

## Moral Development from the Anthropological Perspective

### Christopher R. Hallpike

*Professor Christopher R. Hallpike is Professor for Anthropology at McMaster University in Canada, and presently on leave. He has conducted fieldwork in Ethiopia and Papua New Guinea. His primary interest is in social and cultural evolution, and his *Foundations of Primitive Thought* (1980) – *Die Grundlagen primitiven Denkens* (1984) – is well-known in Germany. He is now completing *The Evolution of Moral Understanding*.*

### Introduction

The idea that people have thought differently about moral issues at different periods in history is neither new nor startling. It will occur, for instance, to anyone who reads the Old and New Testaments, and was of course obvious to the pioneers of anthropology. A number of anthropologists and historians over the last hundred years established that, while the rise of civilisation need not lead to any improvement in personal behaviour, it was clearly associated with a development in how people thought about moral issues. Summarizing this research, which I have continued in my unpublished *The Evolution of Moral Understanding*, it seems that the basic ways in which moral ideas have evolved are as follows:

1. The range of moral concern has steadily extended from one's immediate kin and neighbours to include human beings as a whole. "In the early stages of ethics rights and duties do not attach to a human being as such. They attach to him as a member of a group" (Hobhouse 1906: 233).
2. The concept of duty begins simply with the proper performance of one's specific social roles. Only much later does it become the general principle of moral obligation.
3. The most elementary concept of justice is that of equal exchange, of reciprocity. Only in more complex societies does it develop more fully as the result of the evolution of formal courts and legal systems.
4. Responsibility is initially objective, with little regard for intentions, but as society becomes more complex there is increasing regard to the motives and inner states of the agent.
5. This is paralleled by a development from shame, the consciousness that one has offended against an external, social rule, to guilt, with its essential element of self-condemnation.
6. There is a general development from conventional to principled morality. "There gradually emerges the notion that goodness is something which the mind can apprehend as self-sustained and independent of external sanctions. Among simpler peoples, as described by anthropologists, the sanctions behind customary rules are relatively external and prudential" (Ginsberg 1944: 23).
7. The moralization of religion. The lack of principled morality in primitive society is one reason why its religion has little or no distinctively ethical content, but is essentially concerned with obtaining life, with health, prosperity, and victory over enemies. The natural and social worlds are seen as closely linked together. There is no idea that behaviour in this life will be punished or rewarded after death. World-renunciation only appears with literate civilization.
8. Virtue. Members of primitive societies can easily give lists of what are regarded as desirable qualities – generosity, bravery, good temper, and so on – and these are remarkably similar cross-culturally. But there is no analysis of the essential elements of character that allow people to perform well as moral agents; the virtues in primitive societies are simply lists of attributes that remain unsynthesized.
9. The self. One of the fundamental ways in which the moral consciousness of man has developed is the growing awareness of the inner life of the individual, and of the mind in its cognitive aspects, as necessary to understand why other people behave as they do, and how it would feel to be in their place.

It will be obvious from this that moral ideas cannot be separated from a broader range of ideas about society and the individual, so that moral understanding is simply one aspect of what we may call social understanding in general.

I have therefore learned much from my predecessors, but their work suffers from one important deficiency. Being unfamiliar with developmental psychology they have supposed that men in all times and places think alike and that it is only in their social circumstances that they differ. Hence the evident development in moral understanding has, for them, simply been the result of social change. Now there is no doubt that such historical innovations as agriculture, long distance trade, conquest warfare, and the emergence of the state are social and not psychological phenomena, but this alone does not mean that

psychological considerations are irrelevant in understanding the evolution of moral thought. The most obvious reason for supposing this to be true is that psychological studies of Western children by Piaget, Kohlberg, and many others, have shown that the development of their thought on moral issues has significant parallels to the ethnographic data on moral thought in primitive societies. (By "primitive society" I mean simply those societies that are preliterate, small-scale, with simple, non-monetary economies and technologies, and without centralized government.)

These resemblances would, however, be inexplicable if thought were simply the product of social and cultural circumstances. If this were so then all that psychologists would have discovered is that Western children's thought is simply less well *informed* than that of adults: it would not be qualitatively different. Furthermore, cross-cultural studies of non-Western subjects have also shown that it is possible to construct a general model of cognitive development in moral understanding regardless of culture, just as there is a general model of cognitive development in understanding the natural world. It also appears that the full extent of moral development is not attained by subjects in small-scale societies.

