

Topics in Moral Psychology: Intuitions and Emotions

FRRMV16013
2022/2023 – 2nd Block

Lecturer: Peter Königs (p.j.konigs@uu.nl)

Meetings: Group 1: Monday, 9.00-10.45, Israels 005
Group 2: Monday, 11.00-12.45, Israels 005

Description

Many moral philosophers – e.g., intuitionists, sentimentalists – have assigned a pivotal role to intuitions or emotions in moral philosophy. At the same time, findings from empirical moral psychology are radically changing our understanding of the place of intuitions and emotions in moral judgment. In this course, we will engage with different philosophical theories about the significance of intuitions and emotions in moral philosophy and study findings from empirical moral psychology that have been cited as evidence in support or against these theories. We will also look at the role of intuition and emotion in applied contexts, discussing whether they foster or undermine rational decision-making.

Objectives

In this course, you will be familiarized with some key debates in moral psychology and acquire an understanding of the interplay between moral philosophy and empirical moral psychology. The course focuses specifically on intuitions and emotions, looking at both philosophical and psychological theories of the role of intuitions and emotions in moral judgment. By connecting moral psychology with questions in metaethics, normative ethics, political philosophy and applied ethics, the course also seeks to convey an idea of how moral psychology matters to debates in different areas of practical philosophy.

Upon completion, you will have:

- explored key issues and debates in contemporary moral psychology (both normative and empirical),
- acquired an understanding of how findings from empirical moral psychology bear on questions in normative ethics, metaethics, applied ethics, and political philosophy,
- deepened your understanding of some influential theories in metaethics (intuitionism, sentimentalism) and normative ethics (utilitarianism),
- engaged with debates in applied ethics through the lens of moral psychology
- and improved your essay writing skills.



Week	Readings	Topic
Week 1 Nov. 14	<p>Huemer, Michael 2005: <i>Ethical Intuitionism</i>. Basingstoke: Palgrave (Preface; Ch. 1)</p> <p>Documents 'Guideline – Essay Writing' and 'Grading Criteria'</p> <p><i>Further reading: DeLapp; Sayre-McCord, 2012</i></p>	Introduction
Week 2 Nov. 21	<p>Huemer, Michael 2005: <i>Ethical Intuitionism</i>. Basingstoke: Palgrave (Ch. 5)</p> <p><i>Optional bonus material: Michael Huemer's blog at https://fakenous.substack.com/</i></p> <p><i>Further reading: Huemer, 2008; Kim; Sayre-McCord, 2015; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006, 2008; Sinnott-Armstrong, Young, & Cushman, 2010; Stratton-Lake, 2020</i></p>	Intuitions at the centre of morality: Moral Intuitionism
Week 3 Nov. 28	<p>Prinz, Jesse 2006: "The Emotional Basis of Moral Judgment", <i>Philosophical Explorations</i> (9), 29-43</p> <p>Prinz, Jesse 2016: "Emotions, Morality, and Identity", in Da Silva (ed.), <i>Morality and Emotion</i> (pp. 13-34), New York: Routledge.</p> <p><i>Further reading: Jones, 2006; Kauppinen, 2021; Prinz, 2010; Prinz & Nichols, 2010</i></p>	Emotions at the centre of morality: Moral Sentimentalism
Week 4 Dec. 5	<p>Haidt, Jonathan 2012: <i>The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion</i>, New York: Pantheon Books (Ch. 2)</p> <p>Sinnott-Armstrong 2006: "Moral Intuitionism Meets Empirical Psychology", in T. Horgan/M. Timmons (eds.), <i>Metaethics after Moore</i> (pp. 339-366), Oxford: Oxford University Press.</p> <p><i>Optional bonus material: Jonathan Haidt giving a talk on the moral psychology of political division: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6WmveHzpiK8</i></p> <p><i>Further reading: Ballantyne & Thurow, 2013; Demaree-Cotton, 2016; Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Björklund, 2008; Huemer, 2008; Sinnott-Armstrong, 2008</i></p>	Intuitions and emotions under fire (Part I)
Week 5 Dec. 12	<p>Greene, Joshua/Young, Liane 2020: "The Cognitive Neuroscience of Moral Judgment and Decision-Making", in D. Poeppel et al. (eds.), <i>The Cognitive Neurosciences</i> (pp. 1003-1014), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.</p> <p>Singer, Peter 2006: "Ethics and Intuitions", <i>The Journal of Ethics</i> (9), 331-352.</p> <p><i>Optional bonus material: Peter Singer giving a talk on ethics, evolution, and moral progress: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=91UQAptxDn8</i></p> <p><i>Further reading: Appiah, 2008, ch. 3; Churchland, 2012, 2020; Greene, 2008; Greenspan, 2015; Mason, 2010, 2011; Sandberg & Juth, 2011; Tersman, 2008</i></p>	Intuitions and emotions under fire (Part II)



