

**THE MORAL JUDGMENT DEVELOPMENT  
OF THE CHINESE PEOPLE:  
A THEORETICAL MODEL**

*Hing Keung Ma*

*Abstract*

A seven stage theory of moral judgment development for the Chinese people is constructed. The seven stages are: (1) obedience and Egoism. (2) Instrumental Purpose and Opportunistic Hedonism. (3) Primary Group Affection and Conformity. (4) Golden Mean Orientation and Social System. (5) Utilitarianism and Basic Rights. (6) *Jen* and Universal Ethical Principles. (7) (a) Sainted Altruism and (b) Taoistic Non-Valuative Judgment. Major Chinese thoughts (e.g., Confucianism and Taoism) are used to elaborate some of the characteristics of the stages. The model places more emphasis on the affective aspect of moral development in comparison to Piaget and Kohlberg's theories.

The present study attempts to establish a theoretical foundation for the psychological study of the development of moral judgment in Chinese people. The western theories of moral development by Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1981, 1984) as well as the Chinese perspectives on moral development (e.g., Confucianism and Taoism) are integrated into a single model. An earlier version of the present model appeared in the *International Journal of Psychology* (see Ma, 1988).

A seven-stage model of moral judgment is proposed. The following are the major features of the theoretical model: (1) The first six stages are parallel to Kohlberg's (1981) six-stage theory of moral judgment. It is argued that the degree of cultural universality of the moral judgment stages tends to be large for the lower stages and small for the higher stages (for a review of the cross-cultural studies of Kohlberg's stages, see

Snarey, 1985). In other words, the higher the stage, the larger the cultural difference. Apart from the description of the principle of opportunistic hedonism in the Stage 2 structure, the first two stages in the present model are quite similar to the first two stages in Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) theory. The main differences between our stages and those of Kohlberg begins at the Stage 3, and these differences become larger towards the higher stages. (2) Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) theory has been criticized to neglect the affective aspect of moral development (Gilligan, 1982; Peters, 1971). Chinese tend to emphasize on both the Ch'ing (humanity, human heartedness, affection) and Li (reason) in their moral thinking or judgment. So, it is natural that the present model places more emphasis on the affective aspect of moral development in comparison to the traditional cognitive developmental approach. (3) The Stage 7 consists of two sub-stages: (A) Sainted Altruism, which is based on the Buddhist perspective on empathy for those in distress and painful suffering (Tachibana, 1975). Kohlberg's (1974, 1981) Stage 7 of agape is also relevant here. (B) Non-Valuative Judgment, which is based on the Taoistic philosophy established by the ancient Chinese philosophers, Lau Tzu and Chuang Tzu (Ma, 1990). Generally speaking, the Stage 7A is more concerned with one's profound affection for human beings and other living things, whereas the Stage 7B places more emphasis on the transcendence of oneself. In other words, the Stage 7A is more concerned with the affective human relationships and collectivistic responsibility, and the judgment tends to be toward the society or toward the world. On the other hand, the Stage 7B is more individualistic and transcendent, and the judgment tends to be away from the society. It should be noted that the Stages 5 and 6 in Ma (1988) have been greatly revised in the present study. The concepts of *Jen* in the old Stage 5 and the Taoistic Non-valuative judgment in the old Stage 6 have been restructured to the Stages 6 and 7B in the present model.

### *Stage 1: Obedience and Egoism*

People at this stage tend to be egocentric, and obedient to authorities. They also place more emphasis on one's physical survival and safety needs rather than belonging, love and esteem needs (for a hierarchy of basic needs, see Maslow, 1970).

### (1) Obedience to authorities

One main reason for a person to obey what the authorities command is to avoid physical punishment. Other reasons identified by Piaget (1932) and Lickona (1976) include the following ones: (a) Unilateral respect to parents: It refers to the one-sided respect paid by a child to his or her parents or authorities in the process of conforming his or her behavior to the adults' constraints. (b) Immanent Justice: It refers to the belief in "the existence of automatic punishments which emanate from things themselves" (Piaget, 1932, p.250). The basic assumption of the principle of immanent justice is that natural forces are always in the hands of adults and ensure that the disobedient will be punished. (c) The child takes the assumption that moral rules are external and rooted in adults and authorities. It follows naturally that those who are punished by adults must have done something wrong. (d) The child believes in expiatory or arbitrary punishment. He thinks that "the only way of putting things right is to bring the individual (wrong doer) back to his duty by means of a sufficiently powerful method of coercion and to bring home his guilt to him by means of painful punishment" (Piaget, 1932, p.203). The form of punishment can be arbitrarily determined by adults. (e) The child believes in retributive justice which means that each person should be awarded according to the arbitrary and unequal distribution of rewards by adults. (f) The child believes that one should not take one's revenge because there is a more legitimate way to report the aggression to adults and they would punish the aggressor fairly.

### (2) Egocentric viewpoint

The children at this stage often find difficulty in understanding differences in points of view between themselves and others. In other words, they are not aware of other's reasoning from a third-person perspective. They also confuse the authority's perspective with their own (Kohlberg, 1976, p.34).

### (3) Rules as unchangeable

For young children, rules are fixed and unchangeable. They would not change a rule because of the intention of the actor or the unexpected

situational variables. "A rule is therefore not in any way something elaborated, or even judged and interpreted by the mind; it is given as such, ready made and external to the mind" (Piaget, 1932, p.106).

#### (4) Selfish Orientation

People at this stage are egocentric and selfish. They tend to seek pleasure and avoid pain, very often at the expenses of others. As the ancient Chinese philosopher Yang Chu argued, unless people look out for themselves, Heaven and Earth will destroy them. They would act altruistically only to gain approval or to avoid punishment by authorities (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 17; Sharabany & Bar-Tal, 1982, p. 67).