In other words, moral understanding has developed, like other forms of knowledge, by human experience in living together, and in dealing with new situations in the course of social evolution. Just as our understanding of nature has increased with the need to solve new and difficult problems as technology has evolved, so our understanding of ourselves has developed in the context of increasingly complex institutions. The use of psychology allows us to understand the interaction between social organization and modes of thought in a deeper way than is possible for those who suppose that modes of thought are simply determined (in some unexplained way) by social organization and technology. That kind of theory just produces static correlations between types of social organization and modes of thought. But by focusing on the kinds of problems that individuals have to deal with, and how they each construct a moral sense by interacting with each other, we are able to grasp the dynamic interaction between social organization and modes of thought which is invisible to those who try to treat culture in isolation from the human mind.

### **Social and moral understanding**

The development of moral understanding in the individual has been studied in detail by many psychologists since Piaget's seminal *The Moral Judgment of the Child* in 1932. Very briefly, their general conclusions are that children initially understand society in the form of concrete relations between individuals, in an atomistic, unsystematized fashion, yet with a rigid notion of rules and conventions. Obeying the rules is good in itself, and there is little awareness of the mental states of others, or of the mind in its cognitive aspects. The self is externally defined by size, gender, and so on, and responsibility is objective, so that punishments should be for actions rather than for motives and intentions; what is fair is an exchange, a deal.

The development of a sense of social order involves greater awareness of social roles, and the idea that what is right involves living up to the expectations of others, and having good motives. The social order is seen as authoritative, while social and natural law are not clearly distinguished. Gradually society comes to be understood in a more systematic manner, and hierarchical structures and role differentiations are understood more clearly. What is right consists in maintaining the society as a whole, and more distinction is made between intentions and actions when awarding punishment.

Finally, conventions are understood as arbitrary rules that might have been different, adopted for the general good of society, while moral principles are distinguished from custom and law. The individual is distinguished from society, and it becomes possible to think of moral obligations to all human beings, regardless of the society to which they belong. One's own society can become the subject of criticism, and hypothetical social orders discussed. The idea of the self becomes predominantly defined by psychological and spiritual attributes, and is much more differentiated and integrated; the cognitive functions of the mind are realised, and the self can be the judge of the self.

Cross-cultural studies of moral development (summarised by Snarey 1985) have shown that the higher stages of moral thought seldom occur even in adults who live in small-scale societies such as isolated tribal communities.

This research has shown that certain social factors are closely related to cognitive development in moral thought. Interaction with non-kin in an urban environment, formal schooling, involvement in commercial relations, leadership, participation in state level institutions, and experience of cultural diversity, are all stimulating factors. Schooling and formal education, where the pupils are taken out of the context of their normal daily lives, is of particular importance. It is closely involved with the ability to explain verbally one's reasons for making particular choices in test situations, and it also seems to develop the search for rules for the solution of problems, and the awareness of one's own mental operations. But it also clearly

enhances the ability to solve problems involving logical reasoning, and the use of taxonomic categories. These factors are obviously closely related to many of the features of social evolution, which should now be considered.

### **Social evolution**

The major aspects of social evolution are as follows:

1. The growth of community size, particularly as the result of agriculture, inherently produces more elaborate social structure, differentiation of social function, and hierarchical organization.
2. The development of institutions of mediation and justice promote the formulation of clear social norms, that can eventually be enforced by punishments. The centralization of legal systems is of special importance in relation to notions of law and justice.
3. Growing political centralization involves increasing functional integration and rationalization of society. A few men are now in the position of being able to survey the whole of their society and formulate policies for governing it.
4. Conquest warfare tends to produce large-scale polities, with multi-cultural populations, and this in turn creates problems in the harmonization of values and laws.
5. Trade and commerce are specially effective in breaking down the traditional structure of status obligations based on kinship and birth, and of hereditary nobility. With the developments in technology, and a monetary economy, individual choice becomes of greater importance in social life. Long distance trade, like conquest warfare, increases knowledge of other cultures. Trade and commerce are also related to
6. urbanization involves mercantile relationships, a higher division of labour, the breakdown of traditional status obligations, and multi-cultural interaction.
7. Writing, and the rise of a professional class of thinkers, an educated, literate elite, with debate, was a major factor in the development of explicit thought on ethical matters. This was also associated with
8. the growth of schooling and instruction out of the context of daily life, rather than by informal, context-based learning.

I shall now consider in more detail some of the ethnographic evidence on societies at different levels of complexity, beginning with what have been called "atomistic" societies.

