

# *Sins in Morality Research*



## **THE ‘INTERNAL-DEFINITION-BUT-EXTERNAL-MEASUREMENT’ SIN**

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**In collaboration with**

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# *The Voice*



*There is a voice inside of you  
That whispers all day long,  
“I feel that is right for me,  
I know that this is wrong.”  
No teacher, preacher, partner, friend  
Or wise man can decide  
What’s right for you – just listen to  
The voice that speaks inside.*

*Shel Silverstein, 1996  
Falling up- - Poems and drawing. New York: Harper Collins.*

# *Content Covered*



- *Theory and Method*
- *Internal Definition of Moral Competence in Philosophy and Psychology*
- *External Definition and Measurement of Morality*
- *Critique of External Definition and Measurement*
- *Example of Internal Measurement:  
The Moral Competence Test (MCT)*

# *Theory and Method: A Non-Relationship*



- *Ludwig Wittgenstein (1971), Philosopher:*
  - *“The confusion and barrenness of psychology is not to be explained by calling it a ‘young science’; ... For in psychology there are experimental methods and conceptual confusion... The existence of the experimental method makes us think we have the means of getting rid of the problems which trouble us; though the problem and method simply pass one another by.”*
- *L. Wittgenstein (1953): Philosophical investigations. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. The Macmillan company, New York, chapter xiv)*

# *Internal vs. External Definitions of Morality*



- ***Internal Definition (Autonomy):***
  - *Morality as an agreement between behavior with one's own moral principles (internal voice, conscience, moral judgment, practical reason)*
- ***External Definition (Heteronomy):***
  - *Morality as an agreement between behavior with the expectations and norms of an external entity/authority (society, culture, religion, researcher)*

# *External Definition of Morality: Heteronomy*



- ***John Watson (1970): Behaviorism***
  - *“The interest of the behaviorist in man’s doings is more than the interest of the spectator – he wants to control man’s reactions as physical scientists want to control and manipulate other natural phenomena.”*
- ***Emil Durkheim (1902/1984): Education, Morality and Society***
  - *“We could also say, that morals are a system of rules of action which determine behavior. They determine how one should in specific cases ought to behave: Good behavior means well behaved.” (p. 78)*
- ***Hugh Hartshorne et al. (1929): Studies in the Nature of Character***
  - *Moral behavior must be measured “without any reference ... to its motives or its rightness or wrongness.” (p. 11)*
- ***B. F. Skinner (1971): Beyond Freedom and Dignity***
  - *“(You ought to) tell the truth’ ... we might translate ... as follows: ‘If you are reinforced by the approval of your fellow men, you will be reinforced when you tell the truth.’ (p. 99, 102, 107).”*

# External Definition Critique



- *David Hume (1777):*
  - *“No, say you, the morality consists in the relation of actions to the rule of right; and they are denominated good or ill, according as they agree or disagree with it. [...] All this is metaphysics, you cry. That is enough; there needs nothing more to give a strong presumption of falsehood. Yes, reply I, here are metaphysics surely; but they are all on your side, who advance an abstruse hypothesis, which can never be made intelligible, nor quadrate with any particular instance or illustration.”*

*Hume, D. (1777). An enquiry concerning the principles of morals. Source: <http://www.gutenberg.org>*

# *External Definition Critique*



- ***L. Kohlberg (1984):***
  - *“Proponents of behaviorist conceptions of moral conduct typically define conduct as moral if it conforms to a socially or culturally accepted norm. All of us recognize this is intuitively incorrect, since moral exemplars like Socrates, Ghandi, and Martin Luther King consistently acted in opposition to, and in order to change, social norms – in terms of the moral principles of Stage 5 or 6.” (p. 392)*

*Kohlberg, L. (1984). Essays on moral development, Vol. 2, The psychology of moral development. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.*



# *Critique of the External Measurement of Morality*



- *Pittel & Mendelsohn (1966):*
  - *“Perhaps the greatest single shortcoming (of moral tests) is the failure to view evaluative attitudes as subjective phenomena whose measurement is best achieved independent of a concern with the relationship of those attitudes to conventional and normative standards of moral valuation.”*  
*(p. 32)*

*Pittel, S. M., & Mendelsohn, G. A. (1966). Measurement of moral values: A review and critique. Psychological Bulletin, 66, 22-35.*

# *Internal Definition of Morality*



- *Immanuel Kant*

- *“Morality, insofar as it is grounded on the concept of man as a free being (but who for this very reason also binds himself through his reason to unconditioned laws), requires neither the idea of another being above him in order for him to do his duty. By no means does morality require religion for its own benefit (neither objectively, as regards the will, nor subjectively, as regards the capacity to act); rather, by virtue of practical reason it is self-sufficient.” (Kant, 1793)*

*Kant, I. (1793). Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft. Berlinische Monatsschrift, 1793. (Translated by Y. Estes & C. Bowman, in J. G. Fichte and the Atheism Dispute (1798-1800), 2009).*

# *Internal Definition of Morality*



- *Immanuel Kant\**

- *“Dare to think! Have the courage to use your own mind!” (Kant, 1784)*
- *“Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law without contradiction.” (Kant, 1785).*

*\* Our translation, compiled from others; there are many.*

*Kant, I. (1784). Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung? Berlinische Monatsschrift. Dezember 481-494.*