#### *Stage 2: Instrumental Purpose and Opportunistic Hedonism*

The construction of this stage is based on Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) Stage 2: Individualism, Instrumental Purpose and Exchange and Loevinger's (1976) concept of opportunistic hedonism. People at this stage tend to act with an instrumental purpose to serve their own interests, and they are often Machiavellian in getting what they want. On the other hand, equal exchanges are regarded as fair and acceptable so long as these acts of exchange serve to meet their own needs and interests.

#### (1) Equal Exchange

People at this stage understand that other people also have similar needs and interests as themselves and therefore they regard equal exchange, fair deal or reciprocally altruistic behavior as right act. They also "have a clear sense of fairness as quantitative equality in exchange and distribution between individual" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 148). The idea of equal exchange is clearly expressed in the following descriptions: (a) "You shouldn't hurt or interfere with me, and I shouldn't hurt or interfere with you" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 148). (b) "You scratch my back and I scratch yours". (c) "You help me today and I will help you tomorrow in return".

## (2) Instrumental Purpose

Acts are usually regarded as instrumental means to serve one's needs and interests. For instance, people at this stage tend to help others who are in desperate situation because they expect others to do the same for them someday. On the other hand, if the situation does not clearly indicate that such help would bring more benefits than costs to the actor in the long run, then the actor would stick to the rule "mind your own business" or "let things drift if they do not affect one personally", and he/she would not act to help the victims.

## (3) Concrete Materialistic and Individualistic Perspective

The contents of the exchange or the deal are often concrete or materialistic things such as money or food, or things which are perceived as good to serve one's own needs or interests such as praise from authorities. The perspective of judgment is individualistic; self-interests precede group or others' interests.

It should be noted that things that are too general or abstract such as basic rights of human beings are seldom considered or valued in the exchange or deal.

## (4) Ignoring Other's Positive Claims and Welfare

Since people at this stage are holding a concrete individualistic perspective, the positive claims or welfare of others are in general not their concern unless such claims and welfare are part of the exchange or deal. In other words, "one has a right to ignore the positive claims or welfare of others as long as one does not directly violate their freedom or injure them" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 215).

## (5) Opportunistic Hedonism

People at this stage also believe that "life is a zero-sum game; what one person gains, someone else has to lose" (Loevinger, 1976, p.17). It is of course better to gain for oneself and to let others lose. To put it in an extreme form, it means that it is better for others to die and for me to live, if necessary. In other words, they are Machiavellian in maintaining

their survival and getting what they want. That is, in order to survive or to get what they want, they would consider to use any means, whether the means is legitimate or not. In addition, "work is perceived as onerous. The good life is the easy life with lots of money and nice things" (Loevinger, 1976, p.17). The idea is that one should try to get a lot just by paying little or no effort. Generally speaking, they act or survive by the principle of opportunistic hedonism.

### *Stage 3: Primary Group Affection and Conformity*

Primary group refers to family, gang, group of friends or intimates, club, school, party, organization, company etc. Generally speaking, members of a primary group share common interests, philosophy, ideology and in some cases properties. Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) Stage 3: "Mutual Interpersonal Expectations, Relationships, and Interpersonal Conformity", and Chinese Cardinal Relationships and family affection are the major bases for elaborating the characteristics of this stage.

#### (1) Meeting the Group's Expectation

People at this stage would live up to "what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect of people in your role as son, brother, friend, etc." (Kohlberg, 1976, p. 34). In other words, the right behavior are those which can earn approval from the group. In short, it is a "good-boy-nice-girl orientation" (Kohlberg, 1981, p.18).

#### (2) The Authority of Group Leader

The rules governing the group members' behavior are often made and administered by the group leaders, sometimes in consultation with the group members. What is right at this stage is then to be loyal to the group, to trust and respect the leaders, and to follow the rules set by the leaders. If conflict occurs, the leaders have final say and people at this stage would suppress or give up their own opinion and stick to the group's rule or the leader's decision. Group order is basically maintained by a style similar to parental control over children.

### (3) Family Affection and Primary Group Altruism

The study of altruism in terms of kin selection and group selection in sociobiology is a good example of primary group altruism. Sociobiology, as defined by Wilson (1975), is "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior" (p. 4). Its central theoretical problem is "how can altruism, which by definition reduced personal fitness, possibly evolve by natural selection?" (Wilson, 1975, p. 3) The answer provided by sociobiologists is kinship. As mentioned before, the evolution of altruism involves mainly group selection and kin selection.

People at this stage are willing to perform altruistic acts towards in-group members at great sacrifices, however, they are much less willing to do so for out-group members.

Chinese emphasize on family integrity, and group intimacy and loyalty. Children are taught to be affective and altruistic to their primary group members (Ho, 1986). In a cross-cultural study, Ma (1989) found that Chinese subjects showed a stronger orientation to perform affective and altruistic acts to first kin, close relatives, best friends than did the English counterparts. Chinese are also influenced by the concept of Five Cardinal Relationships in Confucianism which emphasizes a harmonious relationship "between emperor and subject, between father and son, between husband and wife, between brothers, and between friends" (Hsu, 1970, p. 358). Generally speaking, the concept of cardinal relationships promotes intimacy and loyalty between oneself and the significant others. In other words, it helps to reinforce primary group altruism.