### **Atomistic societies**

The simplest form of human society is that of hunter-gatherer bands, on which we have a good deal of evidence from modern ethnography. The dominant characteristics of this type of society are its small size, with each band having an average population of about 25–50, the ability of individuals to move from one band to another when social friction occurs, the lack of stable corporate groups and of formal political and judicial authority. Although headmen may exist, they are not hereditary, and their influence is essentially informal and persuasive, operating through the force of personality and example rather than from a generally accepted duty of obedience on the part of band members. While the older generation are generally respected by their juniors, neither they nor headmen have any judicial functions by which they might settle disputes. Such disputes as occur are resolved by public ridicule, mutual avoidance, physical or verbal duelling, or by vengeance. Families are the largest form of kin groups, and we do not find the clans or lineages of agricultural and pastoral societies, and there are no formal age-grouping systems. Bands, therefore, are collections of individuals, and while there is a great emphasis on reciprocity and a constant exchange of gifts between individuals and the sharing of game, ethnographers have frequently commented on the individualistic quality of these societies, the emphasis on personal autonomy and independence, and low levels of inter-personal concern and mutual assistance. (Marshall 1976: 368; Howell 1989: 38; Holmberg 1969: 260; Woodburn 1968: 91; Barry, Child, and Bacon 1959)

The absence of clear group structures such as descent groups, age-systems, or residential groups therefore means that the social order is little more than the network of actual relations between individuals. The absence of judicial authority, or of formal modes of adjudicating disputes also means that it is hard to articulate social norms in any precise way that is accepted by all, so moral judgements in individual cases tend to be relative to the personal relations of those involved in the disputes. But there may be rigid taboos governing individual behaviour.

The general impression one gets from the literature is that the moral quality of relationships is highly dependent on group membership: within the group reciprocity and cooperation are practised because of

their obvious utility to each individual, not out of any concern with the needs of others, and outsiders do not count at all and are owed no moral concern.

It has also been observed (Gardner 1961; Morris 1976, 1991) that while the members of such societies obviously have a great deal of practical knowledge of their environment, "not only are their taxonomic systems limited in scope, but they have a relative unconcern with systematization" (Morris 1976: 544). Gardner refers to this as "memorate knowledge", that is, knowledge based on personal, concrete experience, and it has been noted as a characteristic of a wide range of hunter-gatherer societies, as well as of some shifting cultivators. It extends to social relations as well as to the natural world, and Gardner, for example, says of the Paliyans, "Just as [they] have problems with natural taxonomy, they manifest difficulty providing models or rules to describe social practices such as residence" (Gardner 1966: 398). Lack of calendrical systems, and very restricted colour and numerical terms are also typical of hunter-gatherer culture.

Some shifting cultivators have a social organization that is scarcely more complex than that of band society, and I have studied one such society, the Tauade of Papua New Guinea, of which it is a fairly typical representative (Hallpike 1977). While there are "big men" in such societies, they have no power to mediate in disputes, and the general absence of mediatory institutions is a general feature of New Guinea (Koch 1974). "Big men" are at the top of society, and "rubbish men" at the bottom. Big men have several wives, many pigs, are generous, organize feasts and dances, and can kill rubbish men with impunity. Rubbish men are typically bachelors, are poor, mean, and said to like spoiling feasts and dances with fights. The pro-social (which we would call good) is thus indistinguishable from the strong, and the anti-social from the weak.

Kin groups are weakly defined; there are no formal age-systems, and elders are not respected as such, while residential groupings are like bands, with constant movements of individuals from one to another. Relations within the nuclear family are close and affectionate, but beyond the range of about first cousins social relations become reserved and suspicious, except for a few close friends, and individuals are constantly obliged to maintain a network of personal ties, dominated by reciprocity and vengeance. This is an extremely simple form of social organization, but none of my informants was able to discuss Tauade society with me or give me a general outline of its institutions. They understand their society almost entirely in the form of concrete relations between individuals, and there are not even generic terms for clan, lineage, or kinsman, and the term for "house" also means "village".

