- work in progress -

Moral Competence and Conflict Resolution

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Two Types of Conflicts: Actional and Personal Conflicts, Dilemmas and Fights

- Definition of *actional conflicts (dilemmas)*: From two courses of (partly) immoral actions only one is possible.
    - In cooperative communities, only dilemmas occur, but no fights.
    - Dilemmas can be resolved througjh thinking and discussion.

- Definition of *personal conflicts (fights)*: Two or more people compete for the same goal, but only one can get it
    - In competitive communities, both dilemmas and fights occur.
    - Fights can only be resolved through violence, deceit, and power.

- Dilemmas into fights: In many cases, actional cnflicts are conceived as (and turn into) personal conflicts.

Questions Concerning the Resolution of Dilemmas and Fights

- How can dilemmas turn into personal conflicts (fights)?
    - Impersonating moral principles: "I am a moral person". "Moral Imperialism," "Moral Majority."
    - Pluralistic ignorance: Interpreting others' immoral action as sign of bad character, but own failures as "error".
    - Disagreement: Seeing agreement on moral issues as a sign of personal respect, and disagreement as personal disrespect.

- Related philosophies: Competition versus cooperation
    - The believe that competition and individual success are the basis of human welfare, and that people are either good or bad, friend or enemy,
    - versus the believe that cooperation is the basis of human welfare, and that all people intend to be morally good, but – more or less – lack moral competence.

Intellectual Sources of Moral Prejudice

- "One need not score at Kohlberg's highest stages in order to exhibit high degrees of moral commitment and exemplary behavior."
    - Colby & Damon (1992, p. 328)

- "The force exerted by the moral sense of the individual is less effective than social myth would have us believe."
    - Milgram (1974, p. 6)

- "Moral reasoning is usually an ex post facto process used to influence the intuitions (and hence judgment) of other people."
    - (Haidt, 2001, p. 814)

- White people are morally superior than colored people. Therefore, we have an obligation to colonize their countries. "Moral "

The Two Aspects of Moral Behavior

- *Moral orientations*
  - ▸ are defined as the directing and confining *moral principles* which visibly guide our behavior, consciously or unconsciously.
  - ▸ *Affective aspect*.

- *Moral competence*
  - ▸ is defined as the ability to resolve a conflict on the basis of shared moral orientations through thinking and discussion rather than through violence, deceit, and power.
  - ▸ *Cognitive aspect*.

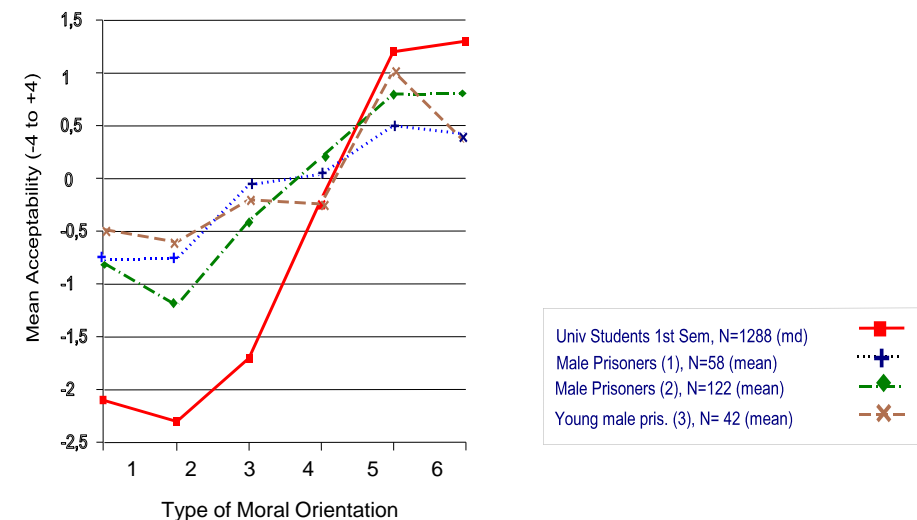## The Dual Aspect Theory of Moral Behavior

Ideals ⟹ Competence ⟹ Behavior
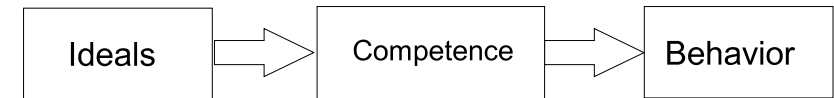
Types of Moral Orientations:
by Lawrence Kohlberg

