A rebuttal of Greene’s attack on deontology

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Joshua Greene has argued that deontology is a rationalization of judgments caused by emotional reactions to morally irrelevant features of the world, and hence is untrustworthy. By contrast, Greene holds that consequentialism is more likely to involve “genuine moral reasoning” in response to morally relevant factors and hence is more trustworthy than deontology.

This paper argues that even if Greene has identified a duality of processes which sometimes compete in human moral judgment, he is wrong that each of them distinctively drives consequentialist and deontological reasoning, respectively. When we get clearer about how to understand the relevant terms (‘deontology’, ‘consequentialism’, ‘alarm-like’, ‘actuarial’), we should be less confident that Greene has shown anything about the natures of consequentialism, deontology, or types of judgment typically associated therewith.

In sum, here’s why. Plausibly, knee-jerk emotional reactions in people who formulate or employ a deontological moral theory are relatively limited. Plausibly, knee-jerk emotional reactions do have a substantial role in the formulation and employment of consequentialist reasoning and theorizing. Plausibly, virtually any moral theory must accommodate a variety of types of value, including that of preserving special relationships for their own sakes.

Joshua Greene has recently gained considerable attention for his neuroscientific results and his argument that they debunk deontological moral theories while vindicating consequentialist ones. In his most philosophically elaborate account to date, he writes:

I will argue that deontological judgments tend to be driven by emotional responses, and that deontological philosophy, rather than being grounded in moral reasoning, is to a large extent an exercise in moral rationalization. This is in contrast to consequentialism, which, I will argue, arises from rather different psychological processes, ones that are more “cognitive,” and more likely to involve genuine moral reasoning. These claims are strictly empirical, and I will defend them on the basis of the available evidence. (Greene 2008:36)

He views these claims as empirical because he thinks his work in neuroscience has revealed two “psychological natural kinds”—two “dissociable psychological patterns” which he associates with deontology and consequentialism, respectively (37). Greene posits ‘mappings’ both [i] between “the content of deontological philosophy and the functional properties of alarmlike emotions” and [ii] between “the content of consequentialist philosophy and the functional properties of” ratiocinative processes (63-4). These mappings are so distinct, in Greene’s view, as to convince him that the two psychological processes are the true essences of each moral theory (38). “Genuine moral reasoning” seems to be the true essence of consequentialism, whereas the psychological pattern of emotional responses plus rationalization is the true essence of deontology. Deontologists (unlike consequentialists, it is implied) typically don’t understand

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2 Greene’s project was preceded and popularized to the philosophical community by Peter Singer (2005).
their theory’s true essence, just as certain tropical islanders might not know that H2O is the true essence of water and even ice.

Somewhat more quietly, a body of critical responses to Greene's view and supporting research has arisen. Greene is readying his responses, bringing hope for an exciting synthesis.

The present paper argues that the notions of deontology and consequentialism which Greene presupposes, as well as the categories of ‘alarm-like’ and ‘actuarial’ emotion to which he appeals, are oversimplified. With a more subtle characterization of these phenomena we can generate several types of thought experiments which threaten to blur the mappings Green takes to be distinct (deontology : alarm-like emotions ; consequentialism : cost-benefit reasoning) as well as other associations Greene uses to make his case. Although Greene’s experiments presented subjects with a large number of cases, there are still a large variety of case types on which Greene needs to observe people making judgments before he can make plausible claims about consequentialism and deontology in themselves. Whether my cases raise problems for Greene is of course an empirical matter, and we can hope they will be of use for further psychology and experimental philosophy. Until then, Greene cannot claim to have found the true essences of either deontology or consequentialism without testing them.

0. Neuroscientific Evidence

Greene’s neuroscientific work has used fMRI studies which most directly support the view that there are two processes involved in moral reasoning, perhaps best labeled ‘affective’ and ‘ratiocinative’. The guiding hypothesis has been as follows:

(H) when presented with harms categorized as “personal” (as opposed to “impersonal”), people would exhibit more emotional responses, in the sense of processes which are valenced, quick, automatic, and not necessarily conscious (2008:41).

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3 Tersman (2008) defends reflective equilibrium against Greene and Singer. Berker's (2009) interesting article serves primarily to argue that Greene's findings are by themselves normatively insignificant insofar as they import assumptions about what features can be morally relevant. Kamm (2009) attacks various methodological assumptions and makes interesting suggestions for further research. Dean (2010) points out some methodological problems and argues that Greene is wrong to presume both “that ‘characteristically deontological’ responses to moral dilemmas are based on morally dubious emotional responses and that deontological moral theories are a rationalization of these emotional responses” (p. 47). Kahane and Schakel (2010) attack Greene's assumptions about various methodological assumptions, including in what sense the subjects were even making moral judgments, and whether the dilemmas Greene and colleagues choose is of the right content to measure consequentialism versus deontology. Klein (forthcoming) attacks Greene's dual-process theory itself.

4 Greene’s website (http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/~jgreene/), as of 7 March 2011, features a lengthy set of notes (Greene, n.d.) replying to Selim Berker (2009). The document emphasizes that it is a work in progress. It also advertises a forthcoming book advancing this research program, where we can hope many worries will be addressed or refinements made.

5 Greene distinguishes 'cognitive', in a broad sense, from “cognitive” (with American quotation marks), in a narrow sense (40). The broader sense refers to "information processing in general”. The latter sense he merely says contrasts with 'emotional'. I will use the term 'ratiocinative' in place of the latter sense (Greene's "cognitive"). And here I will usually use the term ‘emotional’ just as Greene does, although when I want to be sure to refer to fast, automatic, not necessarily conscious, affective processes, I will use the term 'affective’ instead.
The intuitive idea behind ‘[up close and] personal’ harms is that the kinds of harms prevalent in human evolutionary history will likely to powerful, primitive emotional reactions—or anyway more so than only recently prevalent kinds of harms. Greene and colleagues’ original attempt to characterize this defined ‘personal’ harms as those which (a) could reasonably be expected to lead to serious bodily harm (b) to a particular person or a member or members of a particular group of people (c) where this harm is not the result of deflecting an existing threat onto a different party, and “impersonal” harms as those which fail to meet one or more of the three criteria (a)-(c) (Greene et al. 2001 f.8). Greene and colleagues’ most current hypothesis is the following: a personal harm is one caused by a ‘personal force’, which is present when “the force that directly impacts the victim is generated by the agent’s muscles” (Greene et al. 2009).6 This need not be assumed definitive or final; there could be multiple ‘personal’ force biases at work in Greene’s cases as well as other biases of mental salience such as familiarity bias and proximity bias (Hoffman 2000). Numerous such biases, or perhaps many of them at once, are supposed to explain the people’s seemingly contrary intuitions in paired-up cases such as in the Trolley Problem: pushing and killing one mentally salient person to save five others seems impermissible, whereas directing a trolley to hit and kill the one to save the five seems permissible.

