

Short 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, 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 for Planning

One of the seminars 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 feelings or emotions influence ethical judgements?

Your answer may (and probably should) focus on a single feeling or emotion such as disgust.

Lecture Notes

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

- Moral Intuitions
- Moral Intuitions and Emotions: Evidence

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).

Schnall, S., Haidt, J., Clore, G. L., & Jordan, A. H. (2008). Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34(8), 1096–1109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167208317771>

Sinnott-Armstrong, W., Young, L., & Cushman, F. (2010). Moral intuitions. In J. M. Doris, M. P. R. Group, & others (Eds.), *The moral psychology handbook* (pp. 246–272). Oxford: OUP.

Further Reading

Chapman, H. A., & Anderson, A. K. (2013). Things rank and gross in nature: A review and synthesis of moral disgust. *Psychological Bulletin*, 139(2), 300–327. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0030964>

Landy, J. F., & Goodwin, G. P. (2015). Does incidental disgust amplify moral judgment? A meta-analytic review of experimental evidence. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(4), 518–536.

Piazza, J., Landy, J. F., Chakroff, A., Young, L., & Wasserman, E. (2018). What disgust does and does not do for moral cognition. In N. Strohminger & V. Kumar (Eds.), *The moral psychology of disgust* (pp. 53–81). Rowman & Littlefield International.

Nichols, S. (2002). Norms with feeling: Towards a psychological account of moral judgment. *Cognition*, 84(2), 221–236. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277\(02\)00048-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0010-0277(02)00048-3)

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 a heuristic? What role, if any, do heuristics play in explaining ethical judgements?

Lecture Notes

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

- Moral Intuitions
- The Affect Heuristic and Risk
- Moral Attributes Are Inaccessible
- Moral Attributes Are Accessible

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).

Sinnott-Armstrong, W., Young, L., & Cushman, F. (2010). Moral intuitions. In J. M. Doris, M. P. R. Group, & others (Eds.), *The moral psychology handbook* (pp. 246–272). Oxford: OUP.

Pachur, T., Hertwig, R., & Steinmann, F. (2012). How Do People Judge Risks: Availability Heuristic, Affect Heuristic, or Both? *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Applied*, 18(3), 314–330. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0028279>

Further Reading

Kahneman, D., & Frederick, S. (2005). A model of heuristic judgment. In K. J. Holyoak & R. G. Morrison (Eds.), *The cambridge handbook of thinking and reasoning* (pp. 267–293). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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Question 3

EITHER:

What challenge, if any, to theories of ethical judgement is posed by the possibility of moral dumbfounding?

OR:

What challenge, if any, to theories of ethical judgement is posed by the possibility of moral disengagement?

OR (most ambitious?):

What challenge, if any, to theories of ethical judgement is posed by the twin possibilities of moral dumbfounding and moral disengagement?

Which ever question you attempt, be sure to answer with respect to a single theory of ethical judgement. Although several such theories were cited in the lecture notes linked below, the theory you most likely want to consider is Haidt and Bjorklund (2008)'s.

Lecture Notes

The following link will not work before the date of the lectures.

- Lecture 03

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).

Haidt, J., Bjorklund, F., & Murphy, S. (2000). Moral dumbfounding: When intuition finds no reason. Unpublished manuscript, University of Virginia.

Bandura, A. (2002). Selective Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency. *Journal of Moral Education*, 31(2), 101–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305724022014322>

Haidt, J., & Bjorklund, F. (2008). Social intuitionists answer six questions about moral psychology. In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (Ed.), *Moral psychology, Vol 2: The cognitive science of morality: Intuition and diversity* (pp. 181–217). Cambridge, Mass: MIT press.

Further Reading

Hindriks, F. (2014). Intuitions, Rationalizations, and Justification: A Defense of Sentimental Rationalism. *The Journal of Value Inquiry*, 48(2), 195–216. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10790-014-9419-z>

Bandura, A., Barbaranelli, C., Caprara, G., & Pastorelli, C. (1996). Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in the Exercise of Moral Agency. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(2), 364–374. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.2.364>

McAlister, A. L., Bandura, A., & Owen, S. V. (2006). Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement in Support of Military Force: The Impact of Sept. 11. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 25(2), 141–165. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2006.25.2.141>

Osofsky, M. J., Bandura, A., & Zimbardo, P. G. (2005). The Role of Moral Disengagement in the Execution Process. *Law and Human Behavior*, 29(4), 371–393. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10979-005-4930-1>

Royzman, E. B., Kim, K., & Leeman, R. F. (2015). The curious tale of julie and mark: Unraveling the moral dumbfounding effect. *Judgment & Decision Making*, 10(4).

Where to Find the Reading?

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Question 4

Are there cultural differences in moral psychology?

Lecture Notes

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

- Lecture 04
- Lecture 05

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).

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

Chakroff, A., Dungan, J., & Young, L. (2013). Harming Ourselves and Defiling Others: What Determines a Moral Domain? *PLOS ONE*, 8(9), e74434. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0074434>

Haidt, J., & Bjorklund, F. (2008). Social intuitionists answer six questions about moral psychology. In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (Ed.), *Moral psychology*, Vol 2: The cognitive science of morality: Intuition and diversity (pp. 181–217). Cambridge, Mass: MIT press.

Kivikangas, J. M., Fernández-Castilla, B., Järvelä, S., Ravaja, N., & Lönnqvist, J.-E. (2021). Moral foundations and political orientation: Systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 147(1), 55–94. <https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000308>

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Question 5

What is moral reframing? Why, if at all, is it sometimes effective in modifying people's behaviour?

Lecture Notes

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- Lecture 04
- Lecture 05

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. (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>

Wolsko, C., Ariceaga, H., & Seiden, J. (2016). Red, white, and blue enough to be green: Effects of moral framing on climate change attitudes and conservation behaviors. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 65, 7–19. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2016.02.005>

Feinberg, M., & Willer, R. (2015). From Gulf to Bridge: When Do Moral Arguments Facilitate Political Influence? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(12), 1665–1681. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167215607842>

Further Reading

Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96(5), 1029–1046. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0015141>

Hurst, K., & Stern, M. J. (2020). Messaging for environmental action: The role of moral framing and message source. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 68, 101394. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2020.101394>

Wolsko, C. (2017). Expanding the range of environmental values: Political orientation, moral foundations, and the common ingroup. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 51, 284–294. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jenvp.2017.04.005>

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