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Kohlberg's Unnoticed Dilemma – The External Assessment of Internal Moral Competence? ¹

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The voice

There is a voice inside of you
That whispers all day long,
'I feel that this 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]

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Abstract

While Kohlberg broke new ground by defining moral behavior as behavior guided by *internal* moral orientations and by emphasizing the neglected *structural* aspect of moral behavior, in his methodology he relied on mainstream external scoring techniques which clearly contradict his theory. We argue that this dilemma is a matter of two deeper questions, namely a) whether the morality of behavior [and hence the scoring standard] is defined externally or internally, that is, by society's norms or by the individual's moral principles, and b) whether moral competence is defined as the structural properties of an individual's response-*pattern*, or is regarded as represented in each isolated response. We will focus here on the first question and argue that aligning internal moral philosophy with internal measurement of moral competence is the prerequisite for any progress in moral psychology.

Introduction

For anyone who is interested in the study of moral development Lawrence Kohlberg's work is of great importance. Even those who disagree with his theory for various reasons can hardly ignore it. For those who follow in his footsteps, Kohlberg has not only left behind a solid groundwork for their personal research and educational work but also two key unsolved dilemmas. While his theory broke new ground by defining moral behavior as behavior guided by *internal* moral orientations and by emphasizing the neglected *structural* aspect of moral behavior, his methodology relied on hidden assumptions of mainstream test theories which clearly contradict his theory. Kohlberg himself felt the difficulty of translating his internal-structural theory into methodological practice. He believed that the two dilemmas could be solved with the method of clinical interview. However we argue that this dilemma is not a matter of interview versus written tests but a matter of two deeper questions, namely a) whether the morality of behavior [and hence the scoring standard] is defined externally or internally, that is, by society's norms [as operationalized by the researcher] or by the individual's morality, and b) whether moral competence is defined as the structural properties of an individual's response *pattern*, or whether it is regarded as represented in each isolated response, though this representation may be masked by random measurement error, requiring repeated measurements in order to reduce this error. We will focus here only on the first Kohlberg dilemma because the first author has extensively discussed the second one elsewhere. [Lind, 1978; 1982; 2008]

Actually, we are not the first to have noticed the internal-philosophy-but-external-measurement dilemma, and this dilemma is not confined to Kohlberg's research paradigm. For decades eminent psychologists advocating structural theories of personality and behavior, have sensed the gap between structural theory and item-based test theories. [Hartshorne & May 1928; Kelly 1955; Anderson 1974, 1991; Rossi 1983, Mischel & Shoda 1995] Pittel and Mendelsohn [1966] have very clearly and extensively discussed the contradiction between *internal* definitions of moral behavior adopted by many researchers and their *external* operationalization as rule-conforming behaviors. Yet their critique has hardly, if at all, given birth to a new, adequate methodology for assessing moral competence from an internal point of view. The clinical psychologist George H. Kelly [1955] suggested some kind of internal-structural assessment, the *personal repertory grid* technique, which was intended to help patients identify the constructs with which they perceive their social environment. Anderson [1974; 1991] designed experiments to study structural properties of moral reasoning within

the framework of his *information integration theory*. Yet neither method offers a measurement of moral competence.

Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory broke new ground by defining moral behavior as behavior guided by *internal* moral orientations. He defined *moral* behavior as a behavior which is guided by a person's own moral conscience, that is, by her or his *internal* moral orientations or principles. Kohlberg [1958, 5] claims "an action, regardless of its consequences or its classification by the culture, is neither good nor bad unless it has been preceded by judgment of right or wrong." He explicitly objected to *external* definitions of moral behavior: "The trouble with such types is that they describe the person externally in terms of his impact on and relation to his culture and to the observer's values. They will not tell us how the individual thinks, what values he actually holds." [p. 82]

But when it came to measurement Kohlberg employed *external* standards for scoring. When he constructed his stage model for measurement, he invoked the judgments of philosophers, that is, he invoked *external* social norms in order to score the moral quality of an action. 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] This statement corresponds to Kant's 'developmental' claim voiced in his *Critique of Pure Reason*: "For rational but finite beings, only unending progress from lower to higher levels of moral perfection is possible." While this may be seen as an improvement on the approach of test constructors who have less sophisticated external standards for measuring the morality of a person's action or do not reveal their sources, it is still an external standard which overrides the internal moral orientation which actually determines an individual's behavior.³

