

The Socioanalytic Theory

of
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Critical to Hogan's theory is the role of *rule systems*, which are an explicit expression of the morality or values of a social group. Hogan views all purposive social behavior as occurring within the context of rule systems. A defining characteristic of a social rule system is its *ethic*, e.g., respect or equity. Hogan thinks that both the similarities and differences between people can be explained in terms of their relationship to systems of rules. Similarities between people are a product of the rules that have been adopted by the groups within which they have common membership. Differences are a product of each individual's understanding and application of a group's rules.

Rule systems represent an adaptive response to evolutionary pressures that compel a social group to create a *value system* and related *behavioral guidelines* for its members that ensure that functional responses to the demands of a particular environment will be made. The development of such guidelines increase the probability that a group will survive over time. While the rule systems of a particular culture will differ in many respects, at a basic level, successful cultures will embrace certain common rules, e.g., rules about cheating, lying, and stealing. Most, if not all, human cultures depend heavily upon verbal information and are especially vulnerable to deceptive messages. Thus, rules related to language are common among different moralities, e.g., prohibitions against lying. Hogan thinks that establishment and maintenance of systems of rules is possible because of certain characteristics of human beings. Among these characteristics are a predisposition to comply with authority, to internalize adult behavior patterns during critical periods of development, to be sensitive to the expectations of peers, and for rule-governed behavior to become ritualized or automatic. (Note: Some temperament types, particularly those associated with a predisposition for antisocial behavior, are less disposed to adapt to social rule systems than other temperament types; i.e., they are more difficult to socialize.)

To take advantage of the human predispositions listed above, Hogan asserts that each culture must develop child rearing practices capable of transmitting the adaptive values and behaviors evolved by the group for its survival. Thus, a feedback loop is created that includes the environmental demands faced by the group, the guidelines developed for responding to these demands and the child rearing practices that develop character types best able to meet the demands of the group's environment. However, Hogan cautions that the rules and behaviors that a group evolves, in response to the demands of an environment, apply only to past conditions. There is no guarantee that values, rules and behaviors that have been successful in the past will be equally successful under the current or some future environmental conditions.

Hogan suggests that some societies and cultures become dysfunctional and fail. One important benchmark for the health of a social group or a culture is the extent to which its members comply with its rules and standards for behavior. Cultures usually fail for one of two reasons. The first reason that failure is likely to occur is that the feedback loop just

described breaks down. This happens when most, if not all, of the individuals within a culture become *insulated* from the most fundamental demands of the environment in which it must function. The second reason that a society may fail is the development of *factionalism*. Factionalism results from the evolution of a social structure that undermines the solidarity and common purpose that is needed to maintain a society's cultural focus or coherence. All societies have a certain degree of factionalism that results in varying degrees of both internal conflict and cooperation. Indeed, to a certain degree, this is probably necessary in order for adaptation to continue. However, when factionalism within a society results in an excess of conflict and a loss of cultural focus, the society will self-destruct.

Moral Development

The socioanalytic model for moral development in children includes four major components. The four components are *moral knowledge*, *socialization*, *empathy*, and *autonomy*. These components are not stages and therefore are not sequentially dependent upon one another. That is, one's socialization may be weak and still develop a strong degree of empathy. Socialization, empathy and autonomy can be thought of as transitions which tend to occur at successively later points in an individual's life. However, each component is a unique developmental challenge that is independent of the others.

Hogan also suggests that there are two broad morality configurations in people and that these two configurations tend toward different rationales for morality. The first configuration is characterized by an emotional and spontaneous response style. This type of person tends toward a rationale for morality rooted in a commitment to *personal conscience*. Such individuals believe that people are naturally good, and injustice results from oppressive social institutions. The second configuration is characterized by a rational and deliberate response style. This type of person tends toward a rationale for morality rooted in a commitment to *social responsibility*. Such individuals believe that people are naturally bad and that social institutions protect people from injustice. Of course, these two types should be thought of as the end points of a continuum with most people falling between the extremes. Regardless of morality type, each individual develops and maintains an identity and reputation both of which will contribute to the definition of their character.

The underlying foundation for moral development is *knowledge of the rules*. Knowledge of the rules is evident in one's ability to state what the rules are and in the ability to discern the situations in which a rule applies and what response is indicated by the rule in that situation, i.e., *moral judgment*. Knowledge of the rules and moral judgment are both necessary for the development of *self-control*.

Socialization relates to the extent to which one considers the rules binding upon oneself. A sense of commitment to the rules of one's culture and social affiliations, e.g., family and school, is indicated by voluntary compliance with the rules. When this is observed, it is sometimes described as *internalization* of the rules. While the highly socialized who have not developed empathy tend to be overly conforming to authority and rigidly

compliant with rules, the unsocialized are egocentric, impulsive and undisciplined. Socialization appears to be best accomplished through a strong attachment bond between a child and his or her parents and what Baumrind has called an authoritative style of parenting (in contrast to authoritarian).

Empathy can be described as the ability to take another person's point-of-view or assume their role in a situation. It means being able to see a situation as someone else sees it, particularly when it is a perspective different from one's own. Empathetic perception is necessary before one can understand the implications of one's actions on other people. The development of empathy is facilitated by the social competence of a child and by exposure to an authoritative style of parenting. However, simply having an empathetic ability is not sufficient. One must also be willing to act upon one's empathetic perceptions. Hogan suggests that two types of experience contribute to the development of empathetic behavior. First, one must him or herself have been the recipient of empathetic treatment by others. Second, one must have personal experience with the effects of non-empathetic treatment, e.g., injustice and ridicule.

Autonomy, in moral behavior, is characterized by independent action based on a personal sense of duty. To be autonomous is to understand that the reasons for one's actions are never fully conscious. One recognizes that self-deception about one's motives is always a possibility. Achieving this level of moral functioning requires full *self-awareness* and recognition that moral behavior must be a *free choice*. Self-awareness requires that one be as aware of one's motives as possible. It also requires that the relativity of one's values and principles be accepted and requires the recognition that all rule systems and the values underlying them have limitations. Finally, autonomy requires that one recognize and accept that life is unpredictable, unjust and that the meaning of life will probably never be entirely clear. Self-aware individuals have a sense of inner detachment that permits them to distance themselves from their social roles. A self-aware person is one who is capable of achieving an enlightened commitment to the conventional rules and values of his or her culture. True moral autonomy is an ideal that is seldom fully achieved but may exist to varying degrees and at various times in the behavior of an individual.

Hogan suggests that a failure of moral development or what he refers to as *delinquency* in a person results from a poor early attachment bond with caretakers that leads to insecurity, hostility and a weak accommodation to authority, i.e., poor development of moral knowledge. This initial failure leads to further failure in the development of normal peer relations and social isolation. By adolescence such individuals are not only insecure and hostile toward authority but are insensitive to social expectations and have little or no respect for the rights of others. In short, potentially criminal behavior is a very probable outcome.

Adapted from:

Center, D. B. (1999). Character Development. In, [Strategies for Social and Emotional Behavior](#). See books section on this web site for additional information.