

Documents

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Causation in moral judgment

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Abstract

Research on moral judgment is refueling public interest in an old debate concerning the general foundation of morals. Are moral judgments based on reason or on feeling? Recent research in moral psychology and neuroscience concludes that moral judgments occur rapidly, automatically, and largely without the aid of inference. Such findings are utilized to criticize moral theories that require deliberation to precede moral judgment as its cause. The main targets of this criticism are the moral theories of Piaget and Kohlberg, but Kant's moral philosophy is also criticized for this failing. This essay defends Kant from this charge by clarifying the role of deliberation in his moral theory and by demonstrating that, for Kant, moral judgment invokes a self-organizing system that has the capacity to rapidly determine the moral permissibility of any desired purpose - real or imagined. Further support for Kant's moral theory is gleaned from recent work on self-organization in the brain. © 2011 Imprint Academic.

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