<p>Week 6 Dec. 19</p>	<p>Brennan, Jason 2017: "Politics makes us mean and dumb", http://emotionresearcher.com/politics-makes-us-mean-and-dumb/</p> <p>Sunstein, Cass 2010: "Moral Heuristics and Risk", in S. Roeser (ed.), <i>Emotions and Risky Technologies</i> (pp. 3-16), Dordrecht: Springer.</p> <p><i>Optional bonus material: Cass Sunstein giving a talk on how change happens: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u2p7bizn5I8</i></p> <p><i>Further reading: Brennan, 2017; Erisen, Lodge, & Taber, 2014; Sunstein, 2005.</i></p>	<p>Intuitions and emotions in applied contexts (Part I)</p>
<p>Christmas Break</p>		
<p>Week 7 Jan. 16</p>	<p>Roeser, Sabine/Pesch, Udo 2016: "An Emotional Deliberation Approach to Risk", <i>Science, Technology, & Human Values</i> (41), pp. 274-297.</p> <p>Roeser, Sabine/Taebi, Behnam/Doorn, Neelke 2020: "Geoengineering the climate and ethical challenges: what we can learn from moral emotions and art", <i>CRISPP</i> (23), pp. 641-658.</p> <p><i>Further reading: Neblo, 2020; Roeser, 2012, 2010; Roeser & Pesch, 2016; Roeser & Steinert, 2019, and other work by Roeser.</i></p>	<p>Intuitions and emotions in applied contexts (Part II)</p>

Scroll down for the references

Assignments and grading

To successfully complete this course, you need to submit three kinds of assignments:

- A short midterm essay (30% of final grade)
- A long essay at the end of the course (70% of final grade)
- Brief weekly comments on the readings as preparation for class (not graded)

You are also encouraged to submit an outline for the long essay.

The essays

Length

Short midterm essay: 1500 words ($\pm 15\%$)

Long essay: 3500 words ($\pm 15\%$)

Instructions and grading criteria

Resources on essay writing uploaded on Blackboard include:

1. a guideline on writing a philosophy essay
2. the grading criteria
3. a guideline on layout and design
4. a document on signposting

1 and 2 will be discussed in class in Week 1.



Deadlines

Midterm essay: December 14, 2022, 8pm

Outline long essay: December 23. The outline may be a preliminary introduction or some kind of summary of your argument. Submitting an outline is encouraged but optional.

Long essay: January 23, 2023, 8pm

Please submit essays and outline on Blackboard (=> 'Assignments'), preferably as PDFs. The essays will be graded anonymously. Please give your files a name that reflects your student number (e.g. 0123456, essay), and do not mention your name on the cover page. Grades are returned within ten working days.

An essay that is submitted late will incur a penalty of 0.5 point per 24 hours (rounded up). Penalty reductions will remain in place in the case of a resit.

Requests for a deadline extension will only be considered in *very* exceptional cases. All requests for an extension will be discussed with the study advisor, who will make a recommendation. As a general policy, I'm very happy to help you with the essay and very reluctant to grant an extension.

Non-exhaustive list of possible essay topics

- Is Huemer's case for ethical intuitionism (or one of its sub-arguments) sound?
- Is emotion necessary and sufficient for moral judgement?
- Is the morally bad just that which causes disapprobation?
- Does empirical moral psychology refute ethical intuitionism?
- Does neuroscience refute deontology?
- Do emotions promote/undermine rational political decisions-making/rational decision-making under uncertainty?