³ As we have noted, this is not the only dilemma in Kohlberg's work. On the one hand Kohlberg postulated that a competence or ability can show itself only in the *structure* or *pattern* of behavior but not in a single act. "Structural theory," Kohlberg [1973] notes, "does not treat any changes as a change in structural competence unless the change is evident in a qualitatively new pattern of response. [...] a really new mode of response is one that is different in its form or organization, not simply in the element or the information it contains." [p. 498] On the other hand, his *Moral Judgment Interview* is based on the core doctrine – of classical test theory and of modern item response theory – that moral competence is reflected in an isolated act or statement: "My colleagues and I [...] have required each item in the manual to clearly

Confronting individuals with moral dilemmas in order to measure their moral judgment competence, Kohlberg probes their intuitions and internal moral orientations, but scores them by external moral criteria. Why should a personal moral intuition be *in error* in the dilemma situation? “Principles or methods for judging are tentatively applied to cases or dilemmas. Where there is a discrepancy between the principle and our intuitions about the right action in the dilemma, we can either reformulate the principle or decide our moral intuition was in error. Whichever we decide, we move to consider other cases, being open to change until we reach a ‘reflective equilibrium’ between our principles and our moral intuitions about concrete cases.” [Kohlberg 1984, p. 301]

In sum, while in his philosophical assumptions Kohlberg makes allowance for moral reasoning processes and internal moral orientations of the individuals, in his measuring instrument, i.e. the *Moral Judgment Interview* (MJI) and in his scoring system he and his colleagues require the participants to reason in all contexts on what external judges (i.e., the authors of the scoring manual) believe to be the highest stage of reasoning in order to be called *moral competence*. [Colby et al. 1987]

The Two Definitions of Moral Behavior: Internal versus External

There are two distinct definitions of *moral* behavior. People use different words to describe them but essentially the difference is whether it is determined by external or internal factors. According to the *external* definition, a person’s behavior is called moral if it is determined by the expectations of other people, social norms, or other external factors, and no choice or consideration of alternatives is involved. According to the *internal* definition, a behavior is called *moral* if it is determined by a person’s moral orientations, ideals, or principles, or, as we also say, by his or her conscience.

Note that our discussion here is about the definition of moral behavior, not about evaluation or causal relationships. Only if we have decided which definition to use can we evaluate or engage in scoring and studies of causal relationships. We argue that we cannot study moral behavior unless we define and measure moral behavior in regard to people’s internal moral

reflect the structure of the stage to which it is keyed.” [1984, p. 403] “Each item must have face validity in representing the stage as defined by the theory.” [1984, p. 410] This second key dilemma has been discussed at length elsewhere. [Lind 1978; 1982; 2008]

feelings and principles. We also argue that if we describe and evaluate behavior in regard to external standards we should not call it the same as internally determined behavior. Of course, we are free to classify behavior in either way or in both ways simultaneously. However, in order to avoid confusion, we suggest reserving the word 'moral' for only one thing. Let us look at both definitions of 'moral' in turn.

The External Definition of Moral Behavior

Many laypeople as well as scientists, call other people's behavior 'moral' if it conforms to their expectations regardless of the actor's own point of view. This external definition is clearly expressed by the educational philosopher Brezinka [1988] for whom any "competence is always connected to requirements." [p. 76] By this he means "tasks or requirements whose fulfillment is valued positively by the community." [p. 84] "This view implies a belief in the indispensability of authority and tradition, in order to ensure [...] the moral competence of their members." [p. 83]

An example for research that is explicitly based on an *external* definition of moral behavior and character was the famous experimental study by Hartshorne and his colleagues. [Hartshorne et al. 1928; 1929] They believed that moral behavior must be observed, and measured, "without any reference [...] to its motives or its rightness or wrongness. The first question to ask is what did the subject do? Unless this question is answered in quantitative terms so that what he did is clearly known, there is little use in going on to ask why he did it, and still less use in speculating whether he is to be blamed or praised." [Hartshorne & May 1928, p. 11] They even believed that "no progress can be made, however, unless the overt act be observed and, if possible, measured without any reference, for the moment, to its motives and its rightness or wrongness." [Hartshorne et al. 1929, p. 11]

So they set up a series of experiments in which school-age participants were seduced to cheat when working on various aptitude tests. A typical setting was that the participants were seduced to transgress a social norm (like honesty). For example, they were asked to solve some mathematical problems. But the tasks chosen by the experimenter were especially difficult and could only be 'solved' through cheating. After the instruction the experimenter left the room so that the participants could choose to cheat without fear of being supervised. However, they were secretly monitored through a one-way mirror. For each incident of cheating the participants were ascribed a 'dishonesty score.'