As previously mentioned, there is no formal mediation, and disputes are resolved by personal confrontation between the parties concerned, and the outcome depends on the sort of people they are and the mood they are in at the time. Avoidance is one of the basic means of social control, as in band society. They do not recognise the concept of "accidental homicide", and I have numerous accounts of vengeance having been taken for what was clearly accidental killing. Vengeance is only one aspect of reciprocity or "pay-back", *kakit*, which also means any kind of gift exchange, and pervades their society. Shame, *katet*, is also a basic undercurrent of their lives, and they can definitely be described as a "shame" rather than a "guilt" culture. So truthfulness, for example, is not a general obligation, and while it is insulting to tell a man he is lying, the insult consists in saying it to his face. As in the case of theft and adultery, the real shame lies in being caught, not in the act itself.

Read (1955: 255) notes of the Gahuku-Gama that "there is no clearly recognized distinction between the individual and the status he occupies". Thus the individual is not bound by any moral obligations to those outside his own group, and it is permissible to steal from them and kill them. Even within the group, the justification for behaving properly seems to be essentially prudential: "people do not appeal to abstract principles, but rather emphasise the practical consequences of moral deviation. Instead of saying that it is "good" or "right" to help others, they state simply that if you do not help others, others won't help you" (Read 1955: 255).

It was extremely difficult to elicit any value judgements from my Tauade informants beyond vague categories of good/bad or, more frequently, weak/strong. Read encountered a similar unwillingness among the Gahuku-Gama, and this seems to be typical of Papua New Guinea societies as a whole. Religious beliefs have no importance in the control of behaviour, and are as unsystematic and unformalized as their social organization. Tauade culture also conforms to Gardner's and Morris's model of "memorate culture" in other ways. Colour terms are idiosyncratic and unsystematic and related to the hues of specific objects; they have no numerals beyond "single" and "pair", and any counting is done on fingers and toes. There is no calendar or any form of time-reckoning, and they have no general spatial indicators at all. While they have names for various plants, trees, animals, and birds, these are not integrated into a general taxonomic system, and there is little in the way of a general symbolic ordering of the natural and social worlds.

## Corporate order

The shift to agriculture inherently allows larger and more permanent groups to form, and I shall refer to these societies as based on "corporate order". While this process may take many centuries, the need to cope with exponential increases in social relationships and the new forms of property in land and stock produce profound changes in the social order.

If human beings are to live permanently in groups of more than 50 to 100 people, they apparently have to change their own rules. People who live in large, permanent groups must find ways of dealing with neighbours too numerous to be known individually. One of the major steps facilitating progress to larger group size appears to have been the development of systems to categorize, identify, and stereotype group members. (Cohen 1989: 23–24)

These groups typically become formed into structures of a hierarchical nature, such as segmentary descent groups, age-group systems, complex residential divisions, and occupational distinctions such as priests, warriors, and farmers. Smiths, potters, and other craftsmen are also often distinguished from farmers and take on hereditary status, and these institutions form a complex order which is almost invariably linked by a rich symbolism with cosmological and religious beliefs. Taxonomic, calendrical, and numerical systems become much more elaborate.

Political and judicial authority develop greatly, especially on the basis of descent, birth order, and relative age, and in association with religious status, so that disputes come to be settled by recognized officials in accordance with generally accepted norms. There is punishment by duly constituted authority, and it is now possible for crimes to be distinguished from torts.

In these societies it becomes very much easier for individuals to think of one another in terms of their social roles and their associated duties, and hence to judge the behaviour of others in terms of their fulfilment of role obligations. The development of formal institutions to adjudicate disputes also allows social norms to be more clearly articulated, so that moral judgements can be given a more objective, non-relativistic basis in terms of the social order, rather than the personal relations of friendship and enmity between the individual disputants that we find in atomistic society. Dilemmas, however, centre on ambiguities of *status* – the elder who behaves badly, the young man who displays wisdom beyond his years – not on general problems of duty or justice.

Images of order therefore dominate tribal societies. The Konso of Ethiopia (Hallpike 1972), for example, have the word *piita* which can mean "soil" or "earth", but also "land" or "country". In this sense it is said of their Amhara conquerors that they "spoil the land", *piita nyapalishe*, not because they rendered it infertile, or poisoned the wells, but in the sense that they disrupted the proper order of society by exploitation and arbitrary violence. What people should and should not do in such a traditional order is prescribed in terms of status, and this provides a firm basis by which individuals can decide what they should do in a variety of situations.

God, Waqa, is seen as maintaining the social as well as the physical order, so that if people are good they will prosper. "I heard the elders of long ago. They said "Let people listen to one another. If they listen, God will send rain, and ripen the sorghum, and people will be born... They bring back a wife from another lineage, and when she has settled in she obeys her husband and tills the family fields, and brings fodder for the cattle..." and so on. Such common expressions as *porra koteeta*, "the way to behave", and *akama achaato*, "how you should live", are essentially appeals to people's knowledge of this conventional order in which "the way to behave" does not need detailed individual calculations with reference to abstract ethical concepts like "duty", "justice", or "virtue".

