

Lecture 08: Moral Psychology

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Dual Process Theory of Ethical Abilities (core part): Two (or more) ethical processes are distinct: the conditions which influence whether they occur, and which outputs they generate, do not completely overlap.

Additional assumptions

1. One process makes fewer demands on scarce cognitive resources than the other. (Terminology: fast vs slow)
2. The slow process is responsible for consequentialist responses; the fast for other responses.

1. On Second Thoughts (Part II)

‘Submarine (4/60) You are responsible for the mission of a submarine [...] leading [...] from a control center on the beach. An onboard explosion has [...] collapsed the only access corridor between the upper and lower levels of the ship. [...] water is quickly approaching to the upper level of the ship. If nothing is done, 12 [extreme:60] people in the upper level will be killed. [...] the only way to save these people is to hit a switch in which case the path of the water to the upper level will be blocked and it will enter the lower level of the submarine instead. However, you realize that your brother and 3 other

people are trapped in the lower level. If you hit the switch, your brother along with the 3 other people in the lower level (who otherwise would survive) will die [...] Would you hit the switch?’ (Bago & Neys 2019, supplementary materials)

‘Our critical finding is that although there were some instances in which deliberate correction occurred, these were the exception rather than the rule. Across the studies, results consistently showed that in the vast majority of cases in which people opt for a [consequentialist] response after deliberation, the [consequentialist] response is already given in the initial phase’ (Bago & Neys 2019).

‘participants in the time-pressure condition, relative to the no-time-pressure condition, were more likely to give “no” responses in high-conflict dilemmas’ (Suter & Hertwig 2011, p. 456).

‘even if we were to unequivocally establish that [consequentialist] responses take more time than deontological responses, this does not imply that [consequentialist] responders generated the deontological response before arriving at the [consequentialist] one. They might have needed more time to complete the System 2 deliberations without ever having considered the deontological response’ (Bago & Neys 2019).

‘unless you’re prepared to say “yes” to the footbridge case [i.e. Drop], your automatic settings are still running the show, and any manual ad-

justments that you’re willing to make are at their behest’ (Greene 2014, p. 723)

‘one may think of moral theory at first [...] as the attempt to describe our moral capacity [...] what is required is a formulation of a set of principles which, when conjoined to our beliefs and knowledge of the circumstances, would lead us to make these judgments with their supporting reasons were we to apply these principles conscientiously and intelligently’ (Rawls 1999, p. 41).

2. The CNI Model: Beyond Trolley/Transplant

‘a given judgment cannot be categorized as utilitarian without confirming its property of being sensitive to consequences, which requires a comparison of judgments across dilemmas with different consequences. Similarly, a given judgment cannot be categorized as deontological without confirming its property of being sensitive to moral norms, which requires a comparison of judgments across dilemmas with different moral norms’ (Gawronski et al. 2017, p. 365).

‘The only significant effect in these studies was a significant increase in participants’ general preference for inaction as a result of cognitive load. Cognitive load did not affect participants’ sensitivity to morally relevant consequences’ (Gawronski et al. 2017, p. 363).

‘cognitive load influences moral dilemma judgments by enhancing the omission bias, not by reducing sensitivity to consequences in a utilitarian sense’ (Gawronski et al. 2017, p. 363).

‘Instead of reducing participants’ sensitivity to consequences in a utilitarian sense, cognitive load increased participants’ general preference for inaction.’ (Gawronski et al. 2017, p. 365).

References

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