#### *Stage 4: Golden Mean Orientation and Social System*

The Golden (Happy) Mean is the halfway between two extremes. It refers to a tendency to behave in a way that the majority of people in the society would behave, or a tendency to behave in a way that the majority would regard as right or proper. Broadly speaking, consensus, propriety, norms, laws or social institutions are formed in a way reflecting the general or average opinion, philosophy, rightness or interests of the majority of people in the society. Thus, consensus, propriety, norms, laws or social institutions could be regarded as Golden Means. The

Golden Mean of Reconciliation, Norm of Filial Piety, and Norm of Social Altruism will be described below.

(1) Social order and prosperity

The general expectation of people in a society is to maintain the stability and prosperity of the society. People at this stage would regard anything that contributes to the stability and prosperity of the society as right and good. The majority's opinion and interests precede individual's opinions and interests. In contrast to Western people who hold an individualistic perspective, the Chinese hold a strong collectivistic perspective which gives individuals less freedom to develop their idiosyncratic characteristics and personal opinions. In other words, group orientation and group conformity prevails among Chinese at this stage.

(2) Consensus, norm and propriety

The criteria for differentiating right from wrong are based on general consensus, social norms, propriety and traditional rules. People at this stage would live up to what is expected by the majority of people in society. Thus, what is right is what the majority regard as right or what the social norms or traditional rules prescribe.

Chinese norms are usually rigid and inflexible, and Chinese are very stubborn in living up to what is expected by the majority, that is by consensus, norms and propriety. There may be two reasons in accounting for this: (i) The long history of Chinese culture and civilization has left behind lots of virtues, wisdom and traditions which become a strong basis for formation of social norms and propriety in a Chinese society. These Chinese traditions often become important contents of socialization (e.g., basis for child-rearing and school teaching) for Chinese children. Thus, Chinese are brought up by rigid and well-established norms which are in bondage to the past. (ii) The face or self-esteem of the Chinese is both strong and delicate. Strong in the sense that the face of the Chinese appears to be sacred, invulnerable and non-negotiable; and delicate in the sense that it is terribly easy to be hurt. For example, if a person has committed a crime and is caught by the police, then not only would the actor lose his/her face, but also his<sup>1</sup> 3 4 or social norms. It is therefore important to follow closely the social norms in order to keep one's face

or maintain one's self-esteem.

### (3) Golden Mean of Reconciliation

Whenever conflict arises, Chinese tend to resolve conflicts by a soft, tolerating, compromising and less disturbing attitude. "Reconciliation is precious" is one of the Chinese Golden Means. Such a tolerating and compromising attitude would mean that Chinese tend to resolve conflicts outside courts or police stations, that is to resolve conflicts in a less officiated or institutionalized way. "Reconcile big conflicts into small ones, and small ones into none" is the behavior guide of the Chinese at this stage.

### (4) Norm of Filial Piety

Whether the Chinese like it or not, the social norm prescribes them to uphold a strong kinship bondage throughout the whole life span. When they are young, they attach to their parents and grandparents, and when they grow up into adulthood, they attach to their own children, parents, and sometimes grandparents too. General consensus does not allow Chinese people to give up their responsibility or filial piety to their aged parents when they grow up, get married and have their own children. When the norm of filial piety is in conflict with one's interests, one's self-actualization tendency or other psychological needs, one still has to live up to the norm.

The Norm of Filial Piety has a long history of tradition in China. For example, according to the Chinese legal system in the 17th to 19th century, "filial disobedience was the most heinous crime. A son who merely struck his parent could be decapitated where a parent who beat his son to death, if provoked by the son's disobedience, would deserve only 100 blows (by custom '100' was normally 40 blows) of the heavy bamboo and might be let off entirely" (Fairbank, 1981, p. 121). Of course, such law no longer exists in China nowadays.

### (5) Norm of Social Altruism

Social norm always prescribes people to help not only those closely related with them but also other people. For example, according to

Leeds' (1963) Norm of Giving, people should help "the very young, the very old and the very sick" even though they may not be able to reciprocate.

The extension of altruism from primary groups to other people in the society has been an important topic in Confucianism. For example, in *Liki*, it said, "the teaching of respect to one's elder brothers is a preparation for serving all the elders of the country ..." (Lin, 1943. p. 131). The Norm of Social Altruism prescribes people to be altruistic not only to members of their primary group but also to less closely related people in their own society in order to maintain the stability and prosperity of the society. It is the social responsibility of every member of the society to help each other when in needs, not just those closely related with you.

#### (6) Law-abiding perspective

The behavior of people in a society is usually controlled or constrained by officiated or institutionalized laws. In democratic countries, laws are set up or made by elected representatives of people (e.g., members of Congress or members of Parliament), elaborated or used by court judges and enforced by police. In less democratic countries, laws are made and practiced by a few people in power. In either case, people at this stage would uphold or maintain the laws. What is right is what the laws allow and what is wrong is what the laws prohibit.

The Chinese legal system is a person-oriented rather than institution-oriented one. In other words, the Chinese perspective on law is less rational, objective or rigorous in comparison to the Western one. One of the reasons for such practice may be due to the fact that the governments in Chinese societies, past or present, are person-oriented and usually authoritarian rather than constitutionally oriented or democratic.

One distinctive characteristic concerning the Chinese perspective on law is the emphasis on Ch'ing, as expressed in the Chinese proverb "Law is but Ch'ing (human affection or sentiment)". That "Law is but Ch'ing" reveals clearly the affective, subjective and less officiated characteristics of the Chinese perspective on law. Such a Chinese perspective on law may be influenced by Confucianism. According to Munro (1969), the Confucians argued against control by penal law on the following basis.