The findings from these studies led the authors to conclude that their predictions had failed as well as the theory on which their methodology was based. They had predicted that “if honesty or dishonesty were a unified trait, the distribution of scores would be U-shaped, or at least bimodal.” [Hartshorne & May 1928, book II, p. 242] Yet the distributions were uni-modal, more typical of a random process than of the existence of internal virtues or moral competence. Therefore, they concluded that “honesty appears to be a congeries of the situation in which deception is a possibility, and is apparently not greatly dependent on any general ideal or trait of honesty.” [p. 15] “Honesty or dishonesty is not a unified trait in children of the ages studied, but a series of responses to specific situations.” [p. 243] “The virtues are not psychological entities with any real existence. They are not acts. They are classification of acts. [...] To say that an honest act is caused by a man's honesty is like saying that it is cold because the temperature has fallen.” [p. 379]

The authors were aware of the logical inconsistency in their conclusion. Because they observed and classified participants' behavior merely by external standards but not by the participants' own moral standards, their data do not allow any conclusion about the existence or non-existence of a *unified trait*. Only if studied from an internal point of view could such a trait be observed: “A person may be dishonestly honest. He may be honest in little things in order to gain the reputation of being honest in all things. [...] Or he may be honest because it pays in a business way.” [p. 378]

Therefore, at the end of their study, Hartshorne & May [1928] admit that it was wrong to ignore the moral motives of their subjects, and advocate an internal definition of moral behavior. In their “general conclusions” they acknowledge that “the essence of the act is its pretense. Hence it can be described and understood only in terms of the human elements in the situation. It is not the act that constitutes the deception, nor the particular intention of the actor, but the relation of this act to his intentions and to the intentions of his associates.” [p. 377]

Most interestingly, Hartshorne and May [1928] also lay the theoretical ground for a structural assessment of moral competences as Lind [1978; 2008] describes it. For them, “a trait such as honesty or dishonesty is an achievement like ability in arithmetic [...] consisting in the achieved skills and attitudes of more or less successful and uniform performance.” [p. 379] “Another interpretation of these facts might be that all possess a trait of honesty, but in varying degrees.” [Vol. II, p. 221] “Amount and consistency of character go together. If we

hold with the moralists that honesty is ipso facto a trait of character, then we must accept consistency as an associated phenomenon.” [p. 375] Their own data did not support this prediction: “Our present generation of children shows little integration of character. [...] Consistency does not materially increase as [the pupils] move up [from grade five] through grade eight.” [p. 376] Yet this finding is not surprising because external scoring of moral behavior creates ambiguous data. If moral consistency is scored in regard to the participants’ own moral orientations, as the *Moral Judgment Test* allows us to do, an education-related increase of moral behavior has indeed been found. [Lind 2002]

In sum, any research which regards consistency and inconsistency merely as a property of the test [“reliability”] but not as a property of individual’s behavior is bound to fail. “It is not the quality of the isolated act which distinguishes the good man from the bad, but the quality of the man as an organized and socially functioning self.” [Hartshorne & May 1928, p. 413]

The Internal Definition of Moral Behavior

In his theory Kohlberg [1984] strongly defended the need for an internal definition of moral competence and development. “Achieving a certain level of conformity may become a 'milestone' representing the formation of conscience in various theories,” but “further development [...] may lead to an apparent nonconformity as autonomous and individual principles or values are developed.” [Kohlberg 1984, p. 38]

According to Kohlberg [1964] a behavior should be called 'moral' only if a person’s behavior is guided or determined by his or her own moral orientations: “the capacity to make decisions and judgments which are moral (i.e., based on internal principles) and to act in accordance with such judgments.” [p. 425] Kohlberg’s internal definition of moral behavior has a long tradition in ‘enlightened’ moral philosophy like that of Hume, Spinoza, Kant, Arendt, Habermas, and others. In spite of many differences they seem to agree on the internal definition of ‘morality.’

