BOOK REVIEW
The Development and Structure of Conscience, edited by W. Koops, D. Brugman, T. J. Ferguson, & A. F. Sanders (2010), Hoe and New York: Psychology Press

Reviewed by Gerhard Minnameier

It is astounding to notice, that after decades of decomposing the everyday notion of conscience into psychological constructs like moral cognition, moral emotion and motivation, moral character, the moral self and so forth there seems to be renewed interest in *The Development and Structure of Conscience*, which is the title of a book published by W. Koops, D. Brugman, T. J. Ferguson, and A. F. Sanders. It is all the more astounding as research at the end of and after the Kohlberg era has almost incessantly stressed the diversity and partly incoherence of the various components of moral functioning that have been discussed. In part, this renewed interest goes back to recent work by G. Kochanska (Aksan & Kochanska, 2005; Kochanska & Aksan, 2004), who stresses that the cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of moral functioning form a coherent system.

A key and age-old question in relation to morality and moral development concerns the roles of cognition and emotion, as the editors point out in their introduction. In the Rousseauean tradition cognition is seen as the centre of moral functioning, while in the Humeian tradition emotion is considered primary. Today, this dividing line may be drawn between Kohlberg on the one side and, for example, Hoffman (2000) or Haidt (2001) on the other.

Whichever stand one wishes to take in this respect, conscience seems to consist of three basic components: a cognitive, an emotional, and a conative component. This notion of conscience is taken over by the editors from philosopher C. D. Broad (1973) and also functions as the structuring principle for the whole volume, which consists of an opening part on theoretical and cultural historical notions on conscience, a part on moral reason-

Journal of Research in Character Education, 8(1), 2010, pp. 99–102 ISSN 1543-1223

ing, one on social emotions, and one on conscience and antisocial behavior.

In the opening part, B. Muschenga delivers a highly differentiated analysis of personality types that may all be characterized as morally deficient and a review of respective empirical findings and approaches to explain what makes the difference, psychologically, between moral and immoral persons.

In a paper titled "Does religion matter?" J. M. Day observes that at least those who are actively and regularly engaged in religious practice are highly sensitive towards the suffering of others. However, religiosity does not come out as a single explanatory criterion, but is mediated by factors like gender, ethnicity and so forth. One question not addressed by Day concerns the causal direction. High moral sensitivity might also stimulate religious thinking and engagement rather then the other way around.

In a very thorough but also lengthy paper, T. J. Ferguson explicates the three components of conscience as already mentioned in the introduction—affective, cognitive, and conative—and explores their status in middle and later childhood. This paper contains a very fruitful and erudite analysis of guilt and shame and produces some new insights in this respect, especially how they contribute to the development of conscience. Further analyses on this topic are also included in a later chapter by Ferguson and Dempsey.

In the second part of the volume, D. Brugman explores the purported judgement-action discrepancy and makes the interesting point that the gap may not be as much between judgement and behavior, but between abstract dilemmas and real-life situations. In particular, he discusses Krebs and Denton's (2005) criticism of Kohlberg and Candee's (1984) thesis of a monotonic relationship and comes to the conclusion that the "observed lack of stage consistency between moral reasoning competence and moral reasoning performance does not carry evidence about the relation between moral competence and moral action" (p. 121). It is most interesting that J. Olthof in the last chapter of the volume comes to the same conclusion. What's more, Brugman identifies moral atmosphere as the most important mediator between moral reasoning and antisocial behaviour (a thesis discussed further in a second paper by Wolff & Brugman in the same volume). This means that individuals might well be consistent in and across comparable contexts, but they seem to adapt to their social environment and adopt moral standards that work in a given social setting.

In another contribution on moral cognition, J. Boom introduces ways to measure moral development in an item-response-theoretic (IRT) framework. IRT is perfectly suited to measure stages and stage development, since hierarchical integration is virtually woven into this approach (because it simultaneously evaluates responses to all items and models both item difficulties and the persons' abilities on one and the same scale). However, surprisingly little research has been done in this direction so far, as IRT is mostly used to analyze items of so-called large scale assessments.

Part III addresses social emotions and contains five papers: one on guilt (Ferguson & Dempsey), one on altruistic and self-serving lies (Terwogt, Olthof, & Rieffe), one on shame (Thomaes, Stegge, & Olthof), one on the influence of violent media on moral emotionality (Bushman, Chandler, & Huesmann), and one on the Happy Victimiser (HV) phenomenon (Keller, Brandt, & Sigurdardottir). I will only comment on the latter, because it contains interesting ideas and results with respect to the above discussion of consistency between reasoning and action as well as reasoning and emotion/motivation. To be sure, HV is typically interpreted as having moral knowledge but lacking the complementary moral motivation. Again, like other chapters in the book this paper points to findings that indicate more consistency than was expected on the basis of previous HV research. In particular, when subjects are asked to take on the role of the violator and identify with it, they report negative moral emotions more readily than in the condi-

tion in which they are asked attribute emotions to a third-person violator.