"(First), distinctions of noble and mean in human society have

a basis in nature; it is essential to maintain the distinctions or there will be social chaos, and universally applied laws would undercut the distinctions. Second, laws cannot cover all possible circumstances. It is better to have men (good officials) decide each case on its own merits, using customary norms as guidelines, than to have impersonal law mechanically implemented, with no consideration of the unique circumstances of each case. Third, and most important, law controls through fear of punishment; it does not change people's attitudes or habits" (Munro, 1969, p.111)

### *Stage 5: Utilitarianism and Basic Rights*

The main emphasis of this stage structure is on utilitarianism which is concerned with the idea of "seeking the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people", and on the basic rights of an individual.

#### (1) Basic rights and relative rights

Everyone and every society has some basic rights which must be upheld and protected regardless of the opinion of the majority of people. These basic rights are regarded as universal in the sense that every person in every society should have a just or fair claim of these rights. The contents of these basic rights have been elaborated in detail by Kohlberg and his associates.

"All citizens have rights to (1) freedom from arbitrary punishment, (2) property, (3) freedom to enter into affiliative or family contracts and relations, (4) fair exercise of authority and political rights to a say in the government, (5) moral respect or dignity, (6) legal justice, (7) freedom to make contractual agreements, (8) access to information, (9) certain civil rights, and (10) a right to life." (Colby et al. 1979, pp. 53-54)

In parallel with the above basic rights for an individual, every country has rights to (1) freedom from arbitrary attack by individuals or another country, (2) property, including land and natural resources, (3) freedom

to enter into affiliative international contracts and relations with individuals or another country, (4) fair exercise of authority and political rights to a say in the world organizations, (5) national respect or dignity, (6) international legal justice, (7) access to information, and (8) a right to group or national survival.

On the other hand, many of the rights, rules and values are relative to one's group only. "These relative rules should usually be upheld, however, in the interest of impartiality and because they are the social contract" (Kohlberg, 1976, p. 35). Examples of relative rights or values include ritual laws, religious values, traditions and personal interests.

In comparison to the western people, Chinese at this stage may appear to have a slightly weaker emphasis on political and legal rights. The reason is perhaps that Chinese believe in moral conscience, ethical principles and human nature rather than institutionalized law in governing their behavior and maintaining justice and social order. On the other hand, the values, rules and rights that are relative to Chinese society are plenty and rigid mainly because of its long history of tradition and affective collectivistic perspective.

## (2) Social contract

The general will, needs, interests and opinions of the majority of people in a society are either codified into laws or formulated in the form of social norms or proprieties. That everyone should uphold the social norm and abide by the law for the welfare of all is a social contract between an individual and the majority. Social behavior of a person is therefore bound by a social agreement which every rational person would accept. The central theme is that "You are obligated by whatever arrangements are agreed to by due process procedures" (Rest, 1979, p.22).

## (3) Law-making perspective

People at this stage, however, do not blindly maintain the law and social order in all cases. If the law fails to protect a person or a country's basic rights, they would no longer stick to the above social contract and they would urge to make a new law to replace the old one. In some cases, Chinese people at this stage would challenge the authority or the majority with a self-sacrificing altruistic attitude the being exploited or the victims

in order to maintain justice. They are what we call the “conscientious objectors”. That the Chinese institution and legal system is less rigorous and democratic, and that the practice of law depends very much on the subjective and sometimes arbitrary interpretation of the authority and leader would mean that there is no easy way to change a law in a Chinese society.

#### (4) Conflict between majority and individual

In general, if there is conflict between (a) the majority’s basic rights and an individual’s basic rights, or (b) the majority’s relative rights and an individual’s relative rights, then what is right is to sacrifice the individual for the majority, or to protect the majority’s rights because the majority is composed of a large number of people while the individual is only a single person. The reason is based on an affective self-sacrificing altruistic orientation towards the majority. That is, “the small-I should be sacrificed to support the big-I” (a Chinese proverb). “Small-I” refers to an individual and “big-I” refers to the country or the majority of a group. Everyone in a similar position is supposed to do the same. However, if the conflict is between the majority’s relative rights and an individual’s basic rights, then the individual must be protected regardless of the majority’s opinion. If necessary, a new law has to be made to protect the individual with a socially recognized or institutionalized basis. Similarly, if the conflict is between the majority’s basic rights and an individual’s relative rights, then the majority must be protected because the basic rights supersede the relative rights.

#### (5) Utilitarian Altruism

People act to help by the principle of utilitarianism which aims at the greatest happiness of the greatest number. In other words, if there is a conflict of interest between an individual and the majority, the individual should prepare to sacrifice himself/herself for the majority.

One of the famous ancient Chinese philosophers, Mo Tzu has proposed a doctrine of universal love, which states that “men should actually love the members of other families and states in the same way that they love the members of their own family and state ...” (Watson, 1967, p. 9). When asked “what good is such a doctrine”, Mo Tzu answered, “it will

bring the greatest benefit to the largest number of people” (Watson, 1967, p. 10).

### *Stage 6: Jen and Universal Ethical Principles*

The main themes of this stage structure consist of the affective concept of *Jen* (humanity, benevolence or human heartedness) in Confucianism and the rational Principles of Justice in Kant’s philosophy. The concept of *Jen* emphasizes the affective interpersonal relationships and human heartedness, whereas the Principles of Justice emphasize universal justice for everyone. The integration of these two concepts is a clear example of an attempt to integrate the affective and cognitive aspects of moral development in one structure.

#### (1) Jen

The concepts of *Jen* in Confucianism “has something of the love which parents have naturally for their children. It has something of the compassion which a man of sensitivity feels when seeing an innocent animal slaughtered” (Dobson, 1963, p. 27). A great Confucian philosopher, Mencius also said, “it is a feeling common to all mankind that they cannot bear to see others suffer” (Dobson, 1963, p. 132).

