

Proposal for a Programme for the Ontario Correctional Institute Based on Moral Development Theory
Therapeutic Interaction in the Bipersonal Field: Part VII
Classification and Treatment by Moral Development Level

PROPOSAL FOR A PROGRAMME FOR THE ONTARIO CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTE
BASED ON MORAL DEVELOPMENT THEORY.1

This paper is in five sections, which have the following purposes:

1. To summarize moral development theory.
2. To summarize various approaches to moral education.
3. To summarize the moral development programme tried out by the Connecticut Department of Corrections.
4. To draw attention to the similarity between the Connecticut programme and the milieu therapy of the Ontario Correctional Institute (OCI) and show how, with the minimum of innovation, a similar programme could be set up in an OCI Treatment Unit. If a descriptive title is needed, it could be called a Values Programme, to avoid the Victorian overtones of "moral development".
5. To list other components which could be incorporated in the programme to ensure its effectiveness.

Lawrence Kohlberg is a Harvard psychologist who has studied moral behaviour in various cultures for more than fifteen years. He finds that moral judgement always develops in a fixed series of operationally definable stages, just as Jean Piaget has amply demonstrated that intellectual development proceeds stage by stage. The stages differ mainly in degree, but may none the less be classified into three levels. As explained in the notes at the end of this paper, the description of the stages given below is a synthesis from several sources, most of the names given to the levels and the stages being this writer.

A. Level of Selfish Values

This level of behaviour is characteristic of children under 10 years old and of most adolescent and young adult offenders.

Stage 1. Punishment Orientation. The individual is motivated simply to avoid punishment. He respects people in authority only insofar as he has been conditioned to associate them with punishment. His own ideal is to have the power to control or dominate his environment so that he administers rather than received punishment. As a means to this end, he is prepared when necessary to obey more powerful persons. He can make certain simple distinctions such as weak-strong, good-bad, but does not clearly differentiate ends from means, cause from effect, or future from present. Therefore, his thinking is often magically wish-fulfilling. To the extent that he believes that he has a charmed life and is omnipotent, he may have difficulty even in understanding that certain impulsive acts may lead to punishment. Such naivete may make him appear quite charming at times, though he may seem mindlessly brutal at others.

Stage 2. Self-Interest Orientation. The individual is motivated to gain rewards or benefits, his ideal being simple enjoyment. Although he can weigh the immediate utility of alternative actions, his thinking is concrete, he mistakes part of a situation for the whole, and he has little sense of long-term purpose. As a result, his ideal is to be like mature people whom he sees mainly as those with access to such sophisticated fun objects as fast cars and fast women. He therefore imitates the external behaviour of successful people, insisting on being independent, having fun, and possibly even working hard. He sees moral rules as serving people's self-interest. He will stick to the rules if they match his own interest but not otherwise.

B. Level of Conventional Values

This is the level of average adolescent and adult who conforms more or less to the rules of his society.

Stage 3. Friendship Orientation. The individual is motivated to gain approval from people in his immediate environment. To please them, he will be helpful and may work towards a goal specified by his group. Because he wants to be liked by others, he strives to be like others. Because he strives to conform to a stereotype his thinking tends to be

Proposal for a Programme for the Ontario Correctional Institute Based on Moral Development Theory stereotyped. His concept of morality is based on fairness: I will help you if you will help me. To the extent that the principle of give-and-take is embodied in moral and legal rules, he respects them, but where such rules conflict with the expectations of his friends, he usually sets them aside.

Stage 4. Law and Order Orientation. The individual has internalized a coherent set of values and beliefs. He tries to make his personal beliefs square with those of the subculture or society in which he lives. Having thus made his own interest congruent with the duties and responsibilities demanded of him by his society, he becomes very resistant to any deviation from the established order. He feels that the network or rules must be maintained at all costs, because if they are not enforced, society will break down and chaos result. The rigidity manifested in this attitude is also apparent in his thinking.