*Kant, I. (1785). Grundlegung der Metaphysik der Sitten. (Translated by James W. Ellington, 1993).*

# *Internal Definition of Morality*



- *Jean Piaget*

- *“The moral good is in essence autonomous and can not be prescribed.” (1947, p. 123)*
- *“The notion of autonomous ... means that which is possible for the (child) ... to elaborate his (or her) ... own norms, at least in part.” (1981, p. 66)*

*Piaget, J. (1947). The moral development of the adolescent in two types of society, primitive and ‘modern’. UNESCO, Speech delivered July 24<sup>th</sup>, 1947 in Sevres.*

*Piaget, J. (1981). Intelligence and affectivity: Their relation during child development. Palo Alto, CA: Annual Reviews (Originally published 1954).*

# *Internal Definition of Morality*



- *Lawrence Kohlberg*
  - *Moral judgment is “the capacity to make decisions and judgments which are moral (i.e., based on internal principles) and to act in accordance with such judgments” (1964, p. 425)*

*Kohlberg, L. (1964). Development of moral character and moral ideology. In: M. L. Hoffman & L. W. Hoffman, eds., Review of Child Development Research, Vol. 1, 381-431. New York: Russel Sage Foundation.*

# *Internal Definition of Morality*



- ***Georg Lind***

- *“Moral competence is the ability to cope with problems, and solve conflicts, on the basis of universalizable moral ideals through thinking and discussion rather than violence, deceit and power” (2011)*

*Habermas, J. (1990). Moral consciousness and communicative action. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.*

*Lind, G. (2011). Editorial: Moral competence and the democratic way of living. Europe's Journal of Psychology, 7(5), 569-596.*

*Neiman, S. (2009). Moral clarity. A guide for grown-up idealists. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.*

*Nowak, E. (2013). Democracy begins in the mind. In: E. Nowak, D. Schrader & B. Zizek, eds., Educating competencies for democracy, pp. 399 - 416. New York: Peter Lang.*

*Sen, A. (1999). Democracy as a universal value. Journal of Democracy, 10 (3), 3 - 17*

# Paradox:

## External Measurement of Internal Morality



- **L. Kohlberg (1984):**
  - *“I include in my approach a normative component. ... That is, I assumed the need to define philosophically the entity we study, moral judgment, and to give a philosophic rationale for why a higher stage is a better stage.” (p. 400)*
- **J. Rest (1979):**
  - *“The P index ... is interpreted as the relative importance given to principled moral considerations on making a moral decision.” (p. 101).*
- **A. Colby & W. Damon (1992):**
  - *“What was required (to be nominated as a moral exemplar), was an unusual commitment to commonly known values.” (p. 317)*

*Colby, A., & Damon, W. (1992). Some do care. Contemporary lives of moral commitment. New York: The Free Press.*

*Kohlberg, L. (1984). Essays on moral development, Vol. II, The psychology of moral development. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row.*

*Rest, J. (1979). Development in judging moral issues. Minneapolis, MI: University of Minnesota Press.*

# *Internal Measurement of Moral Competence*



- *The Moral Competence Test (MCT) comprises of two dilemmatic stories (Worker, Doctor), each with six Pro- and six Contra-arguments which in turn represent one of the six moral orientations as per Kohlberg's Stages*
- *Participants must rate the arguments on a scale ranging from -4 to +4 (reject to accept)*
- *Test of ability: The C-score measures the level of ability in judging arguments based on their moral quality instead of their conforming with their opinion*
- *Internal Standard: participant's own moral orientation and not the researcher's, employer's, or similar authority figure*



# Internal Scoring Standards



- *The moral competence score (C) is tied to the participant's own orientations, not to external norms*
- *Example: Two persons with same moral competence, though different moral orientations*

Person: Opinion:	<p>Person A "The decision was right"</p>	<p>Person B "The decision was right"</p>		
Arguments of	<p>Contra</p> <p>Pro</p>	<p>Contra</p> <p>Pro</p>		
Type 1:	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 ✘ +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 ✘	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
Type 2:	-4 -3 -2 -1 ✘ +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 ✘ +2 +3 +4	-4 ✘ -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
Type 3:	-4 -3 ✘ -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 ✘ 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 ✘ -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
Type 4:	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 ✘ -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 ✘ -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 ✘ 0 +1 +2 +3 +4
Type 5:	-4 ✘ -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 -1 ✘ 1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 ✘ +2 +3 +4
Type 6:	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	✘ -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 ✘ +3 +4	-4 -3 -2 -1 0 +1 +2 +3 ✘
	<p>C-score: 92.2 High moral competence Modal moral orientation: Stage 1</p>	<p>C-score: 92.2 High moral competence Modal moral orientation: Stage 6</p>		

# *Conclusion: Internal Measurement of Morals Is Possible!*



- *The MCT demonstrates that internal objective measurement of moral competence is possible.*
- *The MCT contains of a 'moral' task: high moral competence (C-score) is indicated when the participant rates arguments based on their moral quality regardless of opinion agreement.*
- *Only this ability guarantees free moral discourse as the basis of a democratic way of life (Habermas, Apel, Sen, Neiman, Nowak, Lind ...).*

# References on the MCT



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For more, see Lind's web-site: <http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-moral/>