



ELSEVIER

Available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

SCIENCE @ DIRECT®

Journal of Economic Psychology 27 (2006) 117–139

JOURNAL OF  
**Economic  
Psychology**

[www.elsevier.com/locate/joep](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/joep)

# A stage for the rational tail of the emotional dog: Roles of moral reasoning in group decision making

Masanori Takezawa \*, Michaela Gummerum, Monika Keller

*Center for Adaptive Behavior and Cognition, Max Planck Institute for Human Development,  
Lentzeallee 94, 14195 Berlin, Germany*

Available online 8 August 2005

---

## Abstract

We demonstrate that moral reasoning plays an important role in group discussions of moral issues. Groups of three children (11 or 13 years old) played dictator and ultimatum games in the role of proposer with another group of three children. Before group discussion, individual preferences were measured. In both games, there was no difference in individual offers between the two age groups. Analyses of group decision-making processes showed an age difference in the dictator game. The results indicate that in the 11-year-old groups, individuals making altruistic offers were much less influential than individuals making egoistic offers. Altruists could not defend their arguments even when they were in a majority position. We further found that the level of moral reasoning was higher in the older age group. All results were congruent with the hypothesis that more advanced moral reasoning is associated with defending prosocial arguments against egoistic arguments that are rational in terms of profit maximization.

© 2005 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

*JEL classification:* C7; C9

*PsycINFO classification:* 2800; 3020

---

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +49 30 824 06 235; fax: +49 30 824 06 394.  
*E-mail address:* [take@mpib-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:take@mpib-berlin.mpg.de) (M. Takezawa).

*Keywords:* Dictator game; Ultimatum game; Moral reasoning; Social preference; Group decision making

---

## 1. Introduction

Behavioral and experimental economists have examined if people will sacrifice their own benefit for the sake of others when no instrumental benefit is expected and they have arrived at the same conclusion reached by psychologists, namely, that people do make such sacrifices. Economists call this prosocial behavior in one-shot and anonymous situations, “strong reciprocity” (Gintis, 2000). Psychologists have long been working on the same topic and have investigated the psychological mechanisms underlying strong reciprocity and prosocial behavior in general. One such mechanism is moral reasoning.

The concept of moral reasoning has received special attention in developmental psychology. Usually, study participants are asked to find a solution to a hypothetical moral dilemma and to justify this solution from a moral point of view. It is argued that the sophistication of justifications proceeds through several distinct developmental stages (Kohlberg, 1969). These stages are characterized by the ability to differentiate and coordinate perspectives of self and others. In higher stages of moral reasoning, it is assumed that people come to see situations not only from their own perspective but also from the perspective of all others involved in the conflict. It has been argued that development into higher stages is crucial for prosocial behavior (Blasi, 1980; Lapsley, 1996).

On the other hand, the predominance of moral reasoning has been doubted by various researchers (Blum, 1980; Hoffman, 2000; Turiel, 1983). More recently, Haidt (2001, 2003) has doubted the importance of moral reasoning as a *cause of prosocial behavior*. He argues that it is emotionally induced intuition that causes prosocial behavior and that moral reasoning is mere posthoc verbal justification of the behavior. He describes the minor role of moral reasoning provocatively as the “rational tail of the emotional dog.” His argument for the minor role of moral reasoning *within the individual* is still the subject of controversy (Pizarro & Bloom, 2003). In this study, we focus on Haidt’s (2001) argument that moral reasoning plays an important role *outside the individual*, such as in group discussions, where people with different preferences argue with each other and try to change the others’ minds. In such discourses, a highly developed reasoning ability in the moral domain may be of central importance for making prosocial arguments influential.

Imagine that, for instance, a group of three boys finds a wallet with \$500 on an empty road where no other person is in view. There is an address for the owner in the wallet but otherwise nothing other than the money. One of the boys argues that they could buy game software with the money and enjoy it together. He further says there is no risk of being scolded by adults if all three boys keep it secret. The other boys understand his argument and cannot find any logical flaw. How can the other

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/885561>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/885561>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)