A Chinese subject in Hong Kong responded to some of the questions in Kohlberg’s (1981) “Heinz and the drug” dilemma as follows:

Q: “Did the druggist have the right to charge that much for the drug when there was no law setting a limit to the price? Why?”

A: “Even though the law did not set limit to the price of the drug, the druggist should not set the price so high because the druggist should have the feeling of distress at he suffering of others. He knows pretty well that the drug is used to cure people in danger, and if the price is so high, the poor people probably couldn’t afford to buy it and would therefore lose their lives. So, the price should not be set so high based on jen. In addition, the druggist should hold a ‘doctor-with-a-parental-heart’ attitude to make the drug, otherwise the society would be a horrible One.”

Q: "Is it important for people to do everything they can to save another's life? Why?"

A: "Everyone should try his best to save other's life because the society is composed of men, and if people don't care for others, the world would become very horrible. As a man, one should have the spirit of 'loving others as loving yourself'. It would be fair and just to everyone, if everyone does the same".

In the above responses, there are three points that are relevant to the concept of *jen*: (a) the feeling of distress at the suffering of others, (b) the spirit of 'doctor-with-a-parental-heart', and (c) loving others as loving yourself. Such deep and profound affection and altruism towards others are less emphasized in Kohlberg's (1981, 1984) moral stages.

## (2) Principles of Justice

There are two principles of justice. The first principle is based on Kant's formula of the end in itself: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end" (Paton, 1978, p.91). In other words, rational people are ends in themselves and they have an unconditioned and absolute value. The second principle is 'individual justice' which refers to "the right of every person to an equal consideration of his claims in every situation, not just those codified into law" (Kohlberg, 1981, p.164).

## (3) Universality of the Principles of Justice

The two Principles of Justice are universal and apply to "any rational agent in similar situation" (Kohlberg, 1981, p.165). In addition, universality also implies reversibility. Based on Rawls (1971), Kohlberg (1981, p.167) argues that "a just solution to a moral dilemma is a solution acceptable to all parties, considering each as free and equal and assuming none of them knew which role they would occupy in the situation."

## (4) Autonomy and Freedom

People at this stage act according to the universal principles which are self-chosen with a free will. That is, these universal ethical principles are not chosen under the external compulsion of consensus, social norms, proprieties, social laws, or majority rights or welfare. These people regard themselves as an end and not a means to any other persons or any other things and thus they are the ones who freely choose the moral laws where they are bound to obey (Paton, 1978, p.34).

#### (5) Natural or Autonomous Altruism

People at this stage act altruistically in accord with their self-chosen ethical principles. They do not give unconditioned advantage to the majority because of its number of people over an individual as in the case of overall utility, "the greatest good for the greatest number". Both the individual and the majority in this case are treated as equal and just entities in Nature.

The altruistic act is also based on a free, natural, autonomous and good will. The self-chosen principles always comply with Nature harmoniously, and the altruistic act is carried out with the least disturbances to all parties concerned.

The features of natural altruism include: (1) Everyone has a feeling of distress at the suffering of others. (2) We should love others in the same way we love ourselves. (3) A natural way to help others should cause the least disturbances to all parties concerned.

#### *Stage 7: Natural Harmony*

There are two paths to reach the natural state of psychological peace and harmony in resolving moral conflicts. One path is concerned with the natural and profound feeling of distress for the suffering of the helpless people and other living things. This kind of feeling or empathy leads to the universal love and unconditional regards for the recipients. The other path is concerned with the transcendence of one's valuative judgment to non-valuative judgment.

#### *Stage 7A: Sainted Altruism*

People act altruistically beyond the principles of justice. They give up their own basic just claims, and make sacrifices for other people as well as animals on a good will.

Kohlberg (1974, 1981) has described a 'stage 7' in his theory of moral development, which is claimed to be a general stage of human development. Kohlberg (1981, p. 344) argues that his stage 7 is roughly equivalent to Fowler's (1981) sixth stage of Faith and that part of the notion of this stage 7 comes from Erikson's (1963) eighth stage of psycho-social development. Stage 7 is a stage of agape, which "has two essential characteristics: first, it is nonexclusive and can be extended to all, including one's enemies; second, it is gracious and is extended without regard for merit" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 347). In short, the 'stage 7' person exhibits genuine, self-sacrificing altruistic love to all people. They also perform acts of supererogation that "freely give up claims the actor may in justice demand" (Kohlberg, 1981, p. 351).

Most probably, the best examples of this stage come from Buddhism. Buddha said, "if I don't go to hell, who else will?" The characteristics of this stage includes: (a) The act is carried out based on a good will. (b) The act is carried out naturally, voluntarily and with a peaceful mind. (c) The actor carries out the act because of a deep and profound feeling of distress at the suffering of the recipient. (d) The recipients may include strangers, enemies, animals, and other living things. Let us illustrate the above spirit of sacrifice by the legendary stories described in the following two Dunhuang mural paintings (Duan & Liang, 1989): (a) Prince Sudana saw some hungry young tigers searching desperately for food. He felt distressful at the suffering of these helpless tigers and jumped to death from a cliff so that the tigers could eat his body (p. 24). (b) King Sivi saw a hungry eagle chasing a pigeon. He cut a piece of flesh (approximately equal to the weight of the pigeon) from his body for the eagle to eat in order to save the life of the pigeon. These are well-known stories in Buddhism. The contents are sometimes beyond our imagination and experiences. The altruism described in the above two stories has three specific features: (1) The actors were willing to sacrifice because of a profound feeling of distress at the suffering of the animals. If a person is willing to sacrifice himself for an animal, it is almost beyond doubt that such a person would also be willing to help other human beings at great cost. (2) The justification for the altruistic act is beyond all the moral principles governing the behavior of human beings. The

actors did not act in accord with any universal ethical principles, they did not claim for what is basic to a person, e.g., life and freedom from physical pain. (3) The act expressed universal love extended to animals and in fact to all living things in Nature. For a description of the ethics of Buddhism, see Tachibana (1975).