Three bodies of evidence confirm hypothesis (H). (E1) Greene et al. (2001) surveyed nine subjects with a battery of sixty vignettes, of which about twenty each featured non-moral dilemmas, impersonal moral dilemmas, and personal moral dilemmas. Using fMRI machines, they found that subjects’ contemplation of personal moral dilemmas produced relatively greater activity in three emotion-related brain regions (posterior cingulate, medial prefrontal cortex, amygdala), and in one region associated with social cognition (superior temporal sulcus), than did contemplation of impersonal cases. By contrast, contemplation of impersonal moral dilemmas resulted in increased neural activity in two traditionally ratiocinative brain areas (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and inferior parietal lobe). There is also activity in one area associated with emotion (the posterior cingulate) which is more pronounced than in response to non-moral dilemma cases, but less pronounced than in response to the ‘personal’ cases (cf. Greene et al. 2004:397). Greene et al. (2004), giving 41 other participants a very similar battery of cases, replicated these findings.

(E2) Greene et al. (2001, 2004) also found that “[t]rials in which the subject judged in favor of personal moral violations took significantly longer than trials in which the subject judged against them, but there was no comparable reaction time effect observed in response to impersonal moral violations” (Greene 2008:44, my emphasis).

(E3) Greene et al. (2004:392) compared the more difficult personal dilemmas (“hard” cases—the third with the slowest reaction time) to the least difficult personal dilemmas (“easy” cases—the third with the fastest reaction time). (An example of an easy case is infanticide, where a 15-year-old contemplates sneaking her newborn (which only she knows about) out of her high school locker room and throwing it in the dumpster. An example of a hard case is crying baby, where a parent must smother her crying baby to death lest it alert soldiers who will kill the baby, the parent, and the fellow villagers hiding out with them.) The difficult dilemmas produced increased activity in a region associated with conflict between responses (the anterior

6 One problem with this seems to be that some forces generated by an agent’s muscles are so generated involuntarily; but surely Greene would want to patch this suggestion by appeal to intention, which is the other topic of the Greene et al. 2009 study.
cingulate cortex), as well as increased activity in two classically ratiocinative regions (anterior dorsolateral prefrontal cortex and inferior parietal lobes).

In other words, when presented with an impersonal dilemma, Joe Average (no matter his answer) uses ratiocination. When facing a personal dilemma, he experiences affect or emotion. If it is an easy one, his response (generally against the prospect of harming for the apparently greater good) comes in under three seconds (2004:392), without much ratiocinative activity, and without much neurological response conflict. On Greene’s interpretation, this signifies that affect wins out fairly easily here over ratiocination. If Joe faces a hard personal dilemma, his response takes over eight seconds (2004:392). Joe may or may not say that (e.g.) smothering one’s baby to save oneself and a score of other people is appropriate; either way, Joe uses more ratiocination and undergoes more neurological conflict than in an average easy case.

Greene takes all this to show that in these cases a prepotent emotional response is conflicting with cost-benefit analytical reasoning. This emotional response serves in moral reasoning as a “nay-saying voice” which expresses a feeling of “non-negotiable absolute wrongness” (63).

Greene thinks that these results, in turn, provide evidence for a debunking psychological explanation of the persistence of tensions in people’s intuitions that ‘the end doesn’t justify the means’ in personal moral dilemmas, but that it does in impersonal ones—such as with the Trolley Problem. Generally, deontologists use “fancy philosophizing” to rationalize moral duties and proscriptions in accordance with the dictates of their emotional reactions (39). For, as Greene reminds us, these duties and proscriptions often apparently disregard the value of the consequences in many cases and even proscribe harmless actions (such as with common views on retributive punishment, and on harmless sexual practices).

**Discussion & Preview**

Greene faces a few worries, three of which will constitute one section in what follows. (I) Greene is not sufficiently cautious regarding how pervasive the influence of dispositions to unconscious, alarm-like emotions is on people who formulate deontological theories or reason like deontologists. (II) In fact, it would seem that much consequentialist thinking couldn’t avoid being driven by inflexible emotions similar to those which Greene attributes to deontological thinking. (III) We should also be cautious in assuming that an emotion’s involvement in an instance of moral reasoning is illicit, or that the factors to which it appeals are morally irrelevant (even if they seem to be at first glance).

**I. Deontology, ‘Personal’ Harms, and Alarm-like Responses**

The following seems to be Greene’s main line of reasoning:

*The Irrelevant ‘Personal’ Factor Argument*

1) Deontological theories are driven by Characteristically Deontological Judgments (CDJs).

2) CDJs are driven, in important part, by responses to cases of ‘personal’ harm.

3) Responses to cases of ‘personal’ harm are usually “alarm-like” emotional responses.
4) Whether an allowance of harm is ‘personal’ or ‘impersonal’ is morally irrelevant.

So, 5) Deontological theories are driven, in important part, by alarm-like emotional responses to a morally irrelevant factor, viz., whether a harm is up-close-and-personal.

I take it that this is an abductive argument, where (1) is an assumed statistical correlation and (2) and (3) are empirically supported claims. (4) is a conceptu clears claim which, Greene points out, virtually everyone agrees with. To arrive at (5), we make an abductive inference: the best explanation of (1)-(3) is that deontology in general is the product of quick, inflexible responses to the world.

Here I propose that we assume with Greene—for now—that the ‘alarm-like’ responses have a few dialectically important features. Like most or all emotions, they are valenced. They are quick and probably automatic, as evidenced by the reaction-time data. They are presumably sometimes unconscious. Two features are most important, which Greene merely gestures to. First, alarm-like emotional episodes produce certitude about the appropriateness or inappropriateness of certain actions. Second, they are inflexible. Both because the information they convey seems so certain, and because they occur so quickly, they are hard to override or even to treat merely as one bit of information to factor in among others. Yet if these alarm-like emotions are really responding to something morally irrelevant, we must ignore what they tell us. How disconcerting!