But in urban, politically centralized society, with a market economy, it is possible for the authorities to act in dishonest ways that create severe moral dilemmas for the virtuous individual, and require him to think hard about ethical issues. I encountered an example of this sort of situation among the Konso when I returned to them last year. In the modern Konso capital of Karate a young Christian Konso was employed as a government store-keeper. One day, he was asked to sign a receipt for some barrels of food-oil that had not in fact been delivered to the store, but had been stolen before their arrival. He told the missionary that he had wrestled the whole night with God, and quoted to him a biblical text about things which could be a benefit for a time, but which then proved to be a curse. He finally refused to sign the receipt, and lost his job. But it is difficult to imagine a comparable dilemma in traditional Konso society because no one would have had the power to dismiss someone from a job, there were no paid jobs anyway, and resources were not distributed by a central agency.

A good example of the sort of general ethical principle that is relevant in complex societies is the golden rule, but one does not find an explicit recognition of this in tribal society. The Konso have encountered it in recent years through Christianity, and it is very illuminating to see how they construe it. The following is

a commentary by an educated Konso Christian, Ato Korra Gara, on Mt. 7.12, "Do to others what you want them to do to you".

Do not wish the harm that you don't want for yourself to happen to others. What you wish a man to do to you, do the same for him. That means, for example, if you have a problem, and want someone to help you with that problem, you help him in the same way. As you have a problem, and ask for help about it, don't forget that everyone who has a problem needs help like you.

It is clear that the basic emphasis here is not the individual who is searching for a general rule of how to behave to others, and who thus mentally changes place with them. On the contrary, the exposition is firmly based on the realities of social life, and the need for mutual assistance in a small rural community, and is essentially prudential in spirit.

I therefore found no terms for "duty" or "obligation". *Kota*, which means "work", or "job", is similar to the Latin *officium*, which was later extended by Cicero and other philosophers to mean "duty" in an abstract sense. Like *officium*, *kota* could, in a future Christian context, perhaps be given a more generalized significance: "What is the *kota* of man?": "To obey the Ten Commandments", but it is certainly not used like this at present.

Nor could I discover any term for "justice". There is a word *orissa*, meaning an answer, response, or repayment of some kind, like Tauade *kakit*, but it has no general moral significance. Writing of Homeric society, Havelock says

... if justice be identified as the central concept of modern morality, conceptually defined, oral societies could get along very well without it. What they did rely on for coherence – as does any society – was a set of proprieties, of general rules of behaviour which in sum total constitute "what is right" ... these rules are not abstracted from what is done ... and they need not add up to a system which can be consistently formulated. (Havelock 1978: 53)

So, in the Homeric world, those who were not *dikaioi*, "just", were not those who failed to solve dilemmas about justice, but those "who behaved wantonly, recklessly, in disregard of the rules" (Havelock 1978: 183), and this would be an accurate statement of the Konso view as well.

There is also no word in the Konso language that could be translated as "virtue". *Xalpeeta* means "character" or "behaviour", but it has not been developed to mean anything like "general excellence as a human being", or "moral goodness", that could be used in ethical argument, or be the subject of such a question as "What is virtue?". They can, of course, like all peoples, give lists of what we would call "virtues" – good temper, bravery, generosity, and so on – but these are simply an indefinite list, of the type that Kohlberg calls a "bag" of virtues. There is no attempt to sort out some of these qualities as more important than others, or to integrate them into a coherent conception of excellence as a human being. Nor is there any exploration of the inner self and its complexities, of a psychological kind. While they are obviously aware that people have motives and intentions, and they distinguish, for example, between accidental and deliberate homicide, no one ever attempted to explain anyone's behaviour to me by reference to what he or she might have been thinking or feeling at the time. And there is certainly no awareness of the "mind", as the cognitive means by which experience is processed.