### Stage 7B: *Taoistic Non-valuative Judgment*

Great intelligent people tend not to classify things into right and wrong. In general, they accept and treat everything, every opinion and every habituation in their own rights or in their natural states as equally good and right (Lin, 1944, pp. 80-82). In other words, they interact with others in a non-valuative way (Ma, 1988). Chuang Tzu elaborates,

Life is the start of the dying process, and death is the start of the new life. Possibility includes impossibility, and impossibility arises from possibility. Whenever there is someone who thinks it is right, there is also someone who thinks it is wrong; and vice versa. Thus, the true sage rejects the distinction between right and wrong and lets the law of Tao (Nature) determine. (Wang, 1983, p. 31).

The argument is that all kinds of rational values and judgments are problematic, sophisticated, biased, subjective and confusing, and hence non-natural. "The idea is that once we are able to suspend looking at people through our evaluative categories, we will be able to accept them for what they are, see them as beings like ourselves, and care for them as we care for ourselves" (Wong, 1984, p. 208).

In contrast, Kohlberg's (1976, 1981) Stage 6 moral judgment is obviously a valuative judgment which is concerned about and based on Kant's principles of justice (see Rawls, 1971). As one knows more about oneself and environment, one's demarcation between right and wrong becomes more fuzzy and the best method for dealing with social and self conflicts is, according to the Chinese Taoistic Perspective, to transcend one's valuative judgment to a non-valuative perspective.

The ultimate criterion governing our behavior, whether it is moral or non-moral, is our unconscious emotion and not the rational values (Pugh, 1978). It is argued that the unconscious emotion is the least conditioned or affected by external environment and therefore is always most in

accord with Nature. That is to say, so long as the behavior is natural or complies with Nature, it is totally acceptable and equally good or right. Following this argument, one may say that death is not worse than life; ugliness is not worse than beauty; loss is not worse than gain; bad luck is not worse than good luck; etc. Thus, "Let it be" and "Take it easy", one will be much more peaceful and balanced.

In order to illustrate the concept more clearly, a prototypical Stage 7B response to Kohlberg's (1981) 'Heinz and the Drug' dilemma was constructed by the author.

Q: "Should Heinz steal the drug for his wife?"

A: "First of all, Heinz should not be too stubborn or insistent on saving his wife's life because life, aging, sickness and death are invariant paths of a person, they are aspects of natural human development. Life and death are just like the sunrise and sunset or the change of four seasons, they are Tao (Law) of Nature and could not be changed by human power.

Similarly, Heinz should not be too serious or care too much about the protection of the druggist's property and drug by the law. The druggist used the radium to make the drug and was therefore taking things from Nature, and in this case not giving Heinz the drug to cure his wife's disease was in fact violating the Tao (law) of Natural Harmony by not using the drug in a way in accord with Nature.

Simply speaking, Heinz should steal the drug for his wife if (i) his wife had a very strong desire to live and hoped to use the new drug to cure her disease. In addition, Heinz felt that his wife would not be heartbroken or even break down in knowing that he had stolen the drug for her and that he would be punished by law, and (ii) the druggist would not be hurt too much by his act of theft.

On the other hand, Heinz should not steal the drug for his wife on the following grounds: (i) His wife would definitely and strongly object to his act of stealing and he knew pretty well that if he had stolen the drug, his wife would be extremely disturbed and heartbroken and that she would feel terrible regrets for the rest of her life. (ii) The druggist would protect his drug from being stolen by others by all means. He would feel very much hurt if someone stole his drug and damaged his business. Under this condition, Heinz should follow his natural feeling and beg the druggist a few more times to

give him the drug to cure his wife's disease. He could also beg again his friends and relatives to lend him sufficient money to buy the drug. If everything failed, he should accept the reality peacefully and comply with Nature naturally. He should try to live as happily as possible with his wife and let her pass away peacefully and calmly without much regret".

In the above proposed Stage 7B answers, the following points are emphasized: (a) The Tao (laws) of Nature should be complied with naturally. (b) The moral decision should take care of all parties so as to achieve the greatest degree of natural harmony. (c) The right to life and the right to property are not regarded as things that must be upheld unless they are in accord with the law of Nature which in this case requires that everyone's emotions and rights must be equally and harmoniously dealt with. (e) People at this stage must have the intelligence or unusual ability to judge other people's feeling and behavior correctly and efficiently.

A summary of the characteristics of the seven stages of moral judgment development is given in Table 1.

In order to illustrate the feature of the seven stages of moral judgment, a hypothetical dilemma, "The King and Princess" is constructed.

An old and ugly king in country B wanted to marry the beautiful princess of country A. However, the king of country A refused to allow his daughter to marry King B. King B was angered and led his army to invade country A. The army of country A was defeated immediately. King B promised to stop the attack if Princess A would marry him.

The question is, "suppose you were the Princess A, would you be willing to marry King B?" The following responses have been constructed by the author for illustrative purpose.

*Stage 1: Obedience and Egoism*

"If I refuse to marry King B, my parents would force me or even beat me; so I better obey their order to marry King B."