The slippery ‘are driven by’ relation seems a kind of causal relation. To say CDJs are driven by alarm-like responses (esp. to cases of personal harm) is to say that alarm-like responses cause CDJs. This need not be a matter of whether, statistically, most token CDJs aren’t directly caused by emotional responses. Greene can consistently hold that most CDJs are produced without any direct or concomitant influence from an emotional response, but rather that alarm-like responses were causally responsible merely for setting up some further mental framework. Greene expects this latter pattern to be especially pervasive in the case of philosophers who defend deontological theories (pp. 65, 72); we can imagine it may also be true of people who less wittingly, but coolly, espouse deontological principles or outlooks. So solely pointing to cases where people make CDJs but don’t experience alarm-like emotions doesn’t finish the job against Greene. Ideally, we must also make it plausible that the CDJs proceed from ratiocinative mental activity or faculties which are unlikely to have been shaped solely or primarily by alarm-like emotional processes. That would seem difficult to show. However, for that matter, it’s also challenging to show that a CDJ has been shaped solely or primarily by alarm-like emotional processes. I submit that the more cases we can find of CDJs unaccompanied by alarm-like emotions, the better the case we have that an important contingent of these CDJs are not being driven by alarm-like emotional tendencies at all.

Characterizing Deontology: Against (1) and (2)

Greene’s assumption (1) that deontological theorizing is driven by CDJs may seem obvious. But exegesis shows it to be problematic. Greene’s use of the phrase ‘wrong despite the benefits’ (2008, 39) most strongly suggests that he understands ‘characteristically deontological’ judgments as those which endorse constraints on what we can permissibly do (to a given thing or person, no matter their relationship to us), even in the pursuit of good ends. However, endorsing
constraints is one way to be a deontologist, but it is not the only way. One notable deontological position is to reject constraints but posit duties (or reasons, etc.) of special relationship (as do McNaughton and Rawling (2006, §6). Duties might stem from the relationships of (e.g.) parent, sibling, friend, teacher, employee, or promisor. Additionally, one could at the least be a non-consequentialist (if not a deontologist) by rejecting the consequentialist view that we are always obligated to maximize the good—thus allowing agents to have options, in McNaughton and Rawling’s (2006) terminology.

Claim (1) should be taken to mean that deontological theories are driven entirely (or almost entirely) by CDJs. Otherwise, the subsequent claims about personal harms and alarm-like reactions would only apply to certain aspects or portions of deontological theories. But in order to make (1) plausible on that interpretation, the notion of ‘characteristically deontological’ judgment will have to be sufficiently wide to catch all agent-relative moral rules of virtually all kinds. Doing this, however, will make (2), the view that CDJs are driven in important part by responses to cases of ‘personal’ harm, less and less plausible.

For it is fairly clear that CDJs are often made about cases which are not ‘personal’. For example, CDJs will include judgments that we have moral options, i.e., ‘people in general are not [or some particular agent in a scenario is not] obligated to maximize the good’; as well as judgments that we have special obligations, e.g., ‘people in general [or some particular agent in a scenario] ought to privilege a family member over a stranger when the choice is forced’. The possibility of a deontology without constraints shows that responses to ‘personal’ harms are not as important to the formation of deontological theories as Greene would let on. To show that constraint-rejecting deontologies are also driven by inflexible, alarm-like emotional responses to morally irrelevant factors, he must find some other factor to which judgments that there are duties of special relationship respond, and show that these responses are inflexible and feature alarm-like emotions.

Has Greene found any such factor? Admittedly, Greene has tested cases containing special relationships between protagonists (call these SR cases). Most of these were grouped among the ‘personal’ test cases used in Greene’s studies.7 So (at least on average) these were seen, like other cases grouped as ‘personal’, to evoke more marked emotional responses than impersonal cases. (Since individual results are not reported for each case, the public cannot know how different, if at all, the brain activity was in judging these cases as compared to the others.) But notice that all of those SR cases not only (A) mostly pit the prospect of harming a family member in an up-close-and-personal way against that of acting for some perhaps-greater good, but also (B) involve killings or rapes8 and (C) are judgments about particular vignettes.

We need to see what factors CDJs (particularly CDJs about special relationships) respond to other than the ‘personal’ natures of cases. In terms of the argument from (1)-(4) to (5), Greene needs it to turn out that these further sorts of CDJs [i] respond to (other) factors which are

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7 See the supplement which describes the battery of cases used by Greene et al. 2004: http://www.neuron.org/cgi/content/full/44/2/389/DC1/. Specifically, among the personal dilemmas, cases 10, 11, 18, 19, 21, and 22 involve killing someone to whom one has a special relationship; case 7 involves killing someone else’s father; case 20 involves killing someone else to save one’s family; and cases 5 and 9 involve seeing to it that someone to whom one has a special relationship is raped (9) or at least sexually exploited (5). Note also that, among the impersonal cases, 13, 16, and 17 can be construed as involving one option apiece that involves responding to reasons connected to a special relationship.

8 John Mikhail (forthcoming) has also recognized this point and argued that studies by Greene and others support the view that people have innate mental rules against battery and other sorts of violent torts.
obviously morally irrelevant, and/or [ii] are driven by (certitude-promoting, inflexible) alarm-like reactions.

Candidate case-types for cooler deontological judgment

Further research needs to investigate how people react to cases which involve [A] pitting the prospect of harming, or allowing harm to, someone of no special relationship against that of benefitting someone of special relationship, [B] less dramatic norm violations, and [C] judgments regarding generalized propositions rather than particular vignettes. We should also consider [D] questions about moral options.\(^9\) [A] would be important for finding out the extent to which special relationship considerations drive CDJs. [B]-[D] would be interesting because all of them seem less likely to engender alarm-like emotional responses than the cases Greene has tested, or at least so my phenomenological reflection suggests. Let’s take these suggestions in reverse order.

Regarding moral options ([D]), there seem to be plenty of cases we can construct where it is plausible that I (representing a typical subject), despite seeing someone’s plight in something like an ‘up close and personal’ way (and which might even create ‘alarm-like’ sympathy in me), nevertheless have the intuition that I am not required to help him or her with that plight. For instance, consider:

TARDY STRANGER 1 Sitting in his car at a stoplight, Jim is approached by a well-dressed businesswoman whom he doesn’t know. The woman explains that she immediately needs a ride to an airport an hour away in order not to miss her ($500) flight for a business trip. Jim is the only person around who can take her. If he helps her, he will miss the first 60-90 minutes of a (90-150 minute) basketball game for which he has already purchased a $100 ticket.

