



**SNS COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING**  
**(Autonomous)**  
**DEPARTMENT OF ELECTRICAL AND ELECTRONICS ENGINEERING**

**COURSE NAME:19GE701 / PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND HUMAN VALUES**

**IV YEAR/VII SEMESTER**

**UNIT:1- ENGINEERING ETHICS**

**TOPIC:MORAL AUTONOMY - KOHLBERG'S  
AND GILLIGAN'S THEORY**



# Moral Autonomy

Moral Autonomy is the philosophy which is self-governing or self-determining, i.e., **acting independently** without the influence or distortion of others.

The moral autonomy relates to the individual ideas whether right or wrong conduct which is independent of ethical issues. The concept of moral autonomy helps in improving self-determination.

**Moral Autonomy** is concerned with independent attitude of a person related to moral/ethical issues.

This concept is found in moral, ethical and even in political philosophy.



# Moral Autonomy

- Ability to relate the problems with the problems of law, economics and religious principles
- Skill to process, clarify and understand the arguments against the moral issues
- Ability to suggest the solutions to moral issues on the basis of facts
- Must have the imaginative skill to view the problems from all the viewpoints –
- Tolerance while giving moral judgment, which may cause trouble



# Skills for Improving Moral Autonomy

Moral autonomy reflects the concept of individuality. This relates to the idea of building one's self with the moral values one has while **developing psychologically**.

To have moral autonomy in all the aspects, one should have a lot of **patience** and interest. One should adhere to the basic principles of humanity and should be strict with the Don'ts he has in mind and liberal with his Do's.

A Person must have adequate knowledge and understanding about the use of ethical language so as to defend or support his views with others.

He must have better **knowledge** in understanding the importance of suggestions and better solutions while resolving moral problems and also about the importance of tolerance on some critical situations.

Above all, one must understand the importance of maintaining **moral honesty** and should be liberal to understand the human behavior under certain circumstances.



# Kohlberg's Theory

Lawrence Kohlberg → a professor at Harvard University in Moral Development

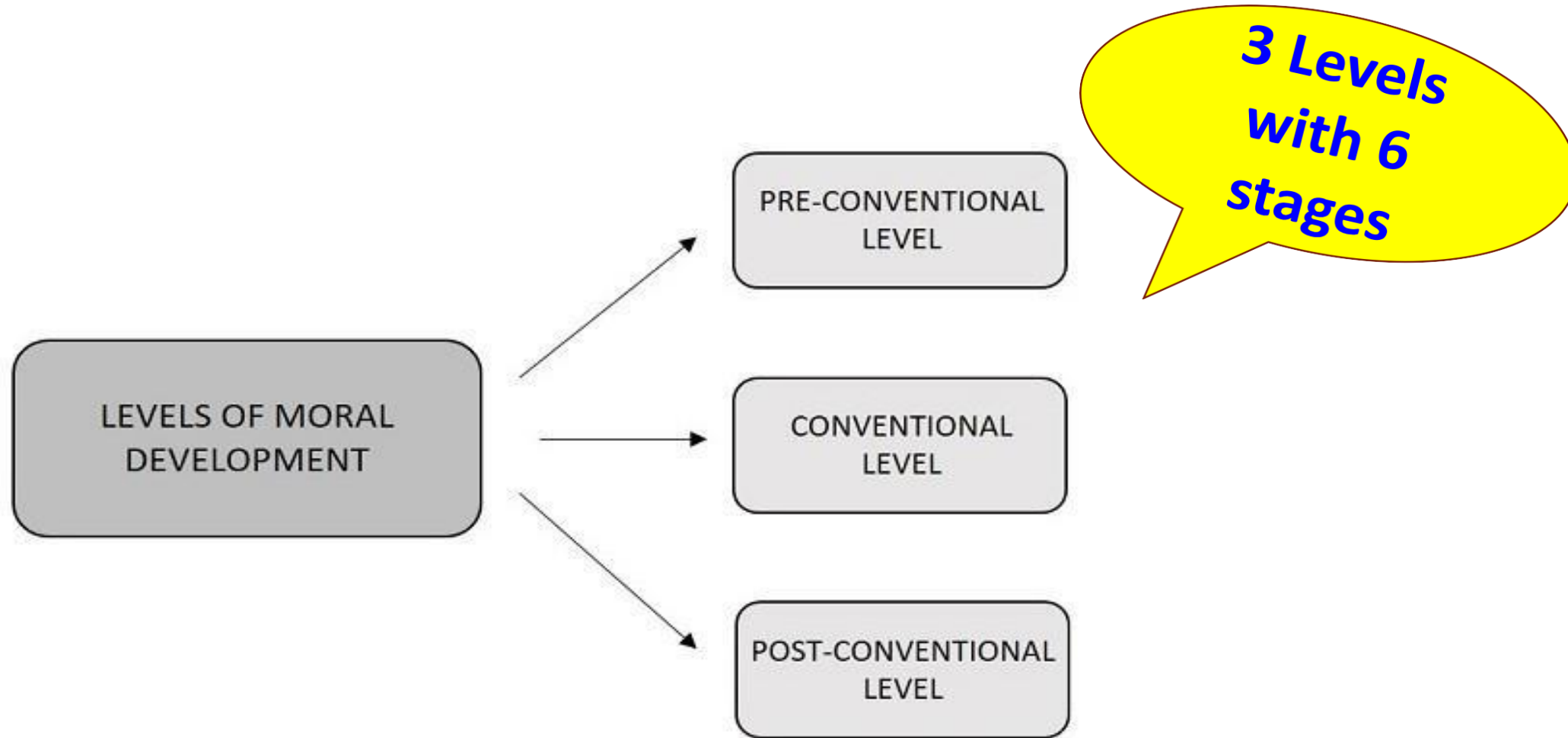
Proposed a theory on moral development - **Kohlberg's theory**.

