

Morality and Ethics: A (very) short review

Journal Club - April 12th



What is the difference ?

Morality (from the Latin *moralitas* "manner, character, proper behavior") is the differentiation of intentions, decisions, and actions between those that are distinguished as proper and those that are improper. Notion of moral judgement. Common values and virtues shared by a community.

Ethics (aka moral philosophy) is the branch of philosophy which **addresses questions of morality**. The word "ethics" is "**commonly used interchangeably with 'morality'**".

Several levels and different perspectives

Morality as an object of thoughts and reflexions → Ethics

Morality as an object of study → Moral judgement

Philosophy: From Aristotle to Locke

Neuroscience: **Brain areas**

Psychology: Moral Psychology

A decorative orange wavy line at the bottom of the slide.

Several levels: Philosophy

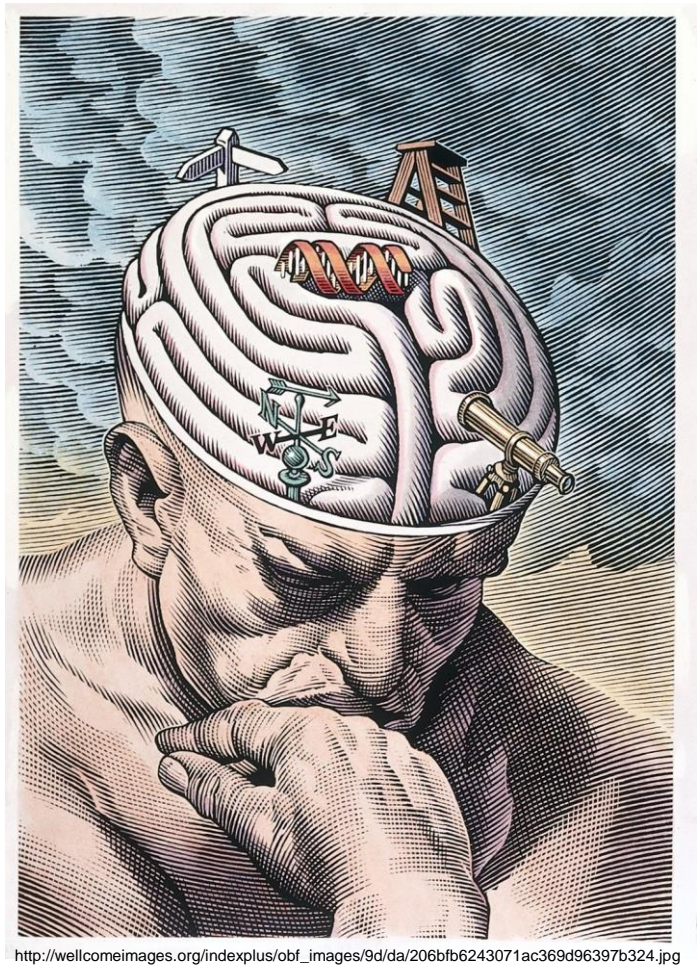
Ethics as a way of questioning morality.

Ethics is teleological:

- Aristotle (eudaimonia: happiness)
- Bentham (utilitarianism)

Ethics is not teleological:

- Kant (no finality - reason and duty)
- Locke (utility, normative - as attributes)



Several levels: Neuroscience

The Journal of Neuroscience, April 1, 2002, 22(7):2730-2736

→ Specific brain areas?

The Neural Correlates of Moral Sensitivity: A Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging Investigation of Basic and Moral Emotions

→ Responses to moral sentences
and pictures

Jorge Moll,¹ Ricardo de Oliveira-Souza,¹ Paul J. Eslinger,² Ivanei E. Bramati,¹ Janaína Mourão-Miranda,^{1,3}
Pedro Angelo Andreiuolo,¹ and Luiz Pessoa⁴

Moll et al. (2001) “They hung an innocent” vs “Stones are made of water”

Moll et al. (2002): Pictures of moral violations (physical assaults, poor children abandoned in the streets) VS aversive scenes (body lesions, dangerous animals) VS pleasant, interesting, neutral pictures and scrambled images

→ Medial OFC and STS

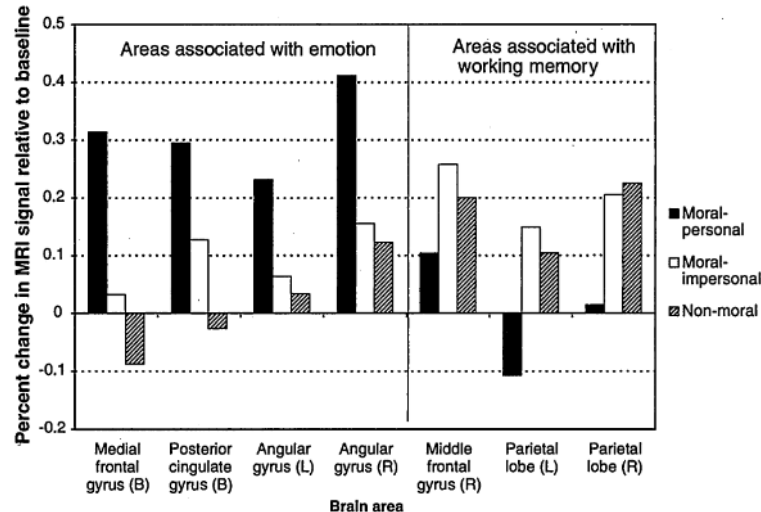
Several levels: Neuroscience

→ Emotional engagement in personal
vs impersonal moral judgements:
Trolley vs footbridge dilemma

