

Moral Psychology: The Science of Good and Evil? (Spring Term 2020-21)

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Questions your 70% essay may answer include the following.

Notes: (i) the references attached to questions are a guide to get you started, you should not restrict yourself to these sources (nor need you use all of them) and you should consider the sources discussed in lectures and provided in the lecture notes at <https://moral-psychology-docs.butterfill.com/> (although you should not attempt to be comprehensive in your use of sources); (ii) you may email me a request to add a question of your choice to this list, which we will discuss; (iii) this list will be updated periodically.

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Could **scientific discoveries** undermine or support **moral principles** (Singer 2005; Greene 2014)?

Why does morality vary so much across **cultures**, and why are there themes that recur across cultures (Graham et al. 2013; Curry, Mullins, and Whitehouse 2019)?¹

Do humans substantially and systematically disagree on ethical matters? If so, does this threaten **moral realism** or **moral epistemology** (Doris and Plakias 2008; Enoch 2009; McGrath 2008)?

What do **dual-process theories of moral cognition** claim? Is there sufficient evidence to accept, or reject, such a theory? (Van Bavel, FeldmanHall, and Mende-Siedlecki 2015; Greene 2015; Conway & Gawronski, 2013; Gawronski et al, 2017)?²

Which, if any, discoveries in moral psychology could undermine or support good arguments for ethical principles?

In what ways, if any, can **emotions** influence unreflective ethical judgements (Haidt 2001; Huebner, Dwyer, and Hauser 2009; Cameron, Lindquist, and Gray 2015; Nichols 2002)?

Are there **innate** drivers of morality? Why do **infants** behave prosocially and respond to prosocial behaviour by others from the second year of life or earlier (Brownell 2013; Hamlin, Wynn & Bloom 2007; Hamlin 2013; Olson & Spelke 2008)?

Could human moral psychology make **mitigating climate change** democratically infeasible (Markowitz and Shariff 2012; Gardiner 2011)? And why are some people moved to act on climate change by thoughts of **harm**, others by thoughts of **purity** (Feinberg & Willer 2013)?¹

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?

¹ You may answer either or both questions.

² Students writing in this area have formulated variations on this question, which you may also use:

OR: Is Greene's argument against the reliability of fast processes for moral judgements contingent on any particular metaethical position?

OR: How could we know whether Cushman's dual-process theory of moral cognition is true?

OR: Is it true that, as Greene claims, whenever two parties disagree, 'one party's automatic settings are going astray'?

OR: What, on balance, does evidence from applications of the CNI model allow us to conclude?

Sources (this is not an exhaustive list)

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