As reported by Plato, Socrates regarded the “desire to be good” as something which is inborn to human beings and therefore existing in all people. If something is inborn and common in all people it does not need to be taught. The cause for the fact that people often do not conform to external expectations regarding ‘good behavior’, must, according to Socrates, not be sought in their moral ideals but in their [in-]ability to act as good as they desire: If people

differ they differ in regard to the ability to be good, that is, in regard to what Socrates called ‘virtue.’ [Plato, Menon] Therefore, it is virtues, or as we would call it, moral competence which can be taught and which needs to be taught. [Lind 2002]

David Hume [1777] also defined morality as agreement of action with one’s inner moral feelings. He fiercely rejected the norm-conformity definition of morality: “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.” In that respect, modern ‘externalist’ researchers like Haidt [2001], wrongly invoke Hume as their philosophical basis.

In the internal tradition of thought, philosophers have argued that, in order to act morally, individuals need to be able to apply their moral orientations in their moral judgments and decisions; they need some kind of moral competence: “the power of our own native intelligence“ [Descartes], “mental agility” [Kant], affects [Spinoza], moral sense [Hume]. The relationship between the individuals’ internal moral ideals and orientations on the one hand and their moral action on the other hand has been given much thought by Spinoza and Kant in particular. Kohlberg regarded both as important sources for his own theory of moral behavior and development.

Spinoza

Benedict de Spinoza contributed to the internal definition of morality. The starting point is an innate, universal for living creatures, instinctive endeavor to persist for living creatures. “Everything endeavors to persist in its own being,” [Spinoza 2009, E3p7] ⁴ a human being too, Spinoza emphasizes. “The first and only foundation of virtue or the rule of right living is seeking one’s own true interest.” [E4p41p] But in order to understand one’s ‘true interest’ virtue, that is, reflective endeavor or adequate cognition is needed. “The mind, both in so far as it has clear and distinct ideas, and also in so far as it has confused ideas, endeavors to persist in its being [...] and of this endeavor it is conscious.” [E3p9] For Spinoza, “will and

⁴ Symbols; E - stands for ethics, 1,2,3... - stand for chapter, p - for proposition no..., n - for note, c - for corollary, p - for proof.

understanding are one and the same.” [E3p49c] “This endeavor, when referred solely to the mind, is called will.” [E3p9n] In its both functions, as cognition and will, the human mind understands, passes moral judgments, and makes decisions, so if a human action is determined by the fact that a person understands what affects influence him and figures out whether they reinforce or – on the contrary – weaken his condition and virtue, then it is determined by virtue. “To act virtuously is to act in obedience with reason, and whatsoever we endeavor to do in obedience to reason is to understand.” [E3p36p]

In other words, for Spinoza rationality has a distinct role to play in the relationship between endeavors and passions. Reason brings in orientation, understanding and reflection among the blind passions. By using reason, a man acts intentionally, not blindly. Spinoza [and also Fichte] uses the metaphors of *light*, *seeing* and *orientation* in order to describe the function of consciousness and rationality. Natural passions, while conscious and understood, cease to be blind. They gain direction and orientation that correlate with the specific mode of behavior. This method may be the expression of a variety of ideas (Kant would say individual *maxims*). These maxims, in turn, may be convergent with or divergent from the external rules of morality, legality, and culture. Only then can passions become guides for human moral action. “He who, guided by emotion only, endeavors to cause others to love what he loves himself, and to make the rest of the world live according to his own fancy, acts solely by impulse,” Spinoza claims. [E3p37n] As Silverstein wrote in his poem, “I feel that this is right for me, I know that this is wrong.”

Of course, the moral voice that whispers inside a person, whispers also in words. Born in the Jewish culture, Spinoza seems to follow Genesis and Deuteronomy. Among voices people hear inside of themselves is the voice of reason. When Spinoza claims that “the knowledge of good and evil is nothing else but the emotions of pleasure or pain, in so far as we are conscious thereof,” [E4p8] he stresses the role of reflection and making judgments. Moral awareness and moral judgment are neither sublimations of sensual impulses nor a mirror-image of the external rules from the world around us. These are products of individual affective and cognitive processes which occur in the individual’s mind. People’s judgments can differ one from another. They can be compared, criticized and balanced in terms of the moral reasoning and deliberation. Not only moral autonomy but also plurality and democratic diversity are provided by Spinoza. “As for the terms good and bad, they [moral judgments]

indicate no positive quality in things regarded in themselves, but are merely modes of thinking, or notions which we form from the compares on of things one with another. Thus one and the same thing can be at the same time good, bad, and indifferent.” [E4P] Only when **one** carefully listens to the voice of her/his passions, s/he understands them and realizes what procedures go hand in hand with them and s/he consciously chooses the best course of action. In addition, by examining the degree of convergence with external rules, human morality becomes possible. For Spinoza, the measure of morality is not a rule-conform action, but acting in accordance with the judgments, which assume the inner harmony between the reason and affects. In his radically internal definition of morality Spinoza recognizes that the mind is capable of directing human action only if it cooperates with passions. Action caused by a virtue is, according to him, not only a product of reason, but an expression of the integrity of the person as a feeling and thinking creature. This integrity is an individual’s strength. “Virtue is human power,” [E4p20] he assumes. In contrast, if we treat the mind as an abstract supreme agency and oppose it to the natural passions, it will lose its motivational power and become powerless. “Think I have now shown the reason, why men are moved by opinion more readily than by true reason, why it is that the true knowledge of good and evil stirs up conflicts in the soul, and often yields to every kind of passion. This state of things gave rise to the exclamation of the poet: ‘The better path I gaze at and approve, the worse – I follow.’ ” [E4p7n]

This implies that Spinoza had an internal understanding of morality. He also stated this explicitly: “Virtue is nothing else but action in accordance with the laws of one's own nature.” [E4p18] Many other ethicists would have demanded in this place the accordance of action with the external rules of law, morality, and culture. But Spinoza asserts: “As reason makes no demands contrary to nature, it demands, that every man should love himself, should seek that which is useful to him I mean, that which is really useful to him, should desire everything which really brings man to greater perfection [...] It now remains for me to show what course is marked out for us by reason, which of the emotions are in harmony with the rules of human reason, and which of them are contrary thereto.” [E4p18n]

Spinoza also made clear that an internal definition of morality must not be confused with egocentrism or even egoism. The desire to do good and to act according to one’s “true interests” is also beneficial for the cooperation between people and the quality of social life.

When everyone cares about their own self-improvement, then people become most useful to one another, says Spinoza. Thus, there is nothing more useful for a man than another man. This conclusion leads Spinoza to recognize that a man is naturally and in an unforced manner a pro-social being. “The good which every man, who follows after virtue, desires for himself he will also desire for other men [...] Hence, men who are governed by reason — that is, who seek what is useful to them in accordance with reason, desire for themselves nothing, which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and, consequently, are just, faithful, and honourable in their conduct. [...] Therefore, men in so far as they live in obedience to reason, necessarily live always in harmony one with another.” [E4p35-37]

Finally Spinoza stresses the importance of one’s own free judgment on the quality of individual moral virtue and social life, advising improvement and practicing the ability of moral judgment. [cf. E4p40] When his own moral judgment tells a man to work in a cooperative way, then he has the primacy over those judgments and actions that could foment social conflict and disorder. “Whatsoever conduces to man's social life, or causes men to live together in harmony, is useful, whereas whatsoever brings discord into a State is bad.” [Spinoza 2012, III, 6] Whereas, in situations of moral dilemma when there is no single absolutely good solution, reason must select, in an unassisted way, the one that it evaluates as the better. “For it is reason's own law, to choose the less of two evils; and accordingly we may conclude, that no one is acting against the dictate of his own reason, so far as he does what by the law of the commonwealth is to be done.” [Spinoza 2012, Chapter III, 6] As it is rooted in the affects Spinoza's internal morality does not become exhausted in simplified, black-and-white criteria of good-bad. It also permits good and evil to be larger or smaller, but such an assessment is a challenge for the human capacity for moral judgment. In contrast, external social rules mostly qualify human moral behavior as clearly good or clearly bad. This concept must have seemed revolutionary when viewed against the moral culture of the second half of the 17th century.