C. Level of Universal Values

At this level, customs and laws are examined in relation to universal principles. A mature individual's felt need to actualize all his human potentialities motivates this reflective consideration of his place in the scheme of things. It demands a capacity for formal thinking on the hypothetico-deductive model. Reasoning by analogy is also needed, but at a high level of abstraction in order to achieve a dialectical synthesis of ideas.

Stage 5. Contract Orientation. The individual sees rule systems as social contracts, regulating behaviour to serve society's need. He does not believe that chaos will result if exceptions are made to the rules, but he does tend to attribute sanctity to interpersonal contracts and the legal and social processes by which they are developed.

Stage 6. Life Goals Orientation. The individual at this stage believes that the sole purpose of morality is to serve fundamental human goals such as freedom, love, happiness, survival, and self-respect. He treats rules, processes and contracts only as means to the maximization of ultimate life goals for himself and others. However, he may conform to petty rules to avoid needless arguments about principles.

People at Stages 4, 5 or 6 tend to behave more consistently than those operating at lower stages because they act in accordance with stable principles, and, as these principles are generally concomitant with the law, they are likely to stay out of trouble. Furthermore, they police themselves, rather than needing external sanctions, because they have internalized certain values, the ignoring of which would lead to a discomfiting loss of self-esteem.

It should be noted that moral judgement continues to develop in many people until about the age of 25 years and, given proper stimulation, further development can occur at any age. However, only about one-fifth of the population go beyond the level of conventional morality.

The attainment of each stage of moral development is logically dependent upon the prior attainment of a new stage of cognitive development. Each stage reflects a more accurate understanding of the complexities of human relationships than the stage below it. A person's shift from one stage of moral development to the next requires participation in social environments which are perceived as fair and just. Development results mainly from the cognitive conflict created by exposure to moral reasoning at a stage above one's own, preferably only one stage above.

2. APPROACHES TO MORAL EDUCATION

A number of ways of promoting moral development have been tried in educational settings. The chief approaches and their shortcomings are:

1. Cathartic Group Discussion. Here each person presents his individual problems. One difficulty with this approach is that other members of the group may tune out until it is time to relate their own particular problems: it is too demanding to be confidant to too many people. Also the haphazard approach does not facilitate the learning of general principles.
2. Case Study. This helps everyone concerned to recognize that simplistic solutions are inappropriate for complex problems. However, the less intelligent may be very frustrated by the study of difficult dilemmas; although there are some excellent Canadian collections of case studies on the law and the police, for example, there are not many studies which would command general interest; and it is doubtful that there is much transfer of learning from case study to dealing with the problems of everyday life.
3. Values Clarification. This approach trains people in the skills of choosing beliefs, affirming them publicly, and acting on them consistently. The approach appeals to sentimentalists who believe that human nature impels people to choose generally acceptable moral values when merely encouraged to think out their beliefs. In fact, it seems that many residents [i.e. inmates] have clearly-defined stage 2 or 3 value systems which the criminal subculture encourages them to keep; and mere clarification of these values would be more likely to confirm than to alter them!
4. Theoretical Discussion. This approach, although it reviews a wide range of specific examples, involves a thorough and cumulative consideration of various principles, ideas and theories in the light of these examples. The approach may well be the best for use in schools, where students are used to dealing with theory, but may have little appeal in correctional settings.

This brief review suggests that none of the main approaches to moral development which have been tried in school are entirely suitable as the main thrust of a programme in a correctional setting.

3. MORAL DEVELOPMENT IN CORRECTIONS

In 1971, Kohlberg and his associates set up a moral development programme in one living unit of the Connecticut Women's Correctional Centre at Niantic State Farm. It appears that the programme has been successful. This section summarizes most of the principles which it incorporates.

It will be noted that none of the principles set out in this section are new to the Ontario Correctional Institute. The few principles which distinguish the Niantic programme from OCI's milieu therapy are discussed in Section 4.