An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgment

Joshua D. Greene,^{1,2*} R. Brian Sommerville,¹ Leigh E. Nystrom,^{1,3}
John M. Darley,³ Jonathan D. Cohen^{1,3,4}

www.sciencemag.org SCIENCE VOL 293 14 SEPTEMBER 2001

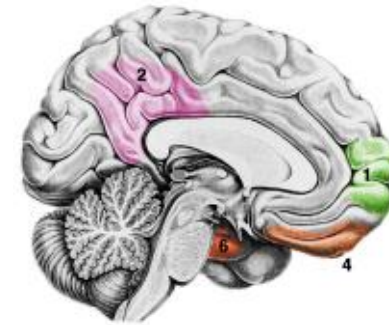
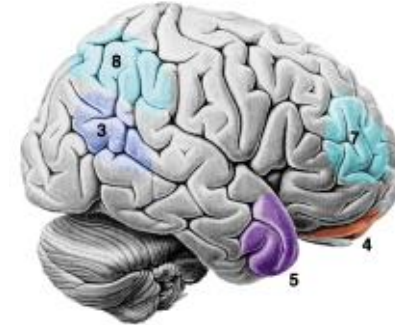


Several levels: Neuroscience

How (and where) does moral judgment work?

Joshua Greene and Jonathan Haidt

Brain region (with BA)	Associated moral tasks		
1. Medial frontal gyrus (BA 9/10)	Personal moral judgments Impersonal moral judgments (relative to non-moral) [32] Simple moral judgments* [28] Viewing moral pictures [30] Forgivability judgments [31]* (*also lateral frontopolar)	3. Superior temporal sulcus, inferior parietal lobe (BA 39)	Personal moral judgments [32] Simple moral judgments [28,29] Moral pictures [30]
2. Posterior cingulate, precuneus, retrosplenial cortex (BA 31/7)	Personal moral judgments Impersonal moral judgments (relative to non-moral) [32] Simple moral judgments [28] Forgivability judgments [31] Moral pictures [30]	4. Orbitofrontal/ventromedial frontal cortex (BA 10/11)	Simple moral judgments [28,29] Moral pictures [30]
		5. Temporal pole (BA 38)	Simple moral judgments [28,29]
		6. Amygdala	Moral pictures [30]
		7. Dorsolateral prefrontal cortex (BA 9/10/46);	Impersonal moral judgment [32]
		8. Parietal lobe (BA 7/40)	



Several levels: Neuroscience

Review

TRENDS in Cognitive Sciences Vol.6 No.12 December 2002

How (and where) does moral judgment work?

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Conclusions:

- Emotions contribute to moral judgement
- No specifically moral part in the brain
- Morality refers to a variety of disparate cognitive processes

Several levels: Psychology

→ Posthypnotic suggestions to feel disgust in response to an arbitrary word

→ Moral judgement vignettes (including or not the hypnotic disgust word)

Congressman Arnold Paxton frequently gives speeches condemning corruption and arguing for campaign finance reform. But he is just trying to cover up the fact that he himself [will take bribes from/is often bribed by] the tobacco lobby, and other special interests, to promote their legislation.

“Student Council” story (Exp 2) → no violation of any kind: “Dan is a student council representative at his school. This semester he is in charge of scheduling discussions about academic issues. He *[tries to take/often picks]* topics that appeal to both professors and students in order to stimulate discussion.”

→ How morally wrong / How disgusting is the behavior?
(rating scales + explanation of the morality ratings)

Several levels: Psychology

Research Report

Hypnotic Disgust Makes Moral Judgments More Severe

Thalia Wheatley¹ and Jonathan Haidt²

¹National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland, and ²University of Virginia

→ How morally wrong / How disgusting is the behavior?

TABLE 1

Mean Disgust and Morality Ratings by Hypnotic Disgust Condition, Experiment 1

Vignette	Disgust ratings		Morality ratings	
	Hypnotic disgust present	Hypnotic disgust absent	Hypnotic disgust present	Hypnotic disgust absent
Cousin incest	72.46	43.24**	67.63	43.29**
Eating one's dog	89.22	83.55	65.26	65.64
Bribery	72.37	38.92**	91.28	78.73*
Lawyer	62.04	48.55	73.26	59.82
Shoplifting	58.38	19.79***	79.81	67.75
Library theft	54.68	25.95**	71.24	69.40
Mean	68.04	43.11***	73.94	64.67*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, by paired-samples t test.

N=45

Several levels: Psychology

Research Article

You See, the Ends Don't Justify the Means: Visual Imagery and Moral Judgment

Elinor Amit and Joshua D. Greene
Harvard University



Psychological Science
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Research Report

Hypnotic Disgust Makes Moral Judgments More Severe

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Research Article

Liberating Reason From the Passions: Overriding Intuitionist Moral Judgments Through Emotion Reappraisal

Matthew Feinberg¹, Robb Willer², Olga Antonenko¹, and
Oliver P. John¹

¹Psychology Department and ²Sociology Department, University of California, Berkeley

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Philosophy and Biological Sciences

Morality and Ethics: What define/characterise them?

Where in the brain could it be located? Networks?

What does it involve? → Interdisciplinary studies?

To appear in *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Psychology*, ed. by John Symons & Paco Calvo
FINAL DRAFT – 12/06/06

You Can't Learn About Morality from Brain Scans

The problem with moral psychology

BY THOMAS NAGEL | November 2, 2013

Moral Judgment

Jennifer Nado
Daniel Kelly
Stephen Stich

Rutgers University

Why choosing to talk about Ethics/Morality?

- We should take more time to think about Ethics, especially as scientists
 - Why am I doing (something) / Which purpose?
 - How far can I go?
 - Which applications / implications might and will it have?
- Knowledge and Science as objects of authority
 - Link to new technologies and innovations
 - What kinds of society will it lead to?

*Morality is not the doctrine of how we may make ourselves happy, but
how we may make ourselves worthy of happiness.*

Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason