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Business Ethics

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Heinz Dilemma

Lawrence Kohlberg a developmental psychologist who studied moral development, wanted to do a study on how people made such moral decisions. In order to do so, Kohlberg interview different ranges of people asking giving them moral situations to decide about. The most known situation created was the “Heinz dilemma.” Basically, there is a man that needs a drug for his dying wife, from a druggist who created it. The druggist created the drug using $400 is charging people $4000. Not having the money to pay for it, the man has to either steal the drug or let his wife die.

To categorise the level of responses Kohlberg made their levels based on conventions. The first level is “pre-conventional” which is a person that does not take into account the conventions of society, but the rational the is used is based on self-interest. The second level is “conventional” where the consequences of actions are not as important as fulfilling one's role and maintaining the approval of one's own group. Guilt over physical punishment such as jail is a motivation. The third and final level is “postconventional” where there is concern for some universally applicable moral standards such as the principle of respect for all human beings as individuals.

After evaluation and asking putting myself in the Heinz dilemma, I am honestly between the second level and the third level. This level is called the Transitional Level where one recognizes that social standards are relieve and arbitrary. Moral decisions are thought to be subjective and personal. Conscience is thought to derive from one's emotional responses. I believe that this level defines my response to the Heinz dilemma. I’m a aware of the fragileness and facade that of morality, law, and social standards. As a young adult I still want to be accepted by society but at the same time I know that I don't have to be accepted by society to have a fulfilling and happy life. In a case of stealing drugs for my wife, I would most definitely steal the drug after every legal choice is exhausted. I will be morally please because the druggist is at fault. He places money over the pricelessness of life. The druggist would soon become a hypocrite if someone he loved became sick and needed the drug, the druggist wouldn't hesitate and let them use it and even give it to them free of charge.

Thus the Heinz Dilemma and the levels defined within it are a good way to categorize the many different responses a person may have. When faced in a moral situation as the one Kohlberg created there, of course, will truly be different responses. Kohlberg’s level’s convention can be used in everyday situations such as political and moral dilemmas of people.