People progress in moral reasoning based on their ethical behaviour.

He postulated this theory based on the thinking of younger children throughout their growing period as adults.

*“Younger children make judgment based on the consequences that might occur and the older children make judgment based on their intuitions”.*

# Levels and Stages of moral development

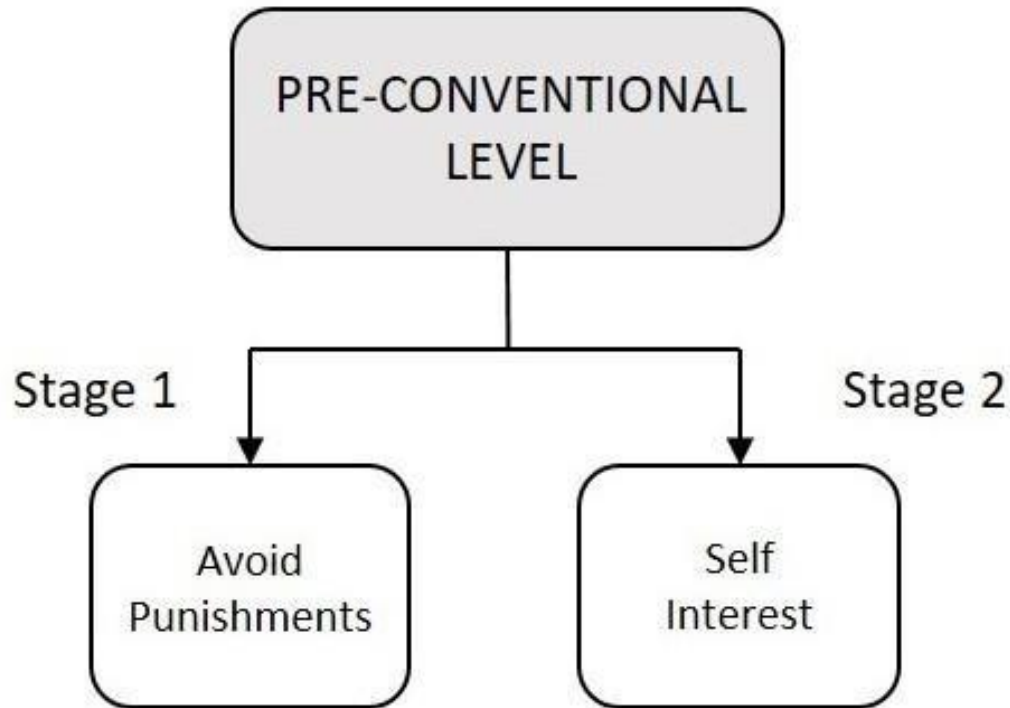


# Level 1: Pre-Conventional Level

First level of moral thinking

Found at Elementary school level

The thinker at this stage tends to think and behave based on the **direct consequences** that might occur



## Avoid Punishments

Think that judgment are to be made as per the socially acceptable norms as they are said so by some higher official (a teacher or a parent).

This is a child-like obedience, in order to avoid punishments.

## Self-interest

A thinker at this stage, shows interest in making decisions according to the rewards they get in exchange.