Many will share my intuition that Jim is not morally required to give the stranger a ride, and hence that it is permissible that he not to do so. We might differ over whether doing so would be supererogatory, or by contrast, whether Jim ‘ought’ to do so (or, perhaps equivalently, whether the reasons more greatly favor helping the stranger over not doing so). Again, some of us might think that Jim would be criticizable for not helping the woman (and hence that his or her refraining would be suberogatory). But all that is consistent with thinking that Jim doesn’t have a moral obligation to help the woman. The case could even be squared with a personal violation on the 2009 account (“the force that directly impacts the victim is generated by the agent’s muscles”) if Jim has to push the stubborn lady out from in front of his car in order to get to his game.

The important thing about this example is that we cannot explain the intuition away as a bias involving mere physical proximity as Greene is wont to do (on this point Greene tends to point to the research of his undergraduate student, Jay Musen, which has shown that people’s judgments concerning obligations to help people in need are, as Peter Singer had predicted, affected by the irrelevant factor of mere spatial distance (Greene n.d. p. 24)). Despite the greater

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\(^9\) Regarding [D], cf. Kamm’s (2009:341) Experiment Proposal 3. Following Kamm’s precedent of suggesting experiments that would improve Greene’s case, you might call these my Experimental Proposals A through D. Despite saying this, however, I can still consistently affirm that the thought experiments I introduce raise serious problems for Greene’s theses even before any experimental philosophy is run or brain scans performed.
conspicuousness of the woman’s plight, the intuition regarding the moral option not to help survives. Is this because she is merely facing financial loss and inconvenience as opposed to (say) imminent death or injury? Probably we can only know after further variation and testing. What isn't clear is that there's any morally irrelevant factor which is responsible for the bias. A more likely explanation is simply that we intuit some rough principle such as that morality isn’t consequentialist in that it doesn't require you to suffer an inconvenience even if you could spare someone else an even greater inconvenience.

Now, to consider a duty of special relationship in the abstract ([C]), you may well share with me the following intuition:

**GENERAL DUTY TO CHILDREN** It is *pro tanto* morally wrong for a parent in a normal human society to neglect a child, or to fail to provide the child with the means to growth and development.

I don’t consciously experience an alarm-like emotional reaction when I consider this in the abstract, so if I am using processes influenced by alarm-like emotional reactions, they are unconscious.

Here Greene will likely invoke the aspects of hypothesis which suggest i) that deontology-driving emotional alarms can be unconscious and ii) that they need only influence some mental apparatus that then issues in the moral judgments. Regarding (i), an experiment should be done to see. (ii) is hard to give evidence for. We would need to consult developmental evidence which testified that in order to learn that this rule expresses a moral truth, developing people (children) typically must ‘feel’ its truth emotionally. Even if we could find such evidence, since this is a deontological rule, Greene’s theory needs this bit of emotional learning to involve a quick, automatic, and inflexible—i.e., alarm-like—emotional system to ‘drive’ this emotional learning.

Even if Greene could show that much, it seems noticeable and important that my having this intuition is, phenomenologically, a steady and flexible state. (Or to pick someone perhaps less mercurial, think of W.D. Ross having this intuition while reflectively lounging in his study.) This intuition, in other words, seems to be a stable mental capacity to make judgments about the duties of a parent, drawing at least on my concepts of what it is to be a parent, certain facts about the capabilities and needs of children, etc. This disposition to hold certain views about the nature of the office of parenthood is a disposition not solely to have alarm-like emotions in response to (egregious) violations of parental duties, but also to have other sorts of emotional reactions running the whole gamut from mild disapproval, to mild approval, to warm praise, to guilt at one’s own failures and pride at one’s own accomplishments in parenting—not to mention a wide array of higher cognitive (ratiocinative) tendencies to form plans, make judgments (such as those you’re witnessing), etc. regarding particular parents and children one interacts with. For this reason, it makes sense to suppose (iii) that a fair amount of consequentialist reasoning could also be based some dispositions of this sort (more later).

It also seems unlikely that we can find any factors which are ‘driving’ this judgment which are obviously morally irrelevant. At any rate, whatever one might suggest along those lines (say, cultural indoctrination) it seems that we could just as easily accuse a consequentialist of the same.

Again, consider another case with a tardy stranger, only this time pitted against a duty to pick up a child from school (violation of which is a less dramatic norm than those in Greene’s
cases ([B]) and pits refraining from helping a stranger against benefitting a person of special relationship ([A]):

**TARDY STRANGER 2** Jim is approached on the street by a well-dressed businesswoman whom he doesn’t know. The woman explains that she immediately needs a ride to an airport an hour away in order not to miss her flight for a business trip. Jim is the only person around who can take her. Helping her would make Jim late to pick up his 4th-grader from school, which is an hour in the opposite direction. He can’t contact anyone else to pick the child up (no cell phones because it’s 1980); if Jim helps the stranger to the airport, he’ll have to make his child’s teacher stay after school an extra two hours or so.

I predict most people will find it impermissible to help the stranger. (Of course, the case can be disambiguated in potentially relevant ways, depending on what Jim knows about the nature of the child, his school, the reason the stranger needs to get to the airport, etc.) The point is that there will be probably a large contingent who say Jim is required to pick up his child, even though the plight of the stranger may well be more ‘personal’ and/or elicit more ‘alarm-like’ emotional reactions—at least for someone actually in the situation. If the intuition that Jim ought to pick up the child is due to a ‘personal’ structure of the case, accommodating this case is one desideratum for whatever final account of that notion is forthcoming. Again, the case could even be squared with a personal violation on the 2009 account of personal force if Jim has to push the stubborn lady out from in front of his car in order to pick up his child.

Here’s another reason to think that CDJs could be causally influenced by non-alarm-like, ratiocinative processes. Many of the impersonal cases listed and tested (in both Greene et al. 2001 and Greene et al. 2004) are ones to which it seems, intuitively, that many people would be inclined to give a characteristically deontological answer. Neither of the two studies provides the data for individual cases. But if we can generalize from the reported averages on impersonal cases, we can then conclude that, when subjects judged on impersonal cases, they would have used ratiocination to the same extent in coming to a deontological conclusion as in coming to a consequentialist conclusion.

