

# Long Essay Questions: Moral Psychology

## **Instructions**

Choose any one question from those below. Do not attempt to answer more than one question in your essay.

## **Bespoke Questions**

We encourage you to devise your own question through discussion with [s.butterfill@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:s.butterfill@warwick.ac.uk), or to adapt one of the questions below to your interests. Your question must then be submitted using a form on the philosophy web pages and formally approved.

## **Lecture Materials**

Each question draws on specific sections of the lecture material, which also provide sources. You do not have to use the lecture material but your essay will probably be marked down if it could have been improved by making better use of the lecture material. It may be prudent to ensure that you understand the sections relevant to your chosen question before answering it.

## **Glossary**

The lecture materials include a glossary to facilitate communication between us. You may deviate from the glossary providing you explicate your terms and providing you have good reason for doing so.

## **Reading**

The reading included here is mainly for students who will not use the lectures and lecture notes (which are online at <https://moral-psychology.butterfill.com/>).

You should check the lecture notes for reading, and perhaps identify additional reading in the course of your independent research.

### **Difficulty Level**

Some questions permit answers that are relatively straightforward to establish. In general, you should not limit yourself to establishing a straightforward answer if aiming for a high mark.

### **Support Planning**

The final seminar for this course will provide you with an opportunity to discuss your plans.

### **Marking Criteria**

This course uses the standard philosophy marking criteria. Ideally your essay will demonstrate an awareness of a philosophical issue in moral psychology. We are aware that students taking this course may come from a variety of disciplines. Your essay can be written in the style of an essay from any of the disciplines covered on this course.

### **Advice**

The questions below are written with a view to allowing a wide range of good answers, including some your examiners may not have foreseen. Your essay should answer the question chosen but it need not provide a complete answer. The best essays are often tightly focussed on one aspect of the question. This is fine: just be sure to explain the part of the question you are addressing and demonstrate that you are aware of what else would be needed to fully answer the question.

## Question 1

How, if at all, do cultural differences in moral psychology explain political conflict on climate change?

*Your answer should normally focus on just one part of the debate associated with this question. Be sure to specify the thesis you aim to establish, how this contributes to partially answering the question, and the limits of your essay at the start.*

### Lecture Notes

*The following links will not work before the date of the lectures.*

- Lecture 04
- Lecture 05
- Moral Reframing and Process Dissociation

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

Feinberg, M., & Willer, R. (2013). The Moral Roots of Environmental Attitudes. *Psychological Science*, 24(1), 56–62. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612449177>

### Further Reading

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditto, P. H. (2013). Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 55–130). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407236-7.00002-4>

Feinberg, M., & Willer, R. (2019). Moral reframing: A technique for effective and persuasive communication across political divides. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 13(12), e12501. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12501>

Markowitz, Ezra M., and Azim F. Shariff. 2012. "Climate Change and Moral Judgement." *Nature Climate Change* 2 (4): 243–47. doi:10.1038/nclimate1378.

### Where to Find the Reading?

In some cases the reference section of the lecture notes already includes a link to help you find the reading.

If there is no link in the lecture notes, start by searching for the title (and, if that fails, by title and authors) on google scholar. If this fails, the library has resources. If those fail, please check first with others on the course. If you still have problems, you may email your seminar tutor.

## Question 2

What is Moral Foundations Theory? What, if anything, would the truth of this theory contribute to philosophical arguments about whether persistent ethical disagreement undermines moral knowledge?

*Your answer should normally focus on a single philosophical argument or objection, and ideally a good one.*

### Lecture Notes

*The following links will not work before the date of the lectures.*

- Moral Pluralism: Beyond Harm
- Moral Foundations Theory: An Approach to Cultural Variation

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

McGrath, S. (2008). Moral disagreement and moral expertise. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, 3, 87–107.

Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., Haidt, J., Iyer, R., Koleva, S., & Ditto, P. H. (2011). Mapping the moral domain. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(2), 366–385. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021847>

Graham, J., Haidt, J., Koleva, S., Motyl, M., Iyer, R., Wojcik, S. P., & Ditto, P. H. (2013). Moral Foundations Theory: The Pragmatic Validity of Moral Pluralism. In P. Devine & A. Plant (Eds.), *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 47, pp. 55–130). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-407236-7.00002-4>

### Further Reading

Doris, J. M., & Plakias, A. (2008). How to argue about disagreement: Evaluative diversity and moral realism. In *Moral psychology, Vol 2: The cognitive science of morality: Intuition and diversity* (pp. 303–331). Cambridge, MA, US: MIT Press.

Enoch, D. (2009). How is Moral Disagreement a Problem for Realism? *The Journal of Ethics*, 13(1), 15–50. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-008-9041-z>

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## Question 3

What do dual-process theories of moral cognition claim? Is there sufficient evidence to accept, or reject, such a theory?