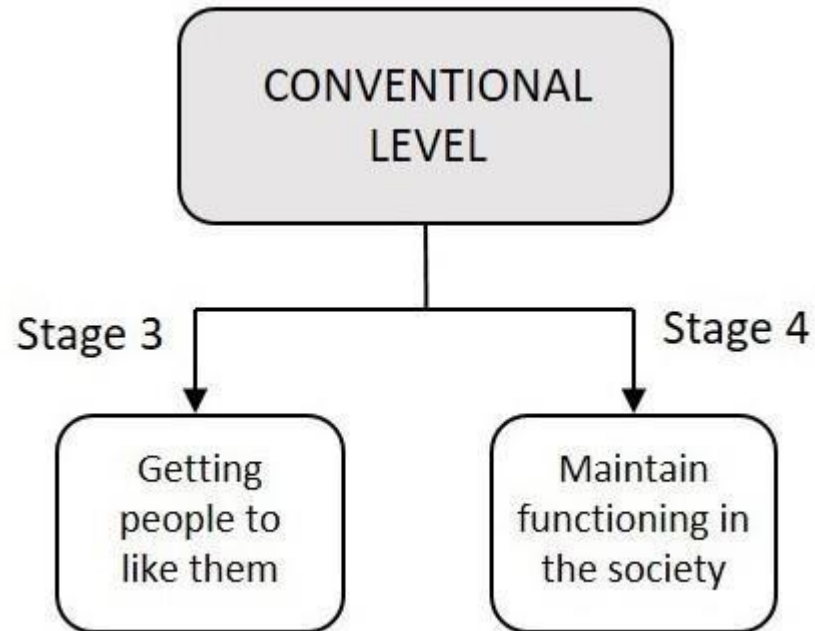
Second stage is characterized by a view that right behavior means acting in one's own best interests.

Tend to follow the rules of authority to ensure positive relationships and societal order.

# Level 2: Conventional Level

primary and high school level.

The thinker at this stage tends to think and behave based on the **want to please others**.



## Getting people to like them

The ideas of the society are considered  
Decision may or may not support the law.  
Thinking process is based on **how to impress others or society**  
and on how to please the people around.

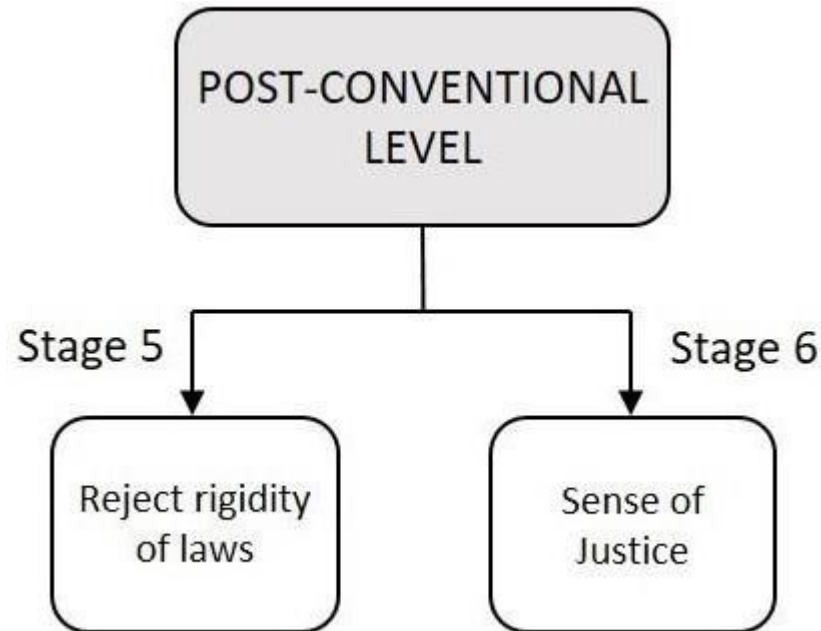
## Maintain functioning in the Society

Follow the rules for the good of the society  
The moral grounds on **how people in the society will consider** the  
job done will be the priority  
Believes that a social order is maintained by abiding by the rules



After the high school level.