The following sort of case also pits refraining from helping a stranger against benefitting a person of special relationship ([A]) also speaks directly against premise (2) (‘CDJs are driven, in important part, by responses to cases of ‘personal’ harm’).

**TROLLEY DAUGHTER** A runaway trolley is headed at five workmen. They will be killed by the trolley unless you pull a switch that diverts the trolley onto another track, where your beloved 12-year-old daughter is sitting. If you pull the switch she will be killed. So you can either pull the switch or not.
- Would it be morally wrong for you to do either thing?
- What ought you to do?

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10 Such answers would include judging it ‘appropriate’ to decline to donate to charity, and ‘inappropriate’ to: encourage the use of a deadly vaccine, put false information on a resume, cheat on one’s taxes, give illegal investment advice, and keep a rich person’s wallet after finding it (which, on Greene et al. 2004’s numbering, are Impersonal cases nos. 3, 4, 12, 13, 16, and 18.)
We should anticipate a higher total of responses than in the standard trolley case saying that it would be wrong to kill the one person when it’s one’s daughter rather than a stranger. This would be a CDJ, but would be by Greene’s own lights an impersonal moral violation. (Similarly, we can ask: Should you push a stranger child into a lake to avoid having to push your own daughter into the lake? to avoid her being pushed into the lake by someone else? Etc.)

Whatever personal violations are, they probably don’t include a great variety of actions which are prohibited by many characteristically deontological rules: for example, such as those prohibiting i) deception, ii) cheating, iii) promise-breaking, or iv) flouting duties of station, particularly duties of special relationship (e.g., failing to send child support checks). The lesson is that there seem to be a large variety of factors that drive CDJs other than a ‘personal’/‘impersonal’ distinction.

_Doubts about (3)_

Recall Greene’s main empirical claim in the argument against deontology:

(3) Responses to cases of ‘personal’ harm are usually “alarm-like” emotional responses.

Here are some thoughts which cast some moderate doubt on that. Presumably, a personal moral violation would involve intentionally inflicting a personal harm on someone. But there’s a reasonable chance that people’s response will be cooler and less alarm-like if they are well acquainted, before becoming aware of a particular perpetrator’s personally harming another, with the perpetrator’s disposition to inflict bodily harms on people. For example:

**IMPRISONED PSYCHOTIC** Sid is a highly delusional individual who has been imprisoned under isolation and high security for two years. He was moved to isolated imprisonment after repeated, often surprisingly successful attempts to bite, and sometimes also claw, punch, or stab, his fellow prisoners. (Sid often playfully pretends he is a Velociraptor, although he perfectly well knows he is a human being.) One day a prison guard, Officer Jones, is trying to get Sid’s attention, but isn’t getting a response from Sid. So he enters Sid’s cell to try to get his attention. Sure enough, Sid bites Officer Jones on the leg.

Was it morally permissible for Sid to bite Officer Jones?

The way I have described this case makes it fairly predictable that Sid will harm officer Jones, and this will presumably mitigate the alarm-like emotional response to the vignette, if the nonchalant tone is preserved, replicated, or improved upon. (Conceivably, someone might find this scenario humorous.) Yet it is also easy to see how the very same scenario could be made dreadfully frightening, in a horror film style.

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11 Call this _Experimental Proposal E_.
12 Perhaps we would also need to build in other conditions to rule out cases where the agent is ignorant, forced to inflict the harm (via blackmail or coercion, etc.), or manipulated or otherwise inauthentic. All that would introduce too much confusion here.
13 Call this _Experimental Proposal F_.
The lesson is that the vividness of description of case of harm is likely to play at least as much of a role in eliciting emotional response (alarm-like or not) as whether the harm is bodily, to a distinctly identifiable person, etc. For it is plausible that we're likely to have more vivid emotions, some of which may be alarm-like reactions, if we consider a case of wrongdoing closely, imagine it is pertinent to us, or if it is vividly described (see Hoffman 2000:151, Petty and Cacioppo 1979, Baumeister et al. 1994)—regardless of whether the wrongdoing involves committing a 'personal' harm. A further lesson is that a quick emotional reaction of amusement should not be confused with an alarm-like reaction of fear or indignation.

Examples such as this give us further reason to think that the reason emotional reactions were elicited by the ‘personal’ harms (as Greene conceived of them) in Greene’s cases was that they so frequently involved rapes or murders. Those sorts of events are traumatic for various reasons. But there are also less traumatic, less serious bodily harms which we can’t be as sure would elicit the same sort of response as serious bodily harms.

These considerations cast further doubt on the view that there even is any important distinction between personal and impersonal harms. For to my knowledge Greene has not yet tested cases with i) less serious bodily harms (e.g., punching, biting, scraping, etc. as opposed to killing or handing someone over to be murdered or raped), or ii) moderately direct ways of enacting a harm (e.g., threatening someone with a knife to falling to one’s death, etc.: cf. Berker 2009, f. 73).

Does Ratiocination (Also) Drive Deontological Theorizing?

Phenomenologically, Greene seems right that ‘quick’ emotions give non-negotiable verdicts, at least at first. But any plausible ethical theory will (almost?) never treat them as non-overridable, no matter what shape it takes. So even if a deontology—W. D. Ross’s, for example—is more shaped by ‘quick’ emotions than is (say) Benthamite utilitarianism (which wouldn’t be surprising), the deontology will still have mechanisms (even if those of some theories are imperfect or ad hoc) for either contextualizing or overriding the emotion.

For example, take the case TARDY STRANGER 2 from above. About it, Ross might say that the prima facie duty of fidelity to special relationships outweighs that of beneficence (cf. Ross [1930]:19,21); he would likely appeal to a plurality of prima facie duties as fundamental (McNaughton 1996). Others will give at least a plausible nonconsequentialist story for why it does so. For example, Gert (2005) will argue that a system of rules which prohibits such actions as breaking promises and flouting special obligations to children is one which reduces the amount of harm that people cause to each other. Audi (2004:99) may say that over-extending ourselves through such excessive benevolence as this undermines the moral importance of our own interests as rational beings.

All this serves as evidence that ratiocination—in addition to emotion—almost always is (and, if the deontology is to be plausible, must be) intimately involved in deontological reasoning. It guides one in comparing (the verdicts of) one’s emotive intuitions about duties or values to other intuitions and to principles based on them.