However, findings also indicate that the development of moral emotions seems to follow a stage-sequence. Three levels are distinguished in this respect. All this is fine, intriguing and convincing as far as the argument goes. Still it may asked what is the difference between cognitive and emotional stages, especially since theses emotional stages imply specific understanding and perspective taking, just as moral cognition is never "cold"—and one has to bear in mind that the authors speak of stages of "reasoning about moral feelings" (p. 261). If cognition and affectivity are aspects of moral functioning, this difference between cognitive and emotional stages clearly begs the question. Moreover, in a paper by the reviewer (Minnameier, 2010) the HV is reconstructed as a particular moral stage—within a neo-Kohlbergian framework—and this squares with what Keller et al. call "Level 1" of reasoning about moral feelings. So, a second look at the relation of cognition and emotion in the HV paradigm would be advisable.

Finally, part IV ("Conscience and antisocial behavior") contains four more papers on the interaction of temperament and socialization with respect to self-regulation (Karreman, van Tuijl, van Aken, & Deković), sex difference and aggression (Côté), social cognition and self-regulation (Lochman), and on the relation between moral emotions, moral judgements, and moral identity as predictors of interpersonal behaviour (Olthof). As could be expected, socialization does matter for the development of conscience in the sense stated above, that is, to foster self-regulation and lead to coherent moral functioning. There are also gender-based differences, partly quantitative (with men tending to be more aggressive than women) and in quality (with men being more physically aggressive as opposed to women, who use indirect violence more frequently). A training offered by J. E. Lochman seems to help children to self-regulate their aggressive behavior. And, as already mentioned above, Olthof reports that final moral judgements (as opposed to prior and principled moral reasoning) and moral behavior actually do cohere.

Let us sum up and conclude that (1) moral judgements (in the sense just explained) and moral emotions seem to cohere and (2) thus constitute what the editors and authors call "conscience," not only theoretically, but also in empirical reality, and (3) that this coherence seems to be educable. However, as the book also reveals, much of the puzzle we have had concerning the relation of moral thinking and moral action appears to be due to (still) imprecise theoretical concepts, although this volume has contributed much toward the better in our conceptual understanding of moral functioning.

Certainly not everything is said in the book on the key questions that were posed, but quite a lot has been clarified. Nonetheless, one important question that has been raised at the beginning of the book still waits to be answered, that is, the one about the primacy of moral cognition or moral emotion. It would have been appropriate and helpful, if the editors had taken up this point at the end, also because some of the papers at least provide some information on this issue (e.g., on the role of moral atmosphere, of parental socialization, of guilt and shame). However, how these theoretical reflections and empirical findings all wind up in relation to the central theoretical question of how cognition and emotion interact with each other and with behavioral aspects and how development is brought about (or hindered), psychologically, remains an open question for the reader to take home. Notwithstanding this shortcoming, the book is a very rich source for all readers interested in moral functioning and development, a topical and coherent compilation of contributions that has also been very carefully edited.

REFERENCES

Aksan, N., & Kochanska, G. (2005). Conscience in childhood: Old questions, new answers. *Developmental psychology, 41,* 506–516.

Broad, C. D. (1973). Conscience and conscientious action. In J. Donnelly & L. Lyons (Eds.), *Conscience* (pp. 5–23). New York: Alba House.

Haidt, J. (2001). The emotional dog and its rational tail: A social intuitionist approach to moral judgment. *Psychological Review, 108,* 814–834.

Hoffman, M. L. (2000). *Empathy and moral development: Implications for caring and justice.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kochanska, G., & Aksan, N. (2004). Conscience in childhood: Past, present, and future. *Meril-Palmer Quaterly, 50,* 299–310.

Kohlberg, L., & Candee, D. (1984). The relationship of moral judgment to moral action. In L. Kohlberg, *Essays on moral development, Vol. II: The psychology of moral development* (pp. 498–581), San Francisco: Harper and Row.

Krebs, D., & Denton, K. (2005). Toward a more pragmatic approach to morality: a critical evaluation of Kohlberg's model. *Psychological Review, 112,* 629–649.

Minnameier, G. (2010). The Problem of Moral Motivation and the Happy Victimizer Phenomenon: Killing two birds with one stone. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development, 129,* 55–75.