In sum, according to Spinoza, the assumption that there is behavior which is guided by internal morality is indispensable. He sees it as prior to the external regulatory systems. It is this primacy that conferred his political persecution, all the more so as he proposed truly revolutionary ethical postulates. His stance is well expressed in a statement by one of the participants in Kohlberg's *Moral Judgment Interview*, who said that “systems of law are valid only insofar as they reflect the sort of moral law all rational people can accept.” [Kohlberg

1984, p 182] Spinoza maintained enough courage to insist on the autonomy of judgment, conscience and thought for every man: “The state is never safer than [...] when the right of the sovereign authorities, whether in sacred or secular matters, is concerned only with actions, and when everyone is allowed to think what they wish and to say what they think.” [Spinoza 2008, p. 259] Spinoza proposes a universally free university education system which can free the human spirit, while at the time Spinoza felt the current education system only imprisoned the human spirit. “The freedom of the spirit and power of the spirit are the virtues of the individual,” he stressed. For this reason, the state owes to its citizens not only safety, but also the educational strengthening of those very virtues in them.

Kant

For Immanuel Kant, the term “moral” also describes *internal* orientations and abilities and not external norms or institutions. He conceives the individual as a moral subject, that is as the source of morality, and not only as an object of external norms and standards. He argued that the human mind is the true birthplace of both aspects of morality, namely of moral orientation and moral competence. As moral subjects, individuals influence and shape the external world. Hence, the philosophizing *Vernunft* does not discover or produce human morality anew. Rather, as Stanley Rosen [2003, p. 25] noted, it “produces the idea of spontaneous, extra-worldly cause of a series of conditions within the spatiotemporal world, namely of itself as initiating moral action within the world.”

For Kant, moral activities are characterized by their moral intentions. Moral activity requires the “faculty of judging,” which produces the idea of what can and should be a goal of the will of an intelligent being such as a human. An intelligent being is able to think, judge and decide on what his or her goal should be like and toward what his or her action should be oriented. Human freedom and, in particular, morality, as Kant assumes, strives for goals that are different from natural goals like pleasure or happiness. His 'pure theory of goals' [reine Zwecklehre] excludes all natural goals. A moral person, he says, should not only strive for his or her own happiness but also for other people's happiness. A moral person should not strive for the moral perfection of another person but for his or her own (eigene Vollkommenheit – fremde Geselligkeit). To give freedom's goals the highest importance in comparison to natural goals, Kant decides to give the former the rank of moral obligation. To outweigh the goals which already lie in the nature of human interest, the goals of human freedom must take a stronger form, such as that of a moral principle. However, the autonomous, rational person

develops his moral orientations independently, without external coercion and norms.

According to Kant, every autonomous being is able to transform his or her subjective *will* into the objective *ought*. [Plato 1962, p. 132] As Kohlbergians put it, moral principles “are developmental constructs” of how moral behavior of an autonomous being has to be. [Levine & Hewer 1984, p. 301] As Dworkin [1976] asserts, because moral duties have a “fixed objective existence” [pp. 27-28] they can motivate the will. Kant claims in his *Metaphysics of Morals* that feelings like respect and conscience are “*subjective* conditions of receptivity to the concept of duty.” In the *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals* he explains why it is so. Moral principle “interests us because it is valid for us as human beings, since it has arisen from our will as intelligence, hence from our authentic self.” According to Kant, both the formation and the application of moral principles are the key for the internal definition of morality. In contrast, legal rules are not always rooted in autonomy, in “our authentic self.” In his political writings Kant postulates the creation of just legal rules by autonomous lawgivers as citizens of the republic.

Hannah Arendt, a neo-Kantian philosopher, illustrates the functioning of internal morality as follows: “The human will is undetermined, open to contraries, and hence broken only so long as its sole activity consists in forming volitions: the moment it stops willing and starts to act on one of the will's propositions, it loses its freedom and man, the possessor of the willing ego, is as happy over the loss as Buridan's donkey was happy to resolve the problem of choosing between two bundles of hay by following his instinct; stop choosing and start eating.” [Arendt 1971, p. 141] It is cognition that allows a person to be aware of “the will's propositions” and to recognize that they are his or her moral orientations. “Thus, to *orientate* oneself in thought means to be guided, in one's conviction of truth, by a subjective principle of reason where objective principles of reason are inadequate.” [Kant 1991, p. 240, footnote] It is also a cognition that allows a person to make decisions according to internal orientations. It is the *differentia specifica* of human beings as rational beings that the “absolute necessity is a necessity that is to be found in thought alone,” [Arendt 1971, p. 146] or – in Habermas' [1990] words –in the power of reason instead of physical power, crude emotions or intuitions. According to Kant, a sovereign personal morality undoubtedly exists. It consists of constructing internal orientations and applying them to one's own moral judgments and decisions.