The ‘hidden essence’ response

Against all this, Greene may sing the chorus:
if it seems that I have simply misunderstood what Kant and deontology are all about, it’s because I am advancing an alternative hypothesis to the standard Kantian/deontological understanding of what Kant and deontology are about. I am putting forth an empirical hypothesis about the hidden psychological essence of deontology, and it cannot be dismissed \textit{a priori} for the same reason that tropical islanders cannot know \textit{a priori} whether ice is a form of water. (74)

However, Greene’s proposed \textit{a posteriori} reduction is far too radical to be successful. Deontology is not just a kind of knee-jerk moral judgment. It is a genre of moral theory centered around a family of related, abstract distinctions (Gauss 2001). Many \textit{a posteriori} reductions are or would be surprising. But virtually none of them would involve clear category mistakes—e.g., it just doesn’t make sense to say that the hidden essence of the color blue is the square root of three. Even if knee-jerk emotional reactions systematically lead to moral judgments of a certain type, these would be the hidden essence of the type of judgment—not of the type of theory that these judgments serve to form.\textsuperscript{14}

By analogy, suppose that the hidden essence behind judgments that certain axioms of set theory are true turned out to be that, when people considered the issue, they unconsciously experience a kind of itchiness in their abdomens which often issues in judgments to the effect that these axioms are true. Even so, neither the axioms nor the entire body of doctrines in set theory can themselves be reduced to these itches. The most we could say would be that the itches constitute the hidden essence of a certain class of judgment (judgments which may turn out to be true, whether or not we could be justified in these judgments. It is debatable whether justification here would require us to become able to think about set theory without the influence of the itches).

The normative ethical framework within which Greene is working is simply too simple, hinging on introductory caricatures of philosophical views. There simply isn't license for labeling a psychological mechanism with the very name of a diverse family of (sometimes) sophisticated philosophical views.

It could be compared to a psychologist working on memory discovering a duality of processes—one associated with remembering events of one's past social interactions, and one associated with non-social memories—and labeling the two processes 'the social history module' and 'the natural history module'. Obviously there are approaches to the study of history which are neither social histories nor natural histories, and there are many approaches which use elements of both of those diverse strategies for writing histories. And it would also be unsurprising if, in writing either natural history or social history, one would use both of the discovered mechanisms. The labels might be helpful, if also somewhat misleading, for guiding our thinking about the discovered mechanisms. But it would be quite extravagant to claim that either mechanism is the ‘true hidden essence’ behind all social histories or natural histories. So, too, it is with deontology and consequentialism.

\textbf{II. Consequentialism, Values, and Emotions}

Here is what seems to be Greene’s argument in favor of consequentialism:

\begin{flushright}
\emph{The Actuarial Consequentialism Argument}
\end{flushright}

\textsuperscript{14} I arrived at these examples before reading Berker (2009), although a similar set of objections and examples are to be found in his 73\textsuperscript{rd} footnote.
6) Consequentialist theories are rooted in Characteristically Consequentialist Judgments (CCJs).

7) CCJs are usually handled via an “actuarial” process of ratiocination after a non-alarm-like emotional process weighs up values.

8) Values are always [and only?] morally relevant.

So, 9) Consequentialist theories are rooted in actuarial responses to values in a way that minimizes bias against morally irrelevant factors [and optimizes responses to morally relevant factors?].

The diversity of values

The view that consequentialist theorizing primarily makes use of CCJs is probably fairly accurate, but CCJs must not be understood too simplistically. Notice that a CCJ, as Greene conceives of one, is “fundamentally actuarial”. This seems to mean that it discerns the values in question and calculates, via some function (probably a rather approximated function with some aggregative element), which of various candidate courses of action generate(s) the maximum value (on some conception of ‘maximum’).\[15\]

We should realize, however, that if ‘characteristically consequentialist’ judgments are supposed to include those congruent with consequentialisms which assume that the value of a state of affairs can be determined by a plurality of factors, then the ‘weighing’ judgments characteristic of “consequentialist moral thought” will need to be preceded by estimations of how to compare the different forms of values together. It’s easy to say that five lives are better than one (all else being equal). But (to pick an extreme example for effect) if I’m given the choice of preventing (from a very removed, detached position in Switzerland) the destruction of only one of American Gothic, ten of my nephews, three top leukemia researchers, or Utah’s Delicate Arch, it’s pretty unclear what a ‘characteristically consequentialist judgment’ will say on the matter. The ‘actuarial’ nature of CCJs would have to include both the valuation of the consequences produced and the weighing of the various sorts of actions available.

This becomes a complication once we consider the recently popular philosophical thesis that

any remotely plausible non-consequentialist theory can be consequentialized. The recipe for consequentializing a non-consequentialist theory is simple: Take whatever considerations that the non-consequentialist theory holds to be relevant to determining the deontic status of an action and insist that those considerations are relevant to determining the proper ranking of outcomes. (Portmore 2007)

It seems that a form of consequentialism (as Portmore would characterize it) which assigns intrinsic value to (say) the maintenance of strong social bonds, or to people’s keeping their promises simply because they promised, would have to count as deontological according to

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\[15\] Greene writes (2008:64):

Consequentialism is, by its very nature, systematic and aggregative. It aims to take nearly everything into account, and grants that nearly everything is negotiable. All consequentialist decision making is a matter of balancing competing concerns, taking into account as much information as is practically feasible. Only in hypothetical examples in which “all else is equal” does consequentialism give clear answers. For real life consequentialism, everything is a complex guessing game, and all judgments are revisable in light of additional details. There is no moral clarity in consequentialist moral thought, with its approximations and simplifying assumptions. It is fundamentally actuarial.
Greene. In other words, it doesn’t seem that Greene is committed to substantive views beyond even act-consequentialism (the view that an act is morally permissible if and only if it produces the most good, impersonally construed). He seems to be committed to a very reductive view about value, something along the lines of hedonism (the view that pleasure is the only intrinsic value and pain is the only intrinsic disvalue).

Enough thought experiments (and actual cases) will be introduced where not-obviously-commensurable values will have to be weighed.16 Suppose Tom judges that that the *Mona Lisa* is more valuable than the life of a museum security guard. Then Greene has a choice to make: either Tom’s judgment is a CCJ, because consequentialist judgment can include weighing incommensurable values (which risks blurring the lines between consequentialism and deontology), or it is not a CCJ, because all CCJs must be roughly congruent with a hedonistic form of act-consequentialism.

**Actuarial Processes**

Since the actuarial judgment process Greene has in mind involves valuation, Greene (plausibly) supposes that such judgment involves an emotional process:

7) CCJs are usually produced via an “actuarial” process of ratiocination after a non-alarm-like emotional process weighs up values.

