

# Evolutionary debunking arguments in ethics

## Graduate seminar syllabus

### Week 1: Introductory readings

Jonathan Haidt & Selin Kesebir (2010) Morality. In Susan T. Fiske, Daniel T. Gilbert, & Gardiner Lindzey, eds. *Handbook of social psychology*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed., 797-832. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley. [On Weblearn]

Guy Kahane (2011) Evolutionary debunking arguments. *Nous* 45, 103-125. [[Link](#)]

#### *Suggested further reading:*

##### *On the science:*

Christopher Boehm (1999) *Hierarchy in the forest*. Harvard University Press.

Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis (2011) *A cooperative species: human reciprocity and its evolution*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

de Waal, Frans B. M. & Flack, Jessica (2000) 'Any animal whatever' Darwinian building blocks of morality in monkeys and apes. *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 7, 1-29.

Chandra Sripada (2008) Nativism and moral psychology: three models of the innate structure that shapes the content of moral norms. In Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, ed., *Moral psychology, vol 1.*, 319-344. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

##### *On evolutionary debunking arguments:*

William Fitzpatrick (2008) Morality and Evolutionary Biology. In Edward N Zalta, ed. *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*.

Kelby Mason (2008) Debunking arguments and the genealogy of religion and morality. *Philosophy Compass* 4, 770-778.

John S. Wilkins & Paul E. Griffiths (2013) Evolutionary debunking arguments in three domains: fact, value, and religion. In Greg Dawes & James McLaurin, eds. *A new science of religion*, 133-146. London: Routledge.

### Week 2: Is morality as “a collective illusion foisted upon us by our genes”?

Richard Joyce (2000) *The myth of morality*, Ch. 6, “Morality and Evolution,” 135-174. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. [Available from ProQuest Ebrary via SOLO]

Michael Ruse (1986) *Taking Darwin seriously*, 250-258. Oxford: Blackwell. [Scan to be put on Weblearn]

*Suggested further reading:*

Alan Gibbard (1990) *Wise choices, apt feelings*, 105-125. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Richard Joyce (2000) Darwinian ethics and error. *Biology and Philosophy* 15, 713-732.

(2006) *The evolution of morality*, 179-220. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Michael Ruse (1991) The significance of evolution. In Peter Singer, ed. *A companion to ethics*, 500-510.

Michael Ruse & Edward O. Wilson (1986) Morality as applied science. *Philosophy* 61, 173-192.

Walter Sinnott-Armstrong (2006) *Moral skepticisms*, 40-45.

**Week 3: Do evolutionary considerations debunking meta-ethical objectivism?**

Sharon Street (2006) A 'Darwinian dilemma' for realist theories of value. *Philosophical Studies* 127, 109-166. [[Link](#)]

*Suggested further reading:*

Sharon Street (2008) Constructivism about reasons. In Russ Shafer-Landau, *Oxford Studies in Meta-Ethics, vol. 3*, 207-246. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

(2011) Mind-independence without mystery: why quasi-realists can't have it both ways. In Russ Shafer-Landau, ed. *Oxford Studies in Meta-Ethics, vol. 6*, 1-32.

**Week 4: Do evolutionary debunking arguments support utilitarianism?**

Peter Singer (2005) Ethics and intuitions. *The Journal of Ethics* 9, 331-352. [[Link](#)]

Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek and Peter Singer (2012) The objectivity of ethics and the unity of practical reason. *Ethics* 123, 9-31. (22) [[Link](#)]

Guy Kahane (2014) Evolution and impartiality. *Ethics* 124, 327-341. [[Link](#)]

*Suggested further reading:*

Joshua Greene (2008) The secret joke of Kant's soul. In Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, ed. *Moral psychology, vol. 3*, 35-80. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Michael Huemer (2008) Revisionary intuitionism. *Social Philosophy and Policy* 25, 368-392.