The most important word of general ethical significance among the Konso is *dukaata*, "truth". Apart from meaning a statement that is factually true, *dukaata* implies the opposite of the lie, and therefore connotes honesty and uprightness in general. The Konso are thoroughly typical of tribal societies and early states in the great importance they ascribe to this concept, because truth is one of the essential facets of order. When all speak the truth harmony is possible, whereas the lie is one of the main roots of disorder and confusion, and the liar is the self-centred person who breaks the rules. The truth is also the predictable, the reliable, and that which makes cooperation possible. In the Konso language *dehamta*, "discussion", links the concept of truth to that of peace, *nakayta*, "when all speak with one voice", and which implies not only social harmony but general prosperity.

In tribal societies this order is essentially ascriptive, that is, based on specific institutions of descent and kinship, birth order, relative age, and gender, and so it is difficult for outsiders to be included in the same moral order.

T. O. Beidelman says of another African people:

At the broadest level, Kaguru contrast their land and themselves with outsiders, with strangers whose language, diet, and customs are different. Kaguru undertake marriage and alliances among their own kind. Outsiders are unknown and uncontrollable... Various modes of culture and order, especially those involving the processing and consumption of food, are contrasted with the raw aspects of wild beasts. (Beidelman 1986: 29) ... In many popular Kaguru tales baboons don clothing and try to dupe humans into accepting them into society. Eventually their tails, hairiness, and rough eating habits (eating raw food and eating in a slovenly manner) betray them and lead humans to drive them back into the bush. (Beidelman 1986: 36)

While the Konso, unlike the Tauade, had a range of terms for descent, age, and residential groupings and categories, my informants could not describe their institutions for me in any general way, and I had to construct the age-system, the kinship system, and so on from a long series of questions and observations. In these societies the moral system cannot be distinguished from the corporate order itself, which cannot therefore be assessed by any criteria independent of that order. "The traditional way of life is hence taken for granted and there is no critical assessment of the validity or usefulness of customary practices and beliefs" (von Furer-Haimendorf 1967: 208). From within the society itself there is therefore no independent intellectual ground on which to base any abstract critique of that order as unjust or otherwise morally deficient. This has to await a more complex organization of society, the state, and a breakdown of corporate order.

### The state

The emergence of the state has important implications for the development of moral ideas. State societies are much larger than those of tribes, and there appears universally the problem of the oppression of the poor by the rich. In early states justice figures prominently as a dominant moral value, and there are innumerable references to the oppression of the small by the great and the poor by the rich, and the prime duty of the king to prevent this. Correspondingly, ideas of law become more articulate as well.

But early states can still be culturally fairly homogeneous, and the economy and commercial relations may also remain fairly simple. It is with the development of larger multi-ethnic polities and commercial relations that we find an associated development of moral thought in the ancient world, which is repeated with the rise of Islam, and again in medieval Europe.

The disruptive effects of war and anarchy, technological change, commercial development, class conflict, and increasing contact with other societies can be observed in many societies of the ancient world. In Egypt during the First and Second Intermediate Periods, and in China after the fall of the Western Chou during the Spring and Autumn, and the Warring States Periods (Hsu 1965; Munro 1969; Kroll 1985–1987). In Israel the social order established by David and Solomon became severely disrupted by political oppression and economic development, and resulting class conflict, by the threat and ultimate reality of foreign conquest, and the traditional clan structure was eroded by increasing state centralization, urbanization and the growth of commerce (Martin 1989; Halpern 1991; Whitelam 1979; Ackroyd 1968). India in the sixth century BC was marked by major social upheaval resulting from technological change, urbanization, trade, and warfare related to the rise of the powerful states of Maghada and Kosala (Gomez 1987; Misra 1972; Thapar 1975; Rhys Davids 1955). At the same period in Greece increased trade, urbanization, the questioning of aristocratic values, and warfare were closely involved in major social unrest. Christianity emerged in the troubled and complex society of Roman Palestine, and much later the rise of Islam occurred in the context of the clash of the urban and mercantile values of Mecca with the traditional tribal values of the desert. Later still, in medieval Europe of the 11th and 12th centuries, we find many of the same social processes repeated yet again.

