

DEVELOPING THE GRAMMAR OF MORAL LOGIC

Abstract: In John Paul II's address before the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1995 he pointed to the critical importance of a universal 'moral logic' in human beings if our world is to move beyond the injustice and violence of the past to a more just and peaceful world. He also argued that the universal human rights movement confirms both a universal human nature and the cross-cultural reality of a universal moral logic in human beings. This essay focuses on four things: 1) The inadequacy of the narrow focus of modern secular cultures and education on the logic of scientific, technological and financial reasoning as the highest expressions of human rationality. This narrow view of human intelligence largely ignores the powerful cross-cultural presence and importance of a universal moral logic present in Catholic Social teaching, international law and the secular universal human rights movement. 2) The logical priority of universalizable moral reason over scientific and technological reason to the building of a more just and peaceful world. 3) The importance of moral reasoning research to the effective teaching of 'the grammar of moral logic' to individuals and communities around the world. This research was begun by Jean Piaget in France in the 1930s. It was then picked up and developed in dramatic new ways in the 1950s by Lawrence Kohlberg first at the University of Chicago and then with his colleagues at Harvard. This in turn leads to the work of J.R. Rest at the University of Minnesota and the important work of a number of other research psychologists, principally in the United States. 4) A presentation of the dramatic, measurable, and replicable gains in moral reasoning skills that can be achieved by constructing a pedagogy based on the insights of the moral development research.

Key words: Peace and justice, scientific & technological reason, moral reason, ethics, natural law, cognitive development, social learning theory, universal human rights, United Nations, the Social Doctrine of the Catholic Church, John Paul II, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kohlberg, James R. Rest, Carol Gilligan.