- 1:Use of physical or psychological force as a criterion of moral rightness: The stronger party has the right of way.
- 2:Morality of simple exchange: "I do to you what you do to me."
- 3:Appeal to group solidarity and cohesion: "If this will harm my family or my friends, I will not do it."
- 4:Appeal to the law as the ultimate arbiter: "The law is on my side!"
- 5:Keeping social contracts: "I ought to do what I promised to sustain mutual trust."
- 6:Referring to universal moral principles: "This would be the most just solution for everyone involved, even for those people to be born in future."
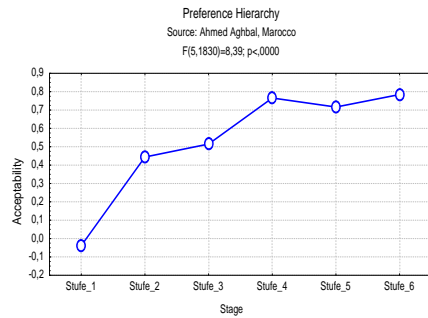
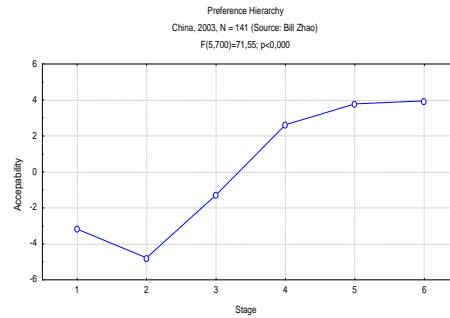## No Difference: Ranks of Moral Orientations of University Students and Young Criminals

Mean Acceptability (-4 to +4) vs Type of Moral Orientation

Legend:
- Univ Students 1st Sem, N=1288 (md)
- Male Prisoners (1), N=58 (mean)
- Male Prisoners (2), N=122 (mean)
- Young male pris. (3), N= 42 (mean)

Similar Moral Orientations in Other Cultures

Marocco (Aghbal, 2003)

Preference Hierarchy
Source: Ahmed Aghbal, Marocco
$F(5,1830)=8,39; p<,0000$

China (Zhao, 2003)

Preference Hierarchy
China, 2003, N = 141 (Source: Bill Zhao)
$F(5,700)=71,55; p<0,000$

The Nature of Moral Competence

SOCRATES: But if there is no one who desires to be miserable, there is no one, Meno, who desires evil; for what is misery but the desire and possession of evil? ...

....

SOCRATES: And if one man is not better than another in desiring good, he must be better in the power of attaining it? ...

....

SOCRATES: Then, according to your definition, virtue would appear to be the power of attaining good?
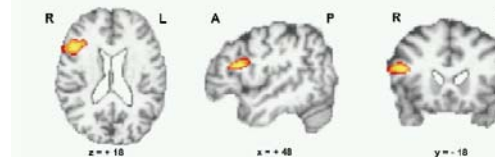
Socrates' Dialogue with Meno (Plato). Meno's part has been left out in this quote.

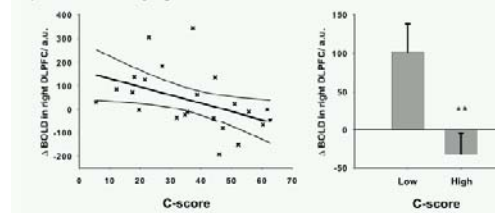# Moral judgment competence varies greatly (Confucius and Socrates were right)

Sources:
1. Lind (2009), N = 3104
2. Nowak (2009), N = 370
3. Lind (2002), N = 924
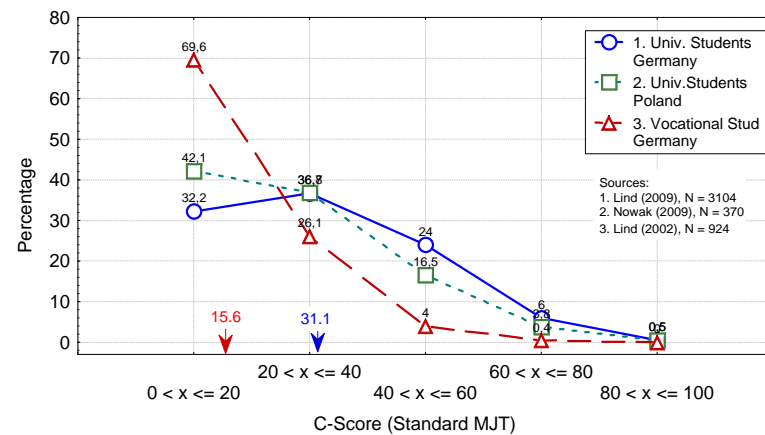
Neural Correlate of Moral Competence