Debate between specialist thinkers, in particular, is one of the key features of this new order, and is an essential factor in the new intellectual level of moral thought. Momigliano says of these developments in the ancient world:

All these civilizations display literacy, a complex political organization combining central government and local authority, elaborate town planning, advanced metal technology, and the practice of international diplomacy. In all these civilizations there is a profound tension between political powers and intellectual movements. Everywhere one notices attempts to introduce greater purity, greater justice, greater perfection and a more universal explanation of things. New models of reality, either mystically or prophetically or rationally apprehended, are propounded as a criticism of, and alternative to, the prevailing models. We are in the age of criticism... (Momigliano 1975: 8–9)

These societies therefore produced a new range of dilemmas relating to the morality of international relations and conquest, hereditary rank and authority, the reconciliation of divergent laws and customs, and commercial morality. The main features of the new types of moral systems that grew up are as follows:

1. The concepts of Righteousness/Justice/Truth – the precise emphasis varies – are extended beyond the thinker's own society, and become universal, even cosmic, principles of moral order, valid for all societies. A permanent tension is therefore established between the eternal moral law and the institutions of actual societies. It is not simply specific social injustices such as oppression of the poor and weak which are condemned, but we find that kingship and social class, and indeed the need for society at all become the subject of speculation and ethical justification.

2. In other words, society itself becomes an object of thought, and models of ideal societies are formulated. These debates focus on such issues as the authority of government, the difference between natural law and the law of the state, whether the state should be governed by the moral example of the ruler or by clear laws rigorously enforced, and the source of the moral law itself: is it from nature, or from Heaven or God, or is it a human invention?
3. World rejection is a universal feature of this new attitude to life, and is expressed not only in movements of religious renunciation, but more generally in the questioning of the belief that material prosperity and social success are the supreme goods.
4. Popular opinion or traditional authority are no longer treated as the obvious and only guides to proper conduct, and there is a new opposition between conventional opinion and the critical views of an intellectual elite of experts or sages. The claims of conscience in the face of social pressure to conform become more clearly recognized.
5. Thus we find a growing awareness of the inner life of the individual. This manifests itself in a new consciousness of the need for self-awareness, and "know thyself" becomes, in one form or another, a general maxim. Intentions and motives are closely scrutinized, and an increasingly sophisticated range of psychological concepts develops.
6. The question "What is virtue?" becomes central, and there is a clear progression from the notion of the virtues as a "bag" of socially desirable attributes to concentration upon a few essential virtues which are the necessary excellences for all human beings as moral agents, and schemes of the virtues form an integrated whole. One of the most important features of these schemes is the belief that the body and its desires must be subordinated to the higher elements of mind and soul. The moral life is increasingly seen as a slow struggle to develop one's character by bringing one's desires into harmony with the right, and the image of the path or way becomes a predominant symbol of this dynamic model of the moral life as a series of choices lasting until death. (All the ancient moral systems agree on the centrality of virtue, and there is an inherent opposition between virtue-based ethical systems, and those based on rules.)
7. Wisdom is an essential aspect of this moral growth, by which the moral agent comes to understand what is truly right, and by so doing obtains tranquillity of mind and true happiness and, in a religious context, salvation.
8. The topic of human nature is generally discussed, both in relation to virtue and to speculation about society, and forms one of the essential foundations for the idea of a universal morality transcending the limitations of one's own society.
9. There is everywhere a major extension of the morality of the "good" – of benevolence, mercy, and compassion – towards all men, not just to members of one's own society or even culture. The ethics of retaliation are part of this development: not only is revenge often deprecated, but we find several traditions advocating the ideal of benevolence even to one's enemies.
10. There is the growth of the idea of a common humanity which transcends the boundaries of nation and culture and social distinctions of rank, such as slavery, so that all good men are brothers, and the ideal condition of man would be universal peace.
11. Religion becomes thoroughly permeated with moral values, and the salvation of one's soul is dependent on one's personal virtue and good deeds alone.

It is not suggested, of course, that these ideas were widely accepted or even understood among the ordinary people of the time, but while they were produced by an intellectual elite, this was the first time in history that they appeared.

## Conclusions

While this paper can only attempt a very brief survey of a vast subject, I have tried to show that moral ideas do not just vary randomly from society in some culturally relative fashion. Social life and its associated technology impose certain fundamental constraints on the ways in which we interact with one another and with the physical world and, moreover, these constraints have operated in a cumulative manner throughout history. For analytical purposes it is useful to represent this developmental process as a series of social and cognitive stages, though of course these are ideal types and not concrete entities in the real world.

It seems clear that there are important resemblances between the stages of individual cognitive growth and the stages of moral development and social evolution. The basic reasons for the correspondence between the findings of developmental psychologists and those of anthropologists and historians can only be that culture, of course, is transmitted by individuals, and it is therefore the problems that these individuals face in their daily lives, and their modes of social interaction, that are the common link

between their cognitive development and the institutions and beliefs that they introduce and maintain. Simple societies produce simple problems and so require less cognitive development than more complex societies, whose dilemmas can only be resolved by conceptually more powerful means.