The distinction between an internal and external definition of moral behavior is not to be

confused with the distinction between internal and external determinants, about which Friedo Ricken [2003] speaks when he asks “whether the justification of moral judgment already is a motive to act accordingly? The answer of internal theory is yes: If someone is convinced of the truth of a moral judgment, he or she is motivated thereby. [...] According to external theory, moral judgment and moral motivation are separated; a moral judgment does not motivate as such but needs an external motive, that is, an additional psychological sanction, which motivates the individual to act accordingly.” [p. 75] Ricken refers to Vladimir Solowjow’s effort to clarify the causal relationship between “natural” and “rational” motivation. Solowjow notes: “Kant comprehends a rational being always as a being which possesses practical reason and ethical will. But must we comprehend this possession as real enactment or merely as a potential or latent competence”? [Solowjow 1978, pp. 123-126]

Conclusion

In sum, studying experimentally assumptions about internally motivated moral behavior, as philosophers like Socrates, Hume, Spinoza, Kant and others have made, requires us to say how we can measure it as internally defined behavior, and not as behavior judged by external norms. Because, as Wittgenstein succinctly said, “whereof one cannot speak thereof one must be silent.” [Wittgenstein 1922, Introduction] Unless we resolve this dilemma, to use the words by Hartshorne and May [1928], no progress can be made.

We have focused here on Kohlberg, though not only Kohlberg’s research has been entangled in the internal-philosophy-but-external-measurement dilemma but also in, as Pittel and Mendelsohn [1966] have pointed out, most moral psychology, if not psychology as a whole [Mischel & Shoda 1995] Kohlberg was much more aware of this dilemma than most of his contemporaries. He not only defended the internal definition of moral behavior and moral competence but also made an attempt to create an adequate methodology, his Moral Judgment Interview. However the pressure of main-stream psychology forced him to revise his original method of interviewing and scoring more and more to meet the external criteria of testing, and thus alienated his method from his theory. [Lind, 1989] We think that this has to be considered when discussing the “ideological bias” in Kohlberg’s approach. [Sullivan, 1977; Ferguson, 2013] This accusation is valid if it is directed at Kohlberg’s external measurement method. Yet, it does not apply to his internal moral philosophy in which he

grants the right to follow one's own moral principle to all human beings, not only members of Western societies.

Once Kohlberg jokingly told me [GL] that he himself had developed an experimentally designed objective test like the *Moral Judgment Test* [MJT] during his time at the University of Chicago before I did. I took this joke as an acknowledgement of my solution of his 'internal-theory-but-external-methodology' dilemma. On another occasion he asserted that the MJT proves that "a scoring algorithm can be arrived at for assigning pure stage structure score for an individual." [Kohlberg 2010, p. xvii] Indeed we claim that the MJT reconciles measurement and moral philosophy by measuring the two aspects of moral behavior -- moral orientations and moral competence -- distinctly (but not separately!). Thereby, the MJT allows us to assess an individual's moral competence without prescribing from outside which moral orientation should guide his or her judgment behavior. Participants can get a high moral competence score regardless of which moral orientation they think is an adequate basis for discussing a specific dilemma situation. Distinguishing between moral orientations and moral competence makes it possible to study empirically the relationship between both aspects, their nature and prevalence in human beings, and their relationship to people's normative or social behavior. Uncoupling the measurement of moral competence from external moral test standards has also enabled us to compare moral competence development across cultures in a fair way. [Lind 1986; Schillinger 2013; Zhang & Yang 2013] These studies show that the preference order for the six moral orientations which Kohlberg (1984) uses to describe his stages of moral development, are indeed universal. In other words, his philosophically based standard for scoring agrees well with most people's moral feelings. Also Socrates' question whether moral competence (virtue) exists and can be taught could be clearly answered now. Many more findings could be presented but this is another story. [See, e.g., Lind 1978; 1982; 2002; 2008; Prehn 2013; Wester 2013]

However, we should always remember that none of this research would have been possible without Kohlberg's neo-Socratic definition of moral competence as "the capacity to make decisions and judgments which are moral (i.e., based on *internal* principles) and to act in accordance with such judgments." (p. 425, emphasis added)

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