Greene’s own data suggest that emotion is typically involved even in more impartial moral reflection. As Greene et al. (2004:397) point out, the posterior cingulate, an area “associated with emotion”, was reliably stimulated even in response to ‘impersonal’ moral dilemmas (as they characterized them).

However, the view that two distinct sorts of emotion, alarm-like and non-alarm-like, will be involved in influencing moral intuitions is quite speculative and based tenuously on the results which inform Greene’s view (Berker 2009:308). I can find only two reasons to posit these two distinct types of emotion processes. One is phenomenological—we tend to experience alarm-like surprise, disgust, or flashes of anger when confronted with some of the most dramatic and currently famous cases in ethics. These feel different from a more steady, abstracted conviction that (say) job discrimination is unfair or that it is in some cases permissible to refuse to help a stranger get to the airport in order to meet your friend. But plausibly there is no clean distinction here; the emotions seem to fall on a spectrum. Or spectra: emotions exhibit a great variety of intensity, duration, focus, complexity, physical manifestation, degree of consciousness, etc. (Goldie 2007).

For that matter, we should also question whether a particular emotional response might count as both ‘alarm-like’ and ‘actuarial’. Or might involve a mixture of emotions roughly of both sorts. For example, upon arguing for a law that sends parents to jail who fail to pay child support, a legislator might experience certain emotional events with retributivist or ‘mustn’t-be-done’ phenomenologies toward bad parenting, while in the background having a steady conviction about the importance of children, especially disadvantaged ones, for the future of society.

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16 Greene et al. 2004 consider one such case: Impersonal Moral Dilemma 7, “Sculpture”. Since individual results are not reported for each case, the public cannot know how different, if at all, the brain activity was in judging this case as compared to other cases they classified as ‘impersonal’.
A second reason why Greene finds it relevant to distinguish alarm-like from non-alarm-like emotions could have to do with the type of moral verdicts given—in the case of deontology, duties of special relationship and/or constraints against certain types of actions, and, in the case of consequentialism, rough value assessments. However, as we have seen, this is unlikely to map very neatly onto the alarm-like vs. non-alarm-like distinction. First, it is plausible that CDJs (e.g. about duties of special relationship) can be endorsed via a fairly cool, sustained, non-alarm-like emotional perspective (as illustrated above by TARDY STRANGER 2). Second, it is also plausible that some judgments regarding someone’s failure to produce the most good she could in a situation will generate an alarm-like response (whatever precisely that comes to). For example:

COMPROMISING VIGILANTE Dale happens to be (legally) carrying a concealed weapon outside a bank which is being robbed by two men. Dale manages to hold both robbers at gunpoint and disarm them. Then he proceeds, using some nearby rope, to tie the hands and feet of one of the robbers. Just after he ties the first robber up, the other robber starts running away, pockets full of cash and gold. Dale could easily run after the first robber, hold him at gunpoint, and tie his limbs as well. But Dale doesn’t enjoy running, and says to himself, “darn”, and lets the second robber get away.

Was it morally wrong for Dale to let the robber get away? Why or why not?

We can predict that subjects will feel some sort of alarm-like reactive emotion to Dale’s laziness, (even if it is also mitigated by Dale’s willingness to stop the robbers in the first place). But we can also predict that (when a subject does not postulate a duty of beneficence) a fair number of responses about why Dale is criticizable would appeal to the fact that he did not produce the best outcome he (easily) could have. This, and similar cases, would show that some CCJs are causally influenced by alarm-like emotional processes. For example, Greene seems to appeal to emotion precisely as the above outline predicts when (in a ‘characteristically consequentialist’ way) imploring us to feed distant children by appealing to Singer’s analogy to a nearby drowning child (46).

Here’s a second reason to think that the emotions involved in characteristically consequentialist cognition (if any) are ‘quick’/automatic in the same way Greene thinks deontological emotions are. The reaction time to impersonal cases (for both ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ responses) is relatively quick (Greene 2001, Fig. 3). Since this is an issue of experimental design and analysis, I’ll let more neuroscientifically inclined individuals develop or answer this worry.

III. The relevance of emotionally engaging heuristics

Perhaps the main point of Greene’s presently-discussed research program is to show that the average person’s moral intuitions are swayed by factors which are intuitively morally irrelevant, and that this fact is “more of a problem for deontologists than consequentialists” (Greene, n.d., p. 18; cf. Berker, 2009). Various tricks can be played in vignette presentation which make people overly sensitive to these factors. Greene’s particular experiments have shown

17 Call this Experimental Proposal G.
that something about the ‘up-close-and-personal’ nature of certain harms makes a difference in our emotional response, roughly to the extent that, for instance, the victim of a harm is [i] discreetly identifiable, [ii] close in proximity to the actor or judger, [iii] badly and/or bodily harmed, or if [iv] the actor’s own agency and/or intentional muscular exertion are involved in directly harming someone. Greene has consulted his intuitions about moral relevance and found that none of these sorts of factors should be taken to make any difference to what moral status an act should be taken to have. CDJs take them to be relevant, so so much the worse for CDJs.

There are two ways we can resist: arguing that non-consequentialist factors in fact often are morally relevant, and arguing that CCJs can also be biased by morally irrelevant factors (such as tricks of vignette presentation). Here space permits only a brief attempt at former; I’ll leave the latter as an exercise for readers and future experimenters.

To argue that non-consequentialist factors are relevant is to argue against the stronger version of premise (8) from above:

8s) Values are always and only the morally relevant factors.

And if the personal/impersonal distinction turns out to be sometimes relevant, then arguing that this non-consequentialist factor is (after all) morally relevant is to argue against the premise that

4) Whether an allowance of harm is ‘personal’ or ‘impersonal’ is morally irrelevant.

How can we argue that factors other than values are at least in some sense morally relevant? Here’s a try.

In order for morality to be a system which applies to all moral agents without their being explicitly verbally taught it, its basic rules or guidelines (which needn’t be exceptionless) have to be simple and intuitive enough that even the simplest and youngest of us can be trained in it (cf. Hooker 2000, Gert 2005). In other words, these rules must be minimally apt to engage the emotional dispositions with which we moralize (at least if Greene and many others are right that at least a major portion of our moral intuitions involve quick, automatic emotional responses) (Gill & Nichols 2008). If that’s right, then roughly the following consideration might at least figure into determining an act’s moral status, or how severely it has that status: whether people are disposed to have certain responses to it—including, but not limited to, responses of praising or blaming, wanting to reward or punish, approving or disapproving, or judging to be permissible or impermissible.

