

Question of concept of 'postformal thinking': conceptual difficulties

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Postformal stage?

- Conceptual problems in assuming stage in the strict Piagetian sense
- **Confusion in the focus of study**
- **Problematic terms used**
- **Assumption of new stage**
- Empirical research cannot be solution, because it is always connected to used concepts (there are no empirical perceptions as such, but *interpreted* ones)

Several models of postformal thinking

- Group of PF models exist (see e.g. [Commons](#))
- For example models on development of autonomy and self-authorship & social perspective-taking, emotional development integrated to cognition; integration of pragmatic knowledge with theoretical knowledge, spirituality, wisdom...
- Some common features exists though: named as absolutism=> relativism=>dialectical thinking (Kramer, [Marchand](#), [Kallio](#))

Problematic questions... **object of study**

- *If there is shift of object of study* btw Piaget's theory and postformal theorists?
- *Category error*: it is not spoken of the exactly same phenomenon, but confused btw two different fields (as speaking of 'lambs' it is instead spoken of 'cats' or neuropsychological vs. subjective-experiential phenomena as same thing)

Problematic questions... **terms used**

- Philosophical terms (e.g. 'absolutism') used in description of psychological phenomena => serious troubles, as used terms may mean various things philosophically
- *Is it possible to make hierarchial order between philosophical assumption systems?*

Problematic questions... **stage**

- If it is question of logical continuation of P's theory, the definition of stage has to be the same (*note: P's changing view of the importance of 'stage'*)
- There seem to be some interconnectedness of models, but it does not mean that new stage exists (merely is signal of 'similarity' of models)

Problematic general questions...stage

- What is meant by *higher* stage?
- What is meant by development? What is the difference with concepts of progress, metamorphosis or change? (Kallio & Marchand, in press)
- Severe risk of normative, value-laden statements in using hierarchial order - typologies. *Who says the higher is better and in which sense?*

Ways out?

- Promising line of study: further complex schemes of formal-causal thinking (co-ordination of different viewpoints is one of them already in Piaget's theory!). Some models may be actually describing complex formal schemes.
- My suggestion: it seems to be question of study of *intergative thinking* in various domains (causal, social, emotional, spiritual and others) (Kallio, 2012) ('dialectical' thinking in philosophical terms)