3.1 CONDITIONS FOR MORAL GROWTH

The moral development programme tries to provide inmates with the following elements of experience which they have missed and which have led to moral retardation:

- 1) Role-Taking Opportunities. The programme attempts to provide role-taking opportunities through discussion of moral and personal issues in which each individual is encouraged to the others' points of view.
- 2) Intellectual Stimulation. An effort is made to encourage logical analyses of situations because a high stage of moral reasoning requires a high stage of logical reasoning.

3) Responsibility. Explicit responsibility for decision making is given to the inmate.

4) Cognitive-Moral Conflict. Discussion of moral and personal dilemmas in small groups and on community policies in the community exposes the individual to other viewpoints and he tends to question and rethink his own standards.

5) Exposure to the Next Stage Up. Inmates at any given stage (except Stage 4) are presented with arguments at the next stage up by other inmates. Group leaders clarify and support inmates' higher-stage reasoning and present higher-stage reasoning of their own.

6) Living in a Just Community. This element of the programme, perhaps the most important, involves making the unit democratic, giving authority over internal matters, and stressing the responsibility of inmates both individually and collectively.

3.2 MANAGEMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY

The administration must delegate clearly defined authority to the unit including, at the minimum, the power to control internal discipline in matters such as tardiness in arriving at groups or leaving a mess in the unit.

The number of inmates in the programme must be limited to between 10 and 30 with the ideal being between 15 and 25.

Selection of Correctional Officers for the programme should be made from among volunteers, with an eye toward staff compatibility, and Unit Management should interview candidates. Unit staff members must also be selected for flexibility and willingness to share some authority with the inmates. Inmates must participate voluntarily, represent a cross-section of stages, and have at least several months still to serve in the prison.

Inmates who volunteer should be made aware that their participation will involve a willingness to accept new responsibilities and new ways of relating to inmates and staff.

3.3 SETTING UP UNIT RULES

Staff and inmates must participate together in establishing rules of the unit.

Training for and discussion by groups should occur before the constitutional convention under the guidance of the programme trainer.

The constitutional convention should last until all rules have been discussed and approved by staff, inmates and administration, and should be marked by patience and willingness to discuss all issues.

All members of the programme, staff and inmates, should meet together every few months to renew the constitution and revise the rules.

3.4 COMMUNITY MEETINGS

The Unit is governed by community meetings in which every inmate and staff member of the Unit has an equal right to call meetings, to voice opinions, and to vote on decisions.

Meetings are held at least once a week, and there should be time available for optional extra meetings at least once a day. Attendance at meetings is mandatory.

There is a strict rule of confidentiality with staff making clear the nature of revelations concerning which they will not feel obligated to maintain confidence.

No subject should be forbidden.

3.5 SMALL GROUPS

Small groups deal with personal problems of importance to inmates. All discussions in groups is confidential, even between groups. Groups meet two or more times a week on a regular schedule. Membership is permanent and attendance is required.

Groups not only seek to help their members solve problems, they also try to make them aware of the social and moral aspects of those problems.

4. A PROGRAMME FOR OCI

The various approaches adopted by the more or less autonomous treatment units in OCI are ostensibly oriented to morally neutral psycho-social objectives. In fact, the very theories of psychology and sociology on which correctional treatments are founded are disguised value judgements. For example, the behaviourist assumption that all fundamental laws determining behaviour are independent of man's wishes corresponds to Stage 4 thinking that obedience to laws is an end in itself. The limitation of group dynamics to the study of interpersonal processes corresponds to the sanctification of interpersonal contracts characteristic of Stage 5 thinking. The lifegoals orientation of Stage 6 thinking

and psychiatry.

It should, therefore, be no surprise that OCI's nominally value-free treatment programmes depend upon moral pressures being exerted on the residents, and on their being evaluated in moral terms by staff and by other members of their units. Treatment goals, such as being honest, not manipulating others, and modifying a generally unacceptable code of conduct, are also moral.

It is, in short, the moral nature of OCI's programmes which make them so similar to the Niantic programme.

It should make an OCI programme more effective if the underlying philosophy were made explicit by structuring it to reflect the psychological theory of stage-by-stage moral development. To do this would require only five innovations, compared with present OCI programmes.

4.1 SHARING MORAL DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES WITH THE RESIDENTS

The theory of moral stages provides a convenient frame of reference for understanding residents. The principles of trust and democracy imply that the residents should be encouraged to use the same frame of reference. This would require all members of the programme to be trained in moral development principles. The main advantage would be that people concerned with quite different modes of treatment would all use a common non-technical language. Thus ultimate treatment goals and rating standards could be expressed in clearer and more generally understandable terms than they seem to be at present.

4.2 GIVING MORE AUTONOMY TO CORRECTIONAL STAFF

An atmosphere of trust cannot be created unless the staff show that they trust themselves, their colleagues and the residents. This requires staff to be sufficiently secure that they can contradict each other in unit meetings, and support a democratically reached group decision even if they do not agree with it. Such trust in turn makes it essential that those in charge of junior correctional officers give them the training, the autonomy and the respect which is essential to preserving a very high level of morale. In other words, if correctional officers are to display a high stage of moral reasoning, their superiors must show at least a similar stage of judgement.

4.3 SETTING UP A HALF-WAY HOUSE

After two years the Niantic Programme was able to make the logical step of applying the moral development approach to the

Proposal for a Programme for the Ontario Correctional Institute Based on Moral Development Theory transition to the community. In July 1973, a group of rooms and facilities at the YWCA in New Haven were opened as a living unit in which women from the moral development unit at New Haven could complete their sentence in the community.

It had been found that any progress which could be achieved in prison could be achieved within six months. After that, issues in the transition to the community must be faced in a community setting.

In order to form a moral community, offenders must be temporarily kept from the temptations and problems they faced in the wider community, by living in close and continual contact with one another and staff. Once the level of moral thinking has been raised in such a group, it can maintain itself as a responsible force in the wider community.

Kohlberg argues that such a community should be a half-way house separate from the unit at the prison. However, it would probably be more practical, and perhaps even more desirable, for an OCI programme to have a group all of whom were on daily working TAPs [Temporary Absence Passes] but returning each evening to their unit.

4.4 SHARING DISCIPLINARY POWER WITH RESIDENTS

A just community must be responsible for its own conduct. This implies that staff must share authority with residents. An interesting moral dilemma now appears. On the one hand a democratic community should have the power to discipline its members for misdemeanors that are the exclusive concern of that community. On the other hand, it would be risky to give disciplinary powers to people whose moral judgement is still at a low stage: indeed it would not even help those people because they profit most from exposure to moral thinking only one stage higher, so a stage 1 or 2 resident might simply get more confused trying to settle a disciplinary problem in collaboration with a stage 4, 5, or 6 staff member.

The solution might be for management, in delegating authority, to insist that power to investigate and discipline residents for certain types of misdemeanors be reserved for authorities outside the unit and that all other offences be the exclusive concern of unit members, both staff and residents. Within these limits the following principles could be borrowed from Niantic (they are already practised to some extent in at least one OCI unit):

- 1) Discipline should be used as a means of encouraging responsibility to others and should not just be a punishment.
- 2) The Unit as a whole has the sole power of deciding that a programme member should be disciplined.
- 3) Staff as well as residents can be disciplined.
- 4) The specific discipline to be imposed is determined by a discipline board composed of officers and residents. Resident membership is based on rotation not election.

4.5 TRAINING STAFF IN MORAL DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

An understanding of moral development stages assists correctional staff in at least four ways.

- 1) It allows the staff to understand the resident on his own terms, and to fully grasp his way of thinking. This facilitates communication, since the person at a lower stage can only understand the next stage up. A staff member who reasons and acts in a high-stage way is often misunderstood by a lower stage resident, with consequent angry feelings.
- 2) It helps staff in leading groups to ensure that higher-stage residents are heard by the group thus influencing lower-stage residents in their development.
- 3) It helps staff to set broad treatment goals for the individual

Proposal for a Programme for the Ontario Correctional Institute Based on Moral Development Theory resident and for the resident group, and to assess development towards those goals.

4) It helps staff to further their own development as responsible, caring people.

These pay-offs cannot, however, be achieved without training. Although the caring function envisaged for OCI by the Senior Management is an expression of the reflective level of morality, some staff seem to have the lower-level Stage 4 law-and-order orientation. Furthermore, staff who normally operate at a higher level may regress to Stage 2 opportunism or even Stage 1 coercive behaviour under the stress induced by a disturbance among residents. It is, therefore, necessary to train staff to function at a consistently high level of moral development before the programme starts.

Training is also needed to enable staff to recognize the moral nature of the issues involved in day-to-day events, to perceive the moral stage at which the residents and they themselves are operating, and to make best use of these perceptions in confronting and guiding others.

Because the term moral development smacks of Victorianism it should not be used to label the programme. If a descriptive term is needed at all it might be called a values programme.

5. OTHER COMPONENTS TO ENSURE EFFECTIVENESS

It is the writer's belief that a values programme is no panacea for rehabilitation, but that it should be an essential ingredient of correctional treatment. Obviously if a man's reasoning capacity is severely limited, his moral reasoning cannot develop beyond a low stage. If he has psychological troubles, a values programme will not remove them: thus, although it has been shown that the higher a person's moral judgement the less frequently does he indulge in maladaptive aggression, it was also found that people at any stage may act aggressively to others even though they know beforehand that they will inevitably thereby penalize themselves.

It would, therefore, appear to be advisable to supplement a values programme with additional components to ensure its effectiveness. Some components which could be an integral part of the programme will now be briefly reviewed.

5.1 STRUCTURED EXPERIENCES

A variety of structured therapeutic experiences would both increase residents' morale and give them specific learning opportunities which might otherwise not arise at all or, if they did, might have to be overlooked because of the necessity for dealing with other problems arising simultaneously.

The experiences could include exercises, simulations, and games to develop social and reasoning skills, and to test out various roles, strategies and attitudes. Such experiences would be aimed at raising the degree of residents' competence in dealing with the difficulties of everyday life on the street which involve problems of values.

5.2 CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING AND RELAXATION

Many residents have used drugs and excitement to get some sort of kick out of life and then resorted to similar means in attempting to calm themselves down again. The external stimuli on which they rely are often dangerous, illegal or both. Therefore, it seems worthwhile to introduce residents to techniques of consciousness raising and relaxation which at least have the merit of legality. Such techniques include sensory awareness exercises, guided phantasy, transcendental meditation, biofeedback training, and encounter group work. The personal growth attainable by these means is likely to result in shifts in values, so the exercises should be part of the values programme. Because many of the techniques would be disconcertingly novel to some members of staff, before they are introduced there should be an Institute-wide programme of familiarization.

5.3 PSYCHODRAMA

After encouraging unit members to examine their values through

Proposal for a Programme for the Ontario Correctional Institute Based on Moral Development Theory structured experiences and to get more in touch with their feelings through consciousness raising and relaxation, they can take the next step, examining the motives which underline their acceptance of particular values. This can be done by using the numerous techniques of psychodrama. Here OCI's sophisticated television facility could be put to full and proper use. For example, the editing facility would enable a protagonist to enact several aspects of himself, each role being videotaped and finally edited so that all his selves finally appeared on the screen together. Both members of the media staff have some experience of psychodrama.

5.4 SMALL GROUPS WITH INSTANT REPLAY

As mentioned in Sub-section 3.5, small group therapy is an essential part of a values programme. Self-disclosure in groups would be directed particularly at showing people that their motives are not unique and that the sky does not fall when the motives underlying their value system are revealed. Confrontation in groups can be facilitated by videorecording. The writer has found that playing back the tape of an entire psychotherapy session has little value, but instant replay of significant interaction may be very helpful. After three weeks practice it becomes quite easy for a therapist to make unobtrusive recordings of the group using Portapak videotape equipment. This, and not the elaborate studio facilities, should be used for group work.