*Stage 2: Instrumental Purpose and Opportunistic Hedonism*

Main Theme	Contents of Stage
<b>Stage 1: Obedience and Egoism</b>	
Obedience to authorities	To obey in order to avoid physical punishment.
Egocentric viewpoint	Unaware of other's perspective.
Rules as unchangeable	Rules would not be changed because of unexpected situational variables.
Selfish orientation	Seek pleasure and avoid pain at the expense of others.
<b>Stage 2: Instrumental Purpose and Opportunistic Hedonism</b>	
Equal exchange	Fairness as quantitative equality in exchange
Instrumental purpose	Acts are regarded as means to serve one's needs and interests.
Concrete materialistic and individualistic perspective	Contents of exchange are concrete or materialistic things such as money or food; self-interests precede group or others' interests.
Ignoring other's positive claims	No concern about other's positive claims or welfare unless they are part of the exchange.
Opportunistic hedonism	Try to get a lot just by paying little or no effort.

Table 1. *The seven stages of Moral Judgment*

“O.K., I would marry King B, but he must treat me well, give me what I want. I am not going to marry him in disgrace.”

*Stage 3: Primary Group Affection and Conformity*

“It is my duty as a daughter to relieve my parents’ sufferings by all means. If my suffering can bring happiness to my family and my best friends, then my sacrifice is worthwhile.”

Stage 3: Primary Group Affection and Conformity	
Meeting the group's expectation	A good-boy-nice-girl orientation.
Authority of the leader	To trust and respect the leader, and to follow the rules set by the leader.
Family affection	Be altruistic and affective to the primary group members.
Stage 4: Golden Mean Orientation and Social System	
Social order and prosperity	What is right is to maintain the stability and prosperity of the society.
Consensus, norm and propriety	What is right is what the consensus say or what the social norms prescribe.
Golden mean of reconciliation	To resolve conflicts by a soft, tolerating, compromising and less disturbing attitude.
Norm of filial piety	To uphold a strong kinship bondage throughout the whole life span.
Norm of social altruism	To extend the altruism from the primary group members to the less closely related members in one's own society.
Law-abiding perspective	To abide by the officiated or institutionalized law.

Table 1 (continued).

*Stage 4: Golden Mean Orientation and Social System*

“The prosperity and decay of the country is the responsibility of every citizen.’ In order to maintain the stability and prosperity of the society, I have no other choice but to marry King B.”

*Stage 5: Utilitarianism and Basic Rights*

“Under the present situation, the small-I (i.e., myself) has to sacrifice for the big-I (i.e., my country), whether the small-I likes it or not. Every individual should try his/her best to seek the greatest happiness for the

Stage 5: Utilitarianism and Basic Rights	
Basic rights and relative rights	Basic rights must be upheld regardless of the majority of people's opinion; relative rights should be upheld in the interest of impartiality.
Social contract	That everyone should uphold the norm and abide by the law is a social contract between an individual and the majority.
Law-making perspective	If the law fails to protect a person's basic rights, a new law should be made to replace the old one.
Conflict between the majority and individual	"Small-I (an individual) should be sacrificed to support the Big-I (majority)".
Utilitarian altruism	An individual should prepare to sacrifice himself/herself for the majority for the sake of bringing the greatest happiness to the greatest number of people.

Table 1 (continued)

greatest number of people, even at the expense of his/her own freedom, life, happiness and other basic rights. Everyone in my position as the princess should do the same to sacrifice herself for the majority."

*Stage 6: Jen and Universal Ethical Principles*

"Even though I have the right to protect my dignity and to seek for my own happiness, how can I feel happy and peaceful if millions of my people suffer from the threat of survival and safety? No one could bear the feeling of distress at the suffering of one single person, how could one then tolerate the distressful feeling at the suffering of millions of people. It is so natural and easy for me to make the decision; I would marry King B without much regret since my decision would stop the war."

Stage 6: <i>Jen</i> and Universal Ethical Principles	
<i>Jen</i>	<i>Jen</i> is “a feeling common to all mankind that they cannot bear to see others suffer”. <i>Jen</i> means humanity, benevolence or human heartedness.
Principles of justice	(a) People are ends. (b) “The right of every person to an equal consideration of his claims in every situation, not just those codified into laws”.
Universality	The principles of justice applies to any rational person in similar situation.
Autonomy and freedom	Act according to self-chosen principles with a free will.
Natural altruism	(a) Everyone has a feeling of distress at the suffering of others. (b) Love others in the same way as we love ourselves. (c) A natural way to help others should cause the least disturbances to all parties concerned.
Stage 7: Natural Harmony	
(7A) Sainted Altruism	Act altruistically beyond the principles of justice. Act naturally, voluntarily and with a good will and a peaceful mind. Recipients can be strangers, enemies, animals, and other living things.
(7B) Non-valuative Judgment	Everyone or every group is treated as ethically neutral. Accept and treat everything, every opinion and every habituation in their own rights or in their natural states as equally good and right.

Table 1 (continued)

*Stage 7A: Sainted Altruism*

“Hell is there, and if I don’t go to hell, who else will? I am willing to

marry King B and try my best to please him. I would do everything including kneeling down in front of our enemy to beg for peace, or sacrificing my life if this would bring peace and harmony to this world.”

*Stage 7B: Taoistic Non-Valuative Judgment*

“I don’t have much strong feeling to refuse to marry King B from the very beginning of the event, not because I love him, but because I feel that King B is going to disturb everyone madly if I refuse him. There is nothing right or wrong that a powerful king, whether old or young, handsome or ugly has the desire to conquer a young and beautiful woman. Everything is so natural. The Tao (Law) of Nature does not guarantee that a beautiful woman would marry a young and handsome man. What I would do is to follow the Tao of Nature so that the whole world’s peace and harmony can be naturally restored.”