Derek Parfit (2011) *On what matters, vol. 2.*, 511-542. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Roger Crisp (2006) *Reasons and the good*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Folke Tersman (2008) The reliability of moral intuitions. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 86, 389-405.

## **Week 5: Realist rejoinders to debunking arguments**

David Copp (2008) Darwinian skepticism about moral realism. *Philosophical Issues* 18, 186-206. [[Link](#)]

David Enoch (2010) The epistemological challenge to metanormative realism: how best to understand it, and how to cope with it. *Philosophical Studies* 148, 413-438. [[Link](#)]

### *Suggested further reading:*

Kevin Brosnan (2011) Do the evolutionary origins of morality undermine moral knowledge? *Biology and Philosophy* 26, 51-64.

William Fitzpatrick (2014) Debunking evolutionary debunking of ethical realism. *Philosophical Studies*.

Karl Schafer (2010) Evolution and normative skepticism. *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 88, 471-488.

Russ Shafer-Landau (2012) Evolutionary debunking, moral realism, and moral knowledge. *Journal of Ethics and Social Philosophy* 7, 1-37.

Knut Olav Skarsaune (2011) Darwin and moral realism: survival of the fittest. *Philosophical Studies* 152, 229-243.

Erik Wielenberg (2010) On the evolutionary debunking of morality. *Ethics* 120, 441-464.

## **Week 6: Street's reply**

Sharon Street (2008) Reply to Copp. *Philosophical Issues* 18, 207-228. [[Link](#)]

Selim Berker (2014) Does evolutionary psychology show that normativity is mind-dependent? In D'Arms and Jacobsen, eds. *Moral Psychology and Human Agency*, 215-252. OUP. [[Link](#)]

### *Suggested further reading:*

Richard Joyce (forthcoming) Evolution, truth-tracking, and moral skepticism. In Bastian Reichardt, ed. *Problems of goodness: new essays in metaethics*.

Katia Vavova (2014) Debunking evolutionary debunking. *Oxford Studies in Metaethics* 9, 76-101.

## **Week 7: The epistemology of genealogical debunking**

Roger White (2010) You just believe that because ... *Philosophical Perspectives* 24, 573-615. [[Link](#)]

Andreas L. Mogensen (forthcoming) Contingency anxiety and the epistemology of disagreement, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly*. [[Link](#)]

*Suggested further reading:*

Adam Elga (ms.) Lucky to be rational. [www.princeton.edu/~adame/papers/bellingham-lucky.pdf](http://www.princeton.edu/~adame/papers/bellingham-lucky.pdf)

Joshua Schechter (ms.) Luck, rationality, and explanation: a reply to Elga's 'Lucky to be rational.'  
[www.brown.edu/Departments/Philosophy/onlinepapers/schechter/LuckRationalityExpalnation.pdf](http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Philosophy/onlinepapers/schechter/LuckRationalityExpalnation.pdf)

Katia Vavova (ms.) Irrelevant influences. [http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~evavova/files/vavova\\_ii.pdf](http://www.mtholyoke.edu/~evavova/files/vavova_ii.pdf)

## **Week 8: Are debunking arguments premised on mistakes about biological explanations?**

Andreas L. Mogensen (forthcoming) Evolutionary debunking arguments and the proximate/ultimate distinction. *Analysis* [[Link](#)]

(ms) Do evolutionary debunking arguments rest on a mistake about evolutionary explanations? [[Link](#)]

*Suggested further reading:*

Justin Clarke-Doane (forthcoming) Justification and explanation in mathematics and morality.  
*Oxford Studies in Metaethics*

Ben Fraser (2014) Evolutionary debunking arguments and the reliability of moral cognition.  
*Philosophical Studies* 168, 457-473.

Abraham Graber (2012) Medusa's gaze reflected: A Darwinian dilemma for anti-realist theories of value. *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 15, 589-601

Joel Pust (2001) Natural selection explanation and origins essentialism. *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 31, 201-220.