

Moral Reasoning Given a Strong Argument and Time

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Abstract: According to a recent trend in moral psychology, traditional reason-based approaches to moral judgment are misguided, insofar as they make no attempt to separate post-hoc rationalization of affective responses from reasoning that leads to a moral judgment. Here we report a study that tests whether reason plays a non-post-hoc role in moral judgment. In this study, subjects were given either a strong argument or a weak argument for a counter-intuitive moral claim (e.g., that sweatshops are morally acceptable). In addition, they were prompted to judge how morally acceptable they believe the action to be prior to reading the argument in favor of the action, and again either two-minutes after reading the argument, or immediately after doing so. Preliminary results reveal an interaction between argument strength and time, suggesting that reason can sometimes override immediate intuitive affective responses in the service of making a moral judgment.