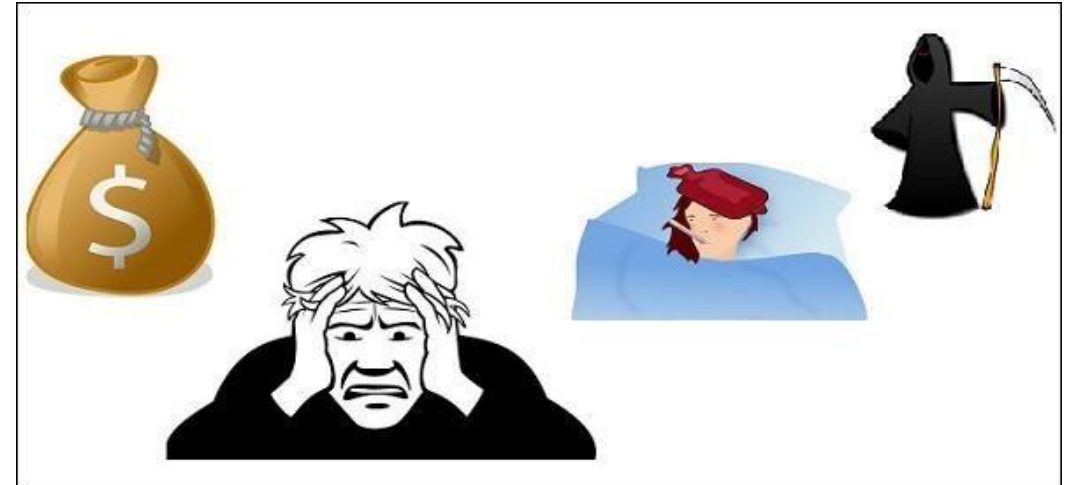
The thinker at this stage tends to think and behave based on a **sense of justice**..



- Reject rigidity of Laws
- Uses his moral thinking skills at a commendable pace Opinion that the rules have to be changed according to **humanitarian values**
- The thinker rejects the rigidity of the existing laws and rules at this stage.
- Sense of Justice
- The thinker has great moral values that he **keeps himself free from the external factors** that might influence his thinking process

## Situation:

A story of a middle-aged ordinary middle-class man, called **Henry** is considered as an example. **Henry** is an ordinary man having a wife. His **wife suffers** from a **dreadful disease**. Doctors believe that a special drug which was invented recently and is available at the BIG pharma store, can only save his wife.



When **Henry** went to buy the drug, the drug-seller costed it around \$2,000 dollars, while the actual manufacturing cost of the drug is \$20 dollars. Henry borrowed the money from friends and lenders and could finally collect only \$1,000 dollars. Though Henry pleaded a lot, the **greedy drug-seller** refused to sell the drug at low cost.

Now, **Henry** had no other option but to **steal the drug** from the shop to **save the life** of his wife. Is this a better option to do? What is your judgment?



# Possible options

## Options for the Thinker

**Henry should not steal the drug because it is the disobedience of law.**

This decision makes it impossible for Henry to save his wife. His wife dies and the rich drug-seller becomes richer. Though the law was obeyed, no moral justice was done. This is a **pre-conventional level** of moral thinking.

**Henry can steal the drug, but should be punished by the law.**

This decision helps Heinz save his wife, but Heinz will be kept in prison. Though Heinz took a moral decision, he had to undergo the punishment. This is a **Conventional level** of moral thinking.

**Henry can steal the drug and no law should punish him.**

This decision lets Heinz save his wife and both of them can live happily. This thinking is based on the thought that the rigidity in law should be rejected and justice should be done on moral grounds. This is a **post-conventional level** of moral thinking.



# Gilligan's Theory

Carol Gilligan opines that **Kohlberg's** theories → biased upon the **male thinking** process.

According to Gilligan, Kohlberg seemed to have studied only **privileged men and boys**.

She believed that **women** face a lot of **psychological challenges** and they are not moral widgets.

The women's point of view on moral development involves **caring** which shows its effect on **human relationships**.



# Gilligan's Theory

## Pre-conventional Level

A person in this stage **cares for oneself** to ensure survival.

Though the person's attitude is **selfish**, this is the transition phase, where the person finds the connection between oneself and others.

## Conventional Level

Person feels responsible and shows care towards other people.

Carol Gilligan believes that this moral thinking can be identified in the **role of a mother and a wife**.

Sometimes leads to the **ignorance of the self**.

## Post-conventional Level

This is the stage, where the principle of **care for self as well as others**, is accepted.

However, a section of people may never reach this level.

## Two types of thinking

Care-based morality  
(usually found in women)

Justice-based morality  
(usually found in men)





# Care-based Morality

- More emphasis is given to inter-connected relationships and universality.
- Acting justly focuses on avoidance of violence.
- Women with this are usually interested in helping others.
- More common in girls because of their connections to their mothers.
- Because girls remain connected to their mothers, they are less inclined to worry about issues of fairness.



# Justice-based Morality

- They view the world as being composed of autonomous individuals who interact with one another.
- Acting justly means avoiding inequality.
- Individuals with this are usually interested in protecting individuality.
- Thought to be more common among boys because of their need to differentiate between themselves and their mothers.
- Because they are separated from their mothers, boys become more concerned with the concept of inequality.





*Thank  
you*