The weekly comments

To successfully complete the course, you will need to submit weekly comments on the readings in advance of our meetings (except for Week 1). This involves briefly (1-3 sentences) answering a few questions on the readings. These questions will be uploaded to Blackboard (=> 'Assignments'). Writing these comments should take you about 10 minutes per week.

Here's one example of such a question: <"What is the role of conscious moral reasoning in Haidt's Social Intuitionist Model? (1-2 sentences)">

Please upload your comments on Blackboard by Sunday 9pm (=> 'Assignments').

Reparation

Resit opportunities ("reparations" in UU jargon) are available for those who complete the course with a grade between 4.0 and 5.5. Only those who have taken part in all components of the course and have completed all assignments are eligible for a resit.

Attendance

If you miss more than one meeting, you'll have to do a substitute task to pass the course. Please contact me about this in time.

Academic integrity

Utrecht University expects each student to be familiar with and to observe the norms and values that ensure academic integrity. Academic integrity consists, amongst other things, in not passing off someone else's thought as your own and always citing your sources correctly and in full. Reasonable suspicions of fraud or plagiarism are always referred to



the Examination Committee. For more information, see the uploaded document on plagiarism and:

<https://students.uu.nl/en/practical-information/policies-and-procedures/fraud-and-plagiarism>

Accessibility

If you have a disability or chronic illness, you have a right to additional support to enable you to study more effectively. More information is available at https://students.uu.nl/sites/default/files/fsw-fi_studying_with_a_disability_or_chronic_illness.pdf, by contacting the MAE study advisor (studieadviesfenr.gw@uu.nl) or through the Humanities Student Desk (studentdesk.hum@uu.nl) (when emailing, always mention your study programme and student number in the subject line). If you experience any circumstances that may negatively influence your ability to participate in the course (attendance, meeting deadlines), notify us as soon as possible so that we may consider possible solutions together.

Contact

You are welcome to contact me with any questions you have about the course. I also gladly receive your feedback on all aspects of the course.

List of references (survey articles are marked with a bold asterisk)

- Appiah, K.A. (2008). *Experiments in Ethics*. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press.
- Ballantyne, N., & Thurow, J. C. (2013). Moral Intuitionism Defeated? *American Philosophical Quarterly*, 50(4), 411–421.
- Brennan, J. (2017). Against democracy. In *Against Democracy*: Princeton University Press.
- Churchland, P. (2012). *Braintrust. What Neuroscience Tells us About Morality*. Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press.
- Churchland, P. (2020). *Conscience. The Origins of Moral Intuition*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- DeLapp, K. M. Metaethics. In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.
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- Erisen, C., Lodge, M., & Taber, C. S. (2014). Affective contagion in effortful political thinking. *Political Psychology*, 35(2), 187–206.
- Greene, J. (2008). The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul. In W. Sinnott-Armstrong (Ed.), *Moral Psychology: Volume 3: The Neuroscience of Morality: Emotion, Brain Disorders, and Development* (pp. 35–80). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Greenspan, P. (2015). Confabulating the Truth: In Defense of 'Defensive' Moral Reasoning. *The Journal of Ethics*, 19(2), 105–123.
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- Kim, S. Moral Realism. In *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.*
- Mason, K. (2010). Debunking Arguments and the Genealogy of Religion and Morality. *Philosophy Compass*, 5(9), 770–778.*
- Mason, K. (2011). Moral Psychology and Moral Intuitions: A Pox On All Your Houses. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 89(3), 441–458.



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- Roeser, S. (2012). Emotional engineers: Toward morally responsible design. *Science and Engineering Ethics*, 18(1), 103-115.
- Roeser, S. (Ed.) (2010). *Emotions and Risky Technologies*. Dordrecht: Springer.
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- Roeser, S., & Steinert, S. (2019). Passion for the Art of Morally Responsible Technology Development. *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements*, 85, 87-109.
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