5.5 STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY ISSUES

To encourage awareness of the ways in which value judgements determine most aspects of our lives, groups would be formed to discuss current events, social problems, the arts and leisure activities. A conscious attempt would be made to enlarge the range of residents' interests, because much anti-social activity seems to stem from boredom. The membership of discussion groups would cut across that of the psychotherapy groups in order to increase the variety of viewpoints to which each resident would be exposed.

5.6 GOAL-SETTING AND MEASUREMENT OF PROGRESS

It is impossible to know whether a treatment programme is of any use unless there are clearly defined goals for each resident and progress towards them is measurable. The superordinate goal for each resident would be to demonstrate that he has learned to think and function at one stage higher at least than when he entered the programme. His initial and final stages would be determined by observation of his daily life, and by a standardized test. Progress to intermediate goals would be measured by means of the rating system being devised by OCI's Chief Psychologist, Dr. R. M. Reynolds.

5.7 VALUES RESEARCH

To improve goal-setting and progress measurement techniques, all participants in the values programme would be asked to assist in devising an inventory of values. Research would then be conducted to discover which accepted values appear to be important determinants of behaviour. By identifying the values most closely associated with criminal behaviour, it would become possible to select from a variety of possible intermediate goals, those which are likely to change the values which most need changing.

5.8 ACCOUNTABILITY

It may require a certain amount of flexibility on the part of OCI's Senior Management to institute the proposed programme because it has many novel components, so that experience with other modes of treatment would not necessarily help and might even be an interfering factor.

As far as the writer knows, this would be the world's first values programme for adult males, so its results should be carefully assessed within a reasonable time limit.

The writer would prefer that the staff be given a year in which

Proposal for a Programme for the Ontario Correctional Institute Based on Moral Development Theory to show that the programme works, and, if satisfactory evidence is not produced at the end of that time, then it should be abandoned. Data in the form of documents and videotapes should be collected throughout the duration of the programme to provide the necessary evidence.

Because there would be a large number of teething problems, the composition of the staff of highly-motivated volunteers should be changed as little as possible during the year. During that time the unit as a whole should be allowed to voice opinions in the selection of further residents. Hopefully there would be a cadre of only ten or so initially. As soon as they had learned to operate as a just community, the population could begin to double, the original residents serving as models for the newcomers. Then, after six months or so, the daily TAP system could be instituted and the unit brought up to full strength.

It is suggested that initially the residents should be those with personality disorders, which are notoriously resistant to change, so that if the programme were to succeed that could not be attributed to spontaneous remission. The residents would need to spend at least six months in the unit, but the programme would be demanding, so that nobody would be likely to stay because it was "easy go". Staff should not be blamed if a large number of residents are dropped from the programme; that is the price to be paid for learning how to select suitable candidates for the programme.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTES

1. The description of stages of moral development is mainly an amalgam of a restatement of Kohlberg's stages given by Clive Beck in Moral Education in the Schools (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education 1971) and a precis of ego ideal development given by Leland Van Den Daele in Genetic Psychology Monographs. (vol. 78, No. 2, 1968, pp. 191-256). The operational definition of the stages is given by Nancy Porter and Nancy Taylor in Row to Assess the Moral Reasoning of Students, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1972).

2. The approaches to moral education are abstracted from Chapters 11 and 12 of Beck's Ethics: An Introduction (McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1972).

3. The overview of moral development in corrections consists mainly of extracts from "The Moral Development Approach to Corrections: Manual" (mimeographed, n.d.) by Lawrence Kohlberg, Kelsey, Kaufman, Peter Scharf and Joseph Hickey.

4. In the discussion of just communities in OCI, mentions of the Niantic intervention are abstracted from the "Justice Structure of the Prison" by Kohlberg, Scharf and Hickey in The Prison Journal (Vol. 51, No. 2, 1973, pp. 3-14).

1 This paper was written by Dr. G. Harry McLaughlin in 1974, as a proposal concerning organization of the treatment unit programmes at the Ontario Correctional Institute. Although some aspects of the proposal have been outdated by subsequent developments at the Institute (e.g., dismantling of the television studio), it is produced in its entirety here because of its relevance to the discussion to follow.

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