual person and at a societal level.

Second, love is at the center of human life. Some form of it is also to be found expressed at the core of most religions. People express love in various ways in their lives. One of these ways in which love finds expression is through sexual activity. Sexuality is not something added to the human being simply for reproduction only. Rather, it is an essential dimension of the human person as such. However, as is already well-known, culture and religion have influenced the way in which love and sexuality have been conceived and expressed. Until not so long ago, sexual intercourse was permitted almost exclusively in function of procreation. Another dimension of a more global vision of sexuality has been brought about by the emancipation of women from the false notion of the "sexual superiority" of men. That emancipation has led to the acknowledgment of the importance of recognizing women as sexual persons, too, rather than seeing them only as wives and/or as mothers (Martínez de Pisón, 1997). This prior recognition of women as sexual persons has given rise to a wider, more global view of sexuality.

Third, cultures and especially religions have colored the way in which sin and evil are understood. Evil was considered as the result of an "ancestral sin" (Ricœur, 1967) which negatively affected life in general. This is a more traditional understanding that has become the subject of great questioning (Martínez de Pisón, 2002).

Fourth, until quite recently the law generally criminalized and penalized committing suicide or helping to commit it. Such acts were stigmatized by society and condemned by most religions (Martínez de Pisón, 2006). But today, medicine, psychiatry, psychology, anthropology and sociology have contributed to the development of a more complete understanding of the complexities around suicide and/or suicidal behaviors. Still, suicide seems to continue to be the subject of social, cultural and religious stigmatization.

Fifth, memory plays an essential role in the process of forgiveness and reconciliation. This is the case whether the process involves individuals, groups, or institutions. Memory is such an essential element in therapy concerning forgiveness and reconciliation. For the healing of hurtful memories is rooted precisely in and involves the very capacity to remember. Consequently, "the advice to 'forgive and forget' is nonsensical. Forgiveness requires memory" (Griffith, 2002, p. 38; Martínez de Pisón, 2006, 2011). Remembering, though, is not synonymous with further self-victimization. To overcome a false understanding of forgiveness, people of faith need to address it in relationship to forgetting and to reconciliation. Jean Monbourquette (2007) deals with the importance of forgiveness in all the various dimensions of life, especially the human and the spiritual. He underscores the fact that forgiveness is neither forgetting nor denial. It is not the result of willpower, nor can it be given on command or simply signify a return to a past before the offense was committed. Forgiveness does not mean giving up victims' rights, excusing the offender, or demonstrating moral superiority. But it does involve a serious and reflective process of "letting go" of a self-destructive hanging on to such things as hatred and a desire for revenge.

Finally, illness, suffering, and death have also been related to an "ancestral sin" (Larchet, 1998). Relating suffering and ancestral sin has often been seen as an explanation for the problem of evil. However, today, this position is no longer defendable (Martínez de Pisón, 2002). At the same time, major religious traditions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, believe in the hereafter in which are finally fulfilled the desire to live forever, the need for a global integration of the different dimensions of human life, the search for harmony and reconciliation with creation, the yearning for peace and solidarity among humans, with the Divine, and with a renewed universe (Martínez de Pisón, 2007).

CONCLUSION

Life is a passionate and wonderful adventure. Yet, not all experience it in the same way. As discussed in the present article, there are many factors

which condition one's sense of what one is, the ways in which one develops and grows, and in what or in whom one believes.

Institutions like educational and/or religious ones need to pay much attention to this "work in progress" which is moral (human) development. This is a process which, when so considered, has also an enormous impact on the way in which identity is conceived today. It can truly be said that a person "is not finished yet" while still alive. Therefore, it is not fair to "freeze" or "lock" someone in a specific (and sometimes awful) situation or moment in that person's life. There is always an opportunity for change. This is the basis for hope, as expressed perhaps whimsically in the old phrase, "hope springs eternal."

But as has been pointed out in the last part of this article, social norms and religious moral precepts influence the ways in which a person evolves, humanly and morally. Such norms and precepts have a great influence on the basic ways in which life is looked at and thought of.

This overall approach to development seen as a process stretching over the course of a lifetime also has important implications for the way in which people relate to the Divine from their various spiritual and/or religious perspectives. Throughout the various stages of life, images of God and the ways in which people connect with the Transcendent change.

Finally, human moral development does not always proceed "in crescendo," namely, in a progressive way. When this way of developing is taken into consideration, it becomes easier to identify problems which may have emerged or may still be emerging in the course of this development. Then, in turn, it is easier to work with someone who seeks help through therapy, which itself is as well a process not necessarily always progressive in its movement.

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STADIA MORALNEGO (LUDZKIEGO) ROZWOJU I OBRAZY BOGA

S t r e s z c z e n i e

W ostrym przeciwieństwie do opinii wyrażonej w niektórych wcześniejszych teoriach o życiu i ludzkim rozwoju, dziś ludzki rozwój jest rozpatrywany jako „działanie na rzecz postępu". Jest on ciągłą „podróżą", w której osoba przechodzi przez różne stadia. To dynamiczne rozumienie ludzkiego rozwoju cechuje także rozwój moralny. Pierwsza część artykułu dotyczy tych spraw. Druga część skupia się na kontekstualnym podejściu do trwałości życia. Natura, dziedziczność, kultura, środowisko, gender, religia i duchowość tworzą kontekst, w obrębie którego dokonuje się rozwój moralny. Trzecia część wysuwa na plan pierwszy bardziej zapotrzebowanie kształcenia ludzi, niż ich indoktrynowanie moralne. Czwarta część udowadnia, że w dynamicznym rozumieniu moralnego rozwoju istotne jest poznawanie dróg, na których socjalne i moralne (religijne) nakazy wywierają wpływ na ludzi.

Słowa kluczowe: rozwój; dynamiczny proces; grzech; kulturowa odmienność; socjo-religijne normy i nakazy.