*Conclusive Remarks*

In the construction of the present theoretical model, the author relies on his previous empirical works to guide his thinking (Ma, 1982, 1989, in press). However, there is very scarce empirical evidence on Stage 7 and the construction of this stage is stimulated by the ethic of Buddhism (see e.g., Tachibana, 1975) as well as the ancient works by Taoistic philosophers, Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu (Bahm, 1958; Ch’en, 1977; Fung, 1933).

The present theoretical model has a number of promising characteristics. First, one of its bases of construction is Kohlberg’s (1981, 1984) theory of moral judgment development, which is a well established theory with extensive cross-cultural empirical supports (Snarey, 1985). Second, it incorporates the major Chinese thoughts (e.g., Confucianism and Taoism) into the model. Third, it is a comprehensive theory of moral judgment development which places more emphasis on the affective aspects of moral development in comparison to Piaget’s (1932) and Kohlberg’s (1981, 1984) theories.

## REFERENCES

- Bahm, A.J. (1958). *Tao Teh King by Lao Tzu: Interpreted as Nature and Intelligence*. New York: Frederick Ungar.
- Ch'en, K.Y. (1977). *Lao Tzu: Text, notes, and comments*. Translated and Adapted by R.Y.W. Young & R.T. Ames. San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center.
- Colby, A., Gibbs, J., Kohlberg, L., Speicher-Dubin, B., & Candee, D. (1979). *Standard Form Scoring Manual: Parts I-IV*. Unpublished manuscript, Harvard University.
- Dobson, W. A. C. H. (1963). *Mencius*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Duan, W., & Liang, W. (Eds.) (1989). *The Cream of Dunhuang Art*. Hong Kong: Polyspring. (In Chinese).
- Erikson, E.H. (1963). *Childhood and society*. Second Edition. New York: North.
- Fairbank, J. K. (1981). *The United States and China* (4th ed.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Fowler, J.W. (1981). *Stages of faith: The psychology of human development and the quest for meaning*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Fung, Y.L. (1933). *Chuang Tzu: A new selected translation with an exposition of the philosophy of Kuo Hsiang*. Shanghai: The Commercial Press.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. MA: Harvard University Press.
- Ho, D. Y. F. (1986). Chinese patterns of socialization: A critical review. In M. H. Bond (Ed.), *The psychology of the Chinese people* (pp. 1-37). Hong Kong: Oxford University Press.
- Hsu, F.L.K. (1970). *Americans and Chinese: Reflections on two cultures and their people*. New York: Doubleday.
- Kohlberg, L. (1974). Education, moral development and faith. *Journal of Moral Education*, 4, 5-16.
- Kohlberg, L. (1976). Moral stage and moralization: The cognitive-developmental approach. In T. Lickona (Ed.), *Moral development and behavior*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Kohlberg, L. (1981). *Essays on moral development, Vol. 1: The philosophy of moral development*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.

- Kohlberg, L. (1984). *Essays on moral development, Vol. 2: The psychology of moral development*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.
- Leeds, R. (1963). Altruism and the norm of giving. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly of Behavior and Development*, 9, 229-240.
- Lickona, T. (1976). *Moral development and behavior: Theory, research, and social issues*. NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Lin, Y. T. (1943). *The wisdom of Confucius*. New York: Random House.
- Lin, Y.T. (Ed.) (1944). *The wisdom of China*. New York: Random House, 1949. Originally published by London: Michael Joseph.
- Loevinger, J. (1976). *Ego development*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Ma, H. K. (1982). *A study of moral development with special reference to psychological needs, human relationships and structures of judgment*. Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of London.
- Ma, H. K. (1988) The Chinese perspectives on moral judgment development. *International Journal of Psychology*, 23, 201-227.
- Ma, H. K. (1989). Moral orientation and moral judgment in adolescents in Hong Kong, Mainland China and England. *Journal of Cross-cultural Psychology*, 20, 152-177.
- Ma, H. K. (1990). The Chinese Taoistic perspective on human development. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 14, 235-249.
- Ma, H. K. (in press). The relation of altruistic orientation to human relationships and moral judgment in Chinese people. *International Journal of Psychology*.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality*. (2nd ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- Munro, D. J. (1969). *The concept of man in early China*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Paton, H. J. (1978). *The moral laws: Kant's groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. London: Hutchinson.
- Peters, R.S. (1971). Moral development: A plea for pluralism. In T. Mischel (Ed.), *Cognitive development and epistemology*. N.Y.: Academic Press.
- Piaget, J. (1932). *The moral judgment of the child*. Translated by M. Gabain. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Pugh, G.E. (1978). *The biological origin of human values*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Rawls, J. (1971). *A theory of justice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

- Rest, J. R. (1979). *Development in judging moral issues*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.
- Sharabany, R., & Bar-Tal, D. (1982). Theories of the development of altruism : Review, comparison and integration. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 5, 49-80.
- Snarey, J.R. (1985). Cross-cultural universality of social-moral development: A critical review of Kohlbergian research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 97, 202-232.
- Tachibana, S. (1975). *The ethic of Buddhism*. London: Curzon Press.
- Wang, S.S. (1983). *Interpretations of ChuangTzu*. Shandong, China: Shandong Educational Press. (In Chinese).
- Watson, B. (1967). *Basic writings of Mo Tzu, Hsun Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Wilson, E. O. (1975). *Sociobiology : The new synthesis*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.
- Wong, D. B. (1984). *Moral relativity*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.