## Bibliography

- Ackroyd, P. (1968) *Exile and Restoration: Hebrew Thought in the Sixth Century BC*. London: SCM Press
- Barry, H., Child, I., & Bacon, M. K. (1959) 'The relation of child training to subsistence economy'. *American Anthropologist* 61, 51 – 63
- Beidelman, T. O. (1986) *Moral Imagination in Kaguru Modes of Thought*. Indiana University press
- Cohen, M. N. (1989) *Health and the Rise of Civilization*. Yale University Press
- von Furer-Haimendorf, C. (1967) *Morals and Merit*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson
- Gardner, P. M. (1966) 'Symmetric respect and memorate knowledge'. *Southwestern J. Anthropol.* 22, 389 – 415
- Ginsberg, M. (1944) *Moral Progress*. Frazer Lecture. Glasgow University Press
- Gomez, L. O. (1987) 'Buddhism in India'. *Encyclopaedia of Religion*. Ed. M. Eliade, 2, 351 – 385, New York: Macmillan
- Hallpike, C. R. (1972) *The Konso of Ethiopia*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Hallpike, C. R. (1977) *Bloodshed and Vengeance in the Papuan Mountains*. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Hallpike, C. R. (n.d.) *The Evolution of Moral Understanding*
- Halpern, B. (1991) 'Jerusalem and the lineages in the seventh century BCE: kinship and the rise of individual moral liability'. *Law and Ideology in Monarchic Israel*. Eds. B. Halpern ... 11 – 107, Sheffield: JSOT Press
- Havelock, E. A. (1978) *The Greek Concept of Justice. From its shadow in Homer to its substance in Plato*. Harvard University Press
- Hobhouse, L. T. (1906) *Morals in Evolution*. London: Chapman & Hall
- Holmberg, A. (1969) *Nomads of the Long Bow. The Siriono of Eastern Bolivia*. New York: Natural History Press
- Howell, S. (1989) *Society and Cosmos. The Chewong of Peninsular Malaysia*. 2nd edn. Oxford: Clarendon Press
- Hsu, Cho-yun (1965) *Ancient China in Transition. An analysis of social mobility 722 – 222 BC*. Stanford University Press
- Koch, K.-F. (1974) *War and Peace in Jalemo. The management of conflict in Highland New Guinea*. Harvard University Press
- Kroll, J. L. (1985 – 1987) 'Disputation in early Chinese culture'. *Early China*, 11 – 12, 118 – 45
- Marshall, L. (1976) 'Sharing, talking, and giving: relief of social tension among the !Kung'. *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers*. Eds. R. B. Lee & I. DeVore, 349-71. Harvard University Press
- Martin, J. D. (1989) 'Israel as a tribal society'. *The World of Ancient Israel*. Ed. R. E. Clements, 95 – 117. Cambridge University Press
- Misra, G. S. P. (1972) *The Age of the Vinaya. A historical and cultural study*. New Delhi
- Momigliano, A. (1975) *Alien Wisdom. The limits of Hellenization*. Cambridge University Press
- Morris, B. (1976) 'Whither the savage mind? Notes on the natural taxonomies of a hunting and gathering people'. *Man* (n. s.) 11, 542 – 557
- Morris, B. (1991) *Western Conceptions of the Individual*. New York: Berg
- Munro, D. S. (1969) *The Concept of Man in Early China*. Stanford University Press
- Piaget, J. (1932) *The Moral Judgment of the Child*. Tr. M. Gabain. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul
- Read, K.E. (1955) 'Morality and the conception of the person among the Gahuku-Gama'. *Oceania* 25 (4), 233 – 282
- Rhys Davids, T. W. (1955) *Buddhist India*. Calcutta: Susil Gupta
- Snarey, J. R. (1985) 'Cross-cultural universality of social-moral development: a critical review of Kohlbergian research'. *Psychological Bulletin* 97, 202 – 232
- Thapar, R. (1975) 'Ethics, religion, and social protest in the first millennium BC in Northern India'. *Daedalus* 104 (2), 119 – 132
- Whitelam, K. W. (1989) 'Israelite kingship. The royal ideology and its opponents'. *The World of Ancient Israel*. Ed. R. E. Clements, 119 – 139. Cambridge University Press
- Woodburn, J. (1968) Discussion in *Man the Hunter*. Eds. R. B. Lee & I. DeVore, 91. Chicago: Aldine