The Experiment

N = 23 women
Dependent variable: Indicator for actitivity in the right dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (DLPFC)
Method: fMRI

Independent variable
a) Task: Judgment on the norm-conformity of statements (contrasted with judgments on the grammaticality of statements)
b) Moral Judgment Competence (C-Wert, MJT)

Finding
Persons with high C-score could solve the task with less activity in the right DLPFC than persons with low C-scoret. Effect size r = .45

Prehn, K., Wartenburger,I., Mériau, K., Scheibe, C., Goodenough, O.R., Villringer, A., van der Meer, E., & Heekeren, H.R. (2008). Influence of individual differences in moral judgment competence on neural correlates of socio-normative judgments. *Social Cognitive and Affective Neurosience. 3*(1), 33-46.
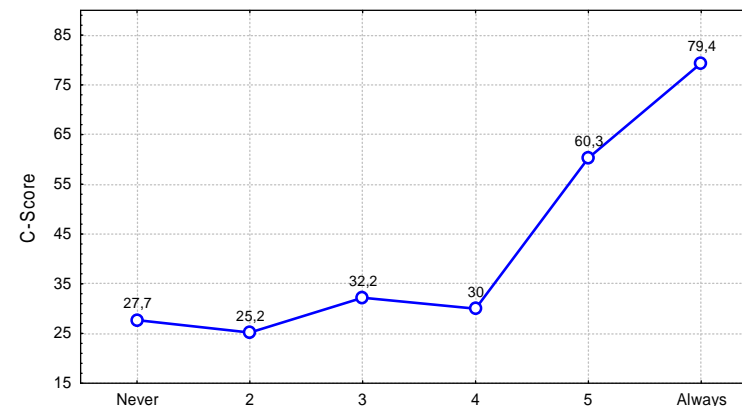
Better Teaching: "Do you use of cooperative learning in class?"

Moral Judgment Competence and Learning:
"How Often Have You Used Cooperative Learning?"
Teachers (N=15)

Question 1.30
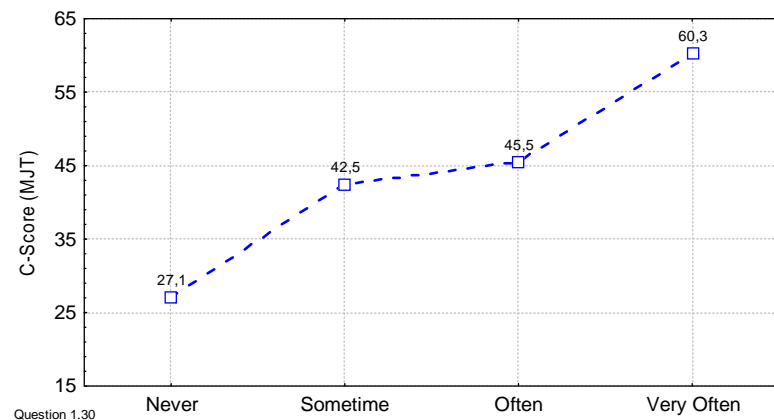
Better Teaching: Letting student do self-chosen projects

Moral Judgment Competence as a Condition for Learning:
"How Often Do You Use Goal-Oriented Project Work?"
Teachers (N=15)

What do these findings mean for moral education?

- Fostering moral competence

- Preventing moral dilemmas from becoming personal conflicts

Reference

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- Lind, G., Hartmann, H.A. & Wakenhut, R., Eds. (2010). Moral Jugment and Social Education. Studies in the Psychology and Philosophy of Moral Judgment and Education. Edison, NJ: Transaction Publisher. McNamee, S. (1977). Moral behavior, moral development and motivation. Journal of Moral Education, 7(1), 27-31.
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