

I'll try to answer the first five of these questions in part 1, and the sixth in part 2. In part 3, I'll explain how this philosophical literature—a bit of it—was woven into the foundation of a psychological project that also sought to characterize the “distinctive characteristics” of moral judgments, rules and transgressions and that has had an important influence on contemporary empirical moral psychology. In part 4, a preliminary conclusion, I'll review what we've done. Subsequent parts address more contemporary theories as I ask what lessons can be learned from the six decades of philosophical and psychological research we'll be reviewing.

1. The Philosophers' Project (≈1952–≈1990): What Were These Philosophers Trying to Do?

To understand what these philosophers were trying to do, we must begin with a crucial distinction. Often, when we ask whether a person's judgment is moral, what we want to know is whether her moral judgment is *true*—or something in that vicinity: correct, or valid, or justified, or wise. What we are asking, to use Frankena's (1967) useful terminology, is whether the judgment is moral as opposed to *immoral*. It is hardly surprising that philosophers often want to know whether a judgment or a principle is moral (as opposed to immoral). Limning the contours of the moral (in this sense), has been a goal of philosophy since antiquity.² But it is very important to keep in mind that this was *not* the goal of the writers engaged in what I'm calling “The Philosophers' Project.” Rather, borrowing again from Frankena, what they were trying to do was to distinguish moral judgments, principles, etc. from *nonmoral* judgments or principles. So, for example, they wanted to know how to determine whether an action guiding rule that is widely accepted in a given culture is a moral rule or some other sort of rule—a religious rule, for example, or an aesthetic rule, or a prudential rule. Whether the rule is true, or valid, or justified, etc., was simply not their concern. Similarly, confronted with the unfamiliar, largely egoistic action guiding rules described in John Ladd's (1957) detailed study of the Navajo, they wanted to know whether this system of rules was a morality. If it was not, then, arguably, the Navajo did not have a moral code at all, and thus having a moral code is not a human universal. Closer to home, these philosophers wanted to specify how to distinguish a moral rule from a rule of etiquette. Are the tacit rules specifying appropriate behavior for people waiting on line to board a bus or to buy a coffee at Starbucks moral rules or just rules of etiquette?³ How about rules specifying appropriate clothing to wear at important events, like funerals? They also wanted some principled way of determining which legal rules are also moral rules.

2. Why Did They Want to Do It? Why Was It Thought to Be Important?

The philosophers we are concerned with wanted to give an account of the conditions required for a judgment or a rule to be moral as opposed to nonmoral. Why? One reason, on which there was wide agreement, was that the account would enable us to give principled answers to the sorts of questions mentioned in the previous paragraph. It would, for example, tell us whether the Navajo, as described by Ladd, had a moral code.⁴ It would also tell us whether rules about how to behave while waiting on line are moral rules, whether a specified legal rule is also a moral rule, etc. Another, more controversial reason was that the account would be a specification

of the *essence of morality*. While a number of authors endorsed this view,⁵ others adamantly rejected it. According to Paul Taylor, "The importance of classifying moral principles . . . does not lie in the discovery of the essence of morality. (There is no such essence)" (1978, 52).

With the explosion of research in empirical moral psychology over the last two decades and philosophers' growing interest in the area, many new questions have been raised that seem to require the sort of account that philosophers engaged in the Philosophers' Project were seeking. One clear example can be found in Richard Joyce's influential book, *The Evolution of Morality* (2006). Joyce wants to provide an account of the evolution of the "moral sense," which he characterizes as "a faculty for making moral judgments" (44). But we can't undertake an inquiry into the evolution of the moral sense, Joyce maintains, without an account of what moral judgments are.

Any attempt to understand how our ability to make moral judgments evolved will not get far if we lack a secure understanding of what a moral judgment is. (To neglect this would be like writing a book called *The Origin of Virtue* without any substantial discussion of what virtue is).

(44)

He goes on to offer his own chapter-length account of "the nature of morality," which includes a detailed attempt to answer the question, "What is a moral judgment?"⁶

Another example that has garnered a great deal of attention grows out of some provocative and problematic claims by Jonathan Haidt. About a decade ago, Haidt, who has been one of the most influential moral psychologists in recent years, accused his fellow moral psychologists of politically motivated bias. Here is a quote that nicely summarizes Haidt's critique.

[S]tudents of morality are often biased by their own moral commitments. . . . One problem is that the psychological study of morality, like psychology itself, has been dominated by politically liberal researchers (which includes us). The lack of moral and political diversity among researchers has led to an inappropriate narrowing of the moral domain to issues of harm/care and fairness/reciprocity/ justice. . . . Morality in most cultures (and for social conservatives in Western cultures), is in fact much broader, including issues of in-group/loyalty, authority/respect, and purity/sanctity. . . .

This article is about how morality might be partially innate. . . . We begin by arguing for a broader conception of morality and suggesting that most of the discussion of innateness to date has not been about morality *per se*; it has been about whether the psychology of *harm* and *fairness* is innate.

(Haidt & Joseph, 2007, 367)

To make their case for a broader conception of morality, Haidt and Joseph offer a brief overview of norms that prevail in other cultures. These norms include "rules about clothing, gender roles, food, and forms of address" and a host of other matters as well (371). They emphasize that people in these cultures care deeply about whether or not others follow these rules. But this is a puzzling way to defend their accusation. For surely Haidt