### Lecture Notes

*The following links will not work before the date of the lectures.*

- A Dual Process Theory of Ethical Judgement
- Lecture 08
- Conflicting Evidence against a Dual-Process Theory of Moral Judgement

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

Cushman, F. (2013). Action, Outcome, and Value: A Dual-System Framework for Morality. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 17(3), 273–292. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868313495594>

Greene, J. D., Morelli, S. A., Lowenberg, K., Nystrom, L. E., & Cohen, J. D. (2008). Cognitive load selectively interferes with utilitarian moral judgment. *Cognition*, 107(3), 1144–1154. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2007.11.004>

### Further Reading

Gawronski, B., Armstrong, J., Conway, P., Friesdorf, R., & Hütter, M. (2017). Consequences, norms, and generalized inaction in moral dilemmas: The CNI model of moral decision-making. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113(3), 343–376. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspa0000086>

Kumar, V. (2016). The empirical identity of moral judgment. *The Philosophical Quarterly*, 66(265), 783–804.

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## Question 4

What are framing effects? Where philosophers' views are influenced by framing effects, should those views be disregarded?

### Lecture Notes

*The following links will not work before the date of the lectures.*

- Framing Effects

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

Rini, R. A. (2013). Making psychology normatively significant. *The Journal of Ethics*, 17(3), 257–274.

Schwitzgebel, E., & Cushman, F. (2015). Philosophers' biased judgments persist despite training, expertise and reflection. *Cognition*, 141, 127–137. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cognition.2015.04.015>

### Further Reading

Rini, R. A. (2017). Why moral psychology is disturbing. *Philosophical Studies*, 174(6), 1439–1458. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0766-4>

Wiegmann, A., & Horvath, J. (2020). Intuitive Expertise in Moral Judgements. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, forthcoming. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/5grsq>

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## Question 5

What is Rawls' method of reflective equilibrium? Do discoveries in moral psychology show that the use of this method is unjustified?

*Answer with respect to any one discovery. Your essay should probably focus on wide reflective equilibrium only (but you may focus on narrow reflective equilibrium only if you give reason for doing so).*

### Lecture Notes

*The following links will not work before the date of the lectures.*

- Against Reflective Equilibrium

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

McMahan, J. (2013). Moral Intuition. In *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory* (pp. 103–120). John Wiley & Sons, Ltd. <https://doi.org/10.1111/b.9780631201199.1999.00007.x>

Greene, J. D. (2014). Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality: Why Cognitive (Neuro)Science Matters for Ethics. *Ethics*, 124(4), 695–726. <https://doi.org/10.1086/675875>

### Further Reading

Rawls, J. (1999). *A Theory of Justice* (Revised edition). Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press.

Scanlon, T. M. (2002). Rawls on justification. In S. Freeman (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Rawls* (pp. 139–167). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CCOL0521651670.004>

Knight, Carl. "Reflective Equilibrium." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Winter 2023. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/reflective-equilibrium/>.

P. Singer. Ethics and Intuitions. *The Journal of Ethics*, 9(3):331–352, 2005.

Hogarth, R. M. (2010). Intuition: A Challenge for Psychological Research on Decision Making. *Psychological Inquiry*, 21(4), 338–353. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1047840X.2010.520260>

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## Question 6

Could discoveries in moral psychology undermine, or support, ethical principles or theories?

*You should normally answer with respect to any one discovery and any one principle or theory (but see Kumar and Campbell, 2012, for an alternative approach).*

### Lecture Notes

This is the overall question for Part III of the course (Lecture 06 onwards).

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

J. D. Greene. Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality: Why Cognitive (Neuro)Science Matters for Ethics. *Ethics*, 124(4):695–726, 2014.

Kumar, V. and Campbell, R. (2012). On the normative significance of experimental moral psychology. *Philosophical Psychology*, 25(3):311–330.

### Further Reading

P. Singer. Ethics and Intuitions. *The Journal of Ethics*, 9(3):331–352, 2005.

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## Question 7

Do discoveries in moral psychology reveal that ethical arguments should not rely on premises which are not justified inferentially if the aim of the argument is to establish knowledge of its conclusion?

### Lecture Notes

*The following links will not work before the date of the lectures.*

- Greene contra Ethics
- Ethical Implications of the Dual Process Theory
- Time to Abandon Ethics?

### Reading

*If you are following the lecture notes and seminars, you should already know what to read. You do not need to consult this list. This is only for people coming to the assignment without using the lecture notes (not recommended).*

Greene, J. D. (2014). Beyond Point-and-Shoot Morality: Why Cognitive (Neuro)Science Matters for Ethics. *Ethics*, 124(4), 695–726. <https://doi.org/10.1086/675875>

Singer, P. (2005). Ethics and Intuitions. *The Journal of Ethics*, 9(3), 331–352. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10892-005-3508-y>

Rini, R. A. (2017). Why moral psychology is disturbing. *Philosophical Studies*, 174(6), 1439–1458. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11098-016-0766-4>

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## Question 8

**WARNING: This is a terrible essay question. Selecting this question is probably a mistake. It is included only because your lecturer is curious.**

What, if anything, do discoveries in moral psychology contribute to knowledge of ethics?

*Your answer should normally focus on a single discovery and a single contribution. This is a broad question but highly focussed answers are expected. Do not attempt a survey!*

### **Lecture Notes and Reading**

*This is such a broad question that almost all lecture materials and readings could be relevant. (But be sure that you answer it in a highly focussed way!)*