

Abstract

Anyone who has ever had the opportunity to observe small children when playing or learning something new or telling something and anyone who has ever had the opportunity to talk to them must have noticed the children sometimes treat the reality around them in a strange way. These are the funny moments when one is surprised what children think and how they treat logic. As though small children lived in an odd world where the rules of logic are completely different. The famous Swiss psychologist noticed this peculiar children's thinking and described the intellectual egocentrism in children of preschool and early school age. Egocentrism does not affect only the children's logical thinking but also other aspects of children's thinking and experience. This special "setting" of children's minds can be observed when the children are playing, in children's communication, in their drawings or in children's moral judgement. In the field of children's morals Piaget spoke of the moral realism.

Under the influence of moral realism children when morally judging the moral situations presented to them do not concentrate on the essential elements of the story but rather on irrelevant circumstances such as material results of an action and other outside matters. According to Piaget it is essential for children whether the behaviour in the story is in accordance with the rules set by an authority. Children typically perceive these rules literally and do not care about their substance, which they are not able to understand yet. According to Piaget these typical manifestations of the theoretical moral judgement of children can be observed until the age of ten.

As opposed to this assertion there is another important author in the field of moral judgement – Elliot Turiel – who represents the social domains theory. According to Turiel children are able to perceive the solidarity, justice and mutuality between people in the given story from the very beginning of moral judgement and thus consider the moral situation. Children are oriented in their moral judgement not according to the respect for the rules of authority but the concept of justice, welfare and rights of the others, Turiel says.

This diploma thesis focuses on the children's moral judgement and its typical manifestations. Translated and adapted Jean Piaget's moral stories are used for this purpose. Empirical data result from interviews about these moral stories with 59 children. I found that mostly younger children have the tendency to notice rather outside circumstances of the story in their moral judgement. This tendency weakens with children's advancing age. However, the actual form of the moral realism in children's responses differs from the one described by Piaget. In this thesis there are new and interesting observations concerning not only children's judgement but also moral stories as a measuring instrument of moral realism.