



Stages: Understanding How You Make Moral Decisions.

Review Author[s]:
Peter Singer

Ethics, Vol. 91, No. 1 (Oct., 1980), 153-154.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0014-1704%28198010%2991%3A1%3C153%3ASUHYMM%3E2.0.CO%3B2-%23>

Ethics is currently published by The University of Chicago Press.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/ucpress.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Kenneth Thompson's book includes several short articles and essays which have evidently been published before. Separate chapters address the three subjects identified in the title, and a fourth chapter includes unconnected and diffuse reflections on attitudes toward change, America's role in the world, and the place of values in education. Thompson makes a most perfunctory attempt to integrate his material, but in fact this book has no discernible overall theme: It certainly will not "help students . . . to deal somewhat more critically with the main currents of international thought" (p. ix) since many of those currents are not even mentioned.

Philosophers who look to these essays for enlightenment about the place of ethics in international relations will be disappointed (especially those whose hopes were raised by the author's most illuminating earlier book, *Political Realism and the Crisis of World Politics* [Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1960]). Thompson still sees the basic problem as the conflict between "realism" and "idealism"; about this his remarks are sensible, but fifty years after the emergence of the "great debate" one might expect more than the vacuous conclusion that foreign policy must pursue a plurality of goals and we should therefore learn to live with the inevitable ambiguity. Of course, the real problem is how to order potentially conflicting goals, and these essays make no progress on this question.

Thompson offers interesting reflections, *en passant*, about several disparate subjects: the contributions of Reinhold Niebuhr, Hans Morgenthau, and George Kennan to American thought about international relations; the efforts of foundations to improve agricultural productivity in developing countries; the heuristic value of "functionalism" in international studies. His remarks throughout are informed and judicious. But worthwhile books are made of more than this.

CHARLES R. BEITZ
Swarthmore College

Lande, Nathaniel, and Slade, Afton. *Stages: Understanding How You Make Moral Decisions*.

San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979. Pp. xxiii+156. \$8.95 (cloth).

Stages may best be described as a moral-philosophy version of Gail Sheehy's best-seller, *Passages*. Lande and Slade have tried to turn Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development into one of those Now You Can Understand Yourself books that sell millions of copies. "We find ourselves reasoning in new ways," the authors tell us "and so, we feel, will you" after reading their book.

I doubt that *Stages* will make the best-seller list, and I doubt that any readers will think in new ways after reading it. Kohlberg's theory is presented in a flat, undramatic manner that renders it neither convincing nor particularly interesting. There is a chapter on each of Kohlberg's six stages of moral development, but most of each chapter is a hodge-podge of made-up little stories of the "Peggy, 19, comes from the country to work in New York and her boss asks her to work late . . ." variety. Kohlberg's own well-known dilemmas—should Heinz steal the drug he cannot afford to buy, but needs to save the life of his sick wife?—are also used heavily. We are told how people at different stages of moral development would answer these dilemmas, but the reasons for classifying a particular response as, say, Stage Two rather than Stage Four, are often obscure.

Some of the problems of *Stages*, including the one just mentioned, are problems of Kohlberg's theory rather than Lande and Slade's presentation of it. Lande and Slade barely mention that Kohlberg's theory has been severely criticized by other workers in the same field. They refer to Kohlberg's "edifice of well-researched theory" without giving any indication how much empirical data there is to back it up. This is not surprising, because Kohlberg has been very slow to publish empirical data. Nor do the authors mention the difficulties involved in making an independent assessment of Kohlberg's empirical research. Kohlberg's published and unpublished papers are highly unsatisfactory in this respect, and a substantial book tying all his work together is still not in sight, despite announcements of it as forthcoming at intervals over the past ten years. (Incidentally, the references on pp. 154 and 155 of *Stages* to "L. Kohlberg and E. Turiel [eds.] *Moralization: The Cognitive Developmental Approach*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973" are to just such a once announced but never delivered volume.)

Lande and Slade are also uncritical in their acceptance of Kohlberg's categorization of stages. Thus they faithfully report Kohlberg's observation that his son's early experiment with vegetarianism was only Stage One morality, because it did not differentiate human and animal life. A few chapters later we are told that according to Stage Six reasoning a captain who needs to select someone for a dangerous mission should not single out the member of his company who is dying from some illness, because "as a matter of principle you have to look on every life as sacred." The apparent discrepancy between these two classifications passes unnoticed.

It would be a mistake to look to *Stages* for the much to be desired coherent reconstruction and defense of Kohlberg's appealing but shaky theory. Indeed it would be a mistake to look to *Stages* for anything much except an illustration of the level of thought that the authors and publisher apparently think will interest the public in moral-development theory. The contrast between this book and a work on morality by a professional philosopher or psychologist could not be greater. Scholarly works, of course, are not intended for a popular audience; but there must be something less vacuous than *Stages* which would not be too difficult or dry for the general reader.

PETER SINGER
Monash University

Goodpaster, K. E., and Sayre, K. M., eds. *Ethics and Problems of the 21st Century*. Notre Dame, Ind., and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979. Pp. xi+210. \$15.95 (cloth).

These editors were in well over their heads. Their pretentious, uninformative title is an early warning. In the preface, they describe their task more precisely as "analyzing the role of environmental and social values in the decision making of power companies" (p. vii), following on from an earlier NSF-sponsored project on "values in the electric power industry." They set about commissioning "original" contributions from a star-studded cast: Frankena, the Routleys, Glover, DeGeorge, Coburn, MacIntyre, Gewirth, Baier, the Goldings, and Peter Singer.