It may well be the case that it is much more common in our world for moral violations to come at the hand of people who intentionally and directly harm others than those who intentionally refrain from preventing harms (to take an example). If so, then the rough moral principles which we could expect to have actually developed or socially implemented will be ones where intentional, direct harms are the subject of harsher punishment, blame, feelings of blame, judgments of wrongness, etc., than are intentional allowings of harm.

If these observations are approximately correct, they suggest that ‘up-close-and-personalness’ is often a quite relevant feature to assessing both the presence and severity of wrongness and blameworthiness. Even if the set of rules it is best for us to advocate in the actual world leaves us disposed to answer the Trolley Problem inconsistently, perhaps we shouldn’t change much so long as we and our children won’t be faced with such dilemmas often.\(^\text{18}\)

\(^{18}\) Kudos to Hanno Sauer for also seeing this point within an unpublished draft he sent me.
With this view in hand, deontologists (along with rule-consequentialists, and others I’ll mention next) can reasonably turn the tables on Greene. Someone who makes a CCJ and ignores some non-consequentialist factor that many take to be obvious—say, some obligation connected to a special relationship, as in certain versions of TARDY STRANGER 2—fails to be influenced by morally relevant factors. That’s so, at least, if our special relationships to each other are indispensable for facing the challenges of life. This is fortunately congruent with the suggestion that intuitions that there are duties of special relationship would persist in reflective equilibrium, even after people view relevant cases from multiple perspectives.

Moral theories other than “vanilla” consequentialism or deontology

It is important for us to remember the obvious fact that there are moral theories which are neither consequentialist nor deontological. Other non-consequentialist theories might include moral theories which ground moral rules on something other than duties or values. These include natural law theories based on notions of the needs of society (Copp 1995) or rationality plus impartiality (Gert 2005). Other natural law theories, for this same reason, can also count as non-consequentialist, non-deontological moral theories. Similarly, virtue ethical theories ground moral rules on the dispositions of virtuous agents, and hence are (arguably) neither consequentialist nor deontological. The mere existence of these other theories brings up a challenge for Greene: if the brain contains two main processes which contribute to moral thinking, each of which is the ‘hidden essence’ of consequentialism and deontology, do these approaches to moral reasoning via other normative concepts also have one or the other process as a ‘hidden essence’? Saying yes, he will be faced with the difficult task of justifying an answer with regard to each theory we withdraw from our quiver. I submit he should say ‘no’ and answer that reasoning in line with many of these other theories engages both systems. But in that case, he will be stuck awkwardly defending the claim that all the chief insights of the developed philosophical deontology of, e.g., Audi (2004) are “driven” by alarm-like reactions.

But the problems do not stop here. The most popular forms of consequentialism themselves often appeal to rules resembling deontological rules, giving them consequentialist justification. Brad Hooker (2008, §4) gives some reasons why it is that “no serious philosopher nowadays” defends an act-consequentialist moral decision procedure, according to which “on each occasion, an agent should decide what to do by calculating which act would produce the most good”. [i] People are very often ignorant of the consequences of their potential acts; [ii] obtaining such information would often involve greater costs than are at stake in the decision to be made; [iii] the agent might make mistakes in her calculations; [iv] people would lose the ability to trust one another in such a world. As a result, Hooker, along (he thinks) with virtually all other serious consequentialists, suggests that moral agents should not do their moral decision-making solely by thinking about the potential consequences of their actions.

New World Problems

Greene sends mixed messages about all this. His usual tack is to emphasize ‘the camera analogy’: “The moral brain is like a dual-mode camera with both automatic settings and a manual mode” (n.d. p. 21). The ‘automatic settings’ are the alarm-like emotional reactions he associates with deontology; the ‘manual mode’ is the actuarial process he associates with consequentialism. He admits that sometimes we should rely on our automatic settings. Yet he
downplays this, stating that the central message of his forthcoming book is that “we rely too much on our automatic settings” (ibid.). This is because we face a world which is different from the one we evolved in, presenting us with new problems such as famines we can actually mitigate, the ability to get food without hunting, environmental problems, high-tech warfare, and the capability to use sophisticated biotechnologies to alter processes of birth, growth, aging, death, etc.

This advocacy of careful, scientifically informed thinking about important, recent world problems deserves applause. Yet it says little about the debate between deontology and consequentialism, for all the reasons I’ve detailed plus the following. Deontologists can promote these ideals with equally warranted fervor. Michael Slote (2007), for example, advocates increasing the amount of empathy people have for distant strangers, perhaps until the point that we feel ‘chilled’ by people who don't help distant strangers in dire need. A non-consequentialist can emphasize ideals of decreasing the amount of suffering in the world or increasing the amount of good (Gert 2005). Even a Rossian can of course decide that, given our prima facie duty of beneficence, the ease with which we can sacrifice small benefits to greatly benefit other people puts us nowhere short of having duties to do just this.

IV. An Objection

An important worry for me to address is the following. ‘Sure, you’ve muddied the waters a bit, having shown that the processes which drive deontological and consequentialist theorizing are likely to overlap a bit. But does this really create any major problem for Greene? Shouldn’t we conclude that, for the most part, Greene is right that alarm-like reactions to morally irrelevant factors play a far more important role in deontology than any more actuarial processes, whereas actuarial processes play a far more important role in consequentialist theorizing? You have raised minor problems for Greene at best.’

We cannot well quantify the damage of the problems I have raised for Greene; only in jest would I claim that 42.3% of all deontological judgments made last century were in fact not driven by affective responses. But consider all together the extensive variety of cases where I’ve shown it plausible, contrary to anything that Greene has heretofore shown, that deontological judgments are arrived at without noticeable affect at all, let alone ‘alarm-like’ affect. Greene's extant arguments that deontological (or similar) judgments involve alarm-like emotional reactions to morally irrelevant factors almost always depend either on [i] a personal/impersonal bias, [ii] bias toward the near, or [iii] disgust reactions (usually he references Jonathan Haidt on this last score). The variety of cases I’ve mentioned is vast, involving i) deception, ii) cheating, iii) promise-breaking, iv) duties of special relationship, v) other duties of station, vi) generalized judgments as opposed to reactions to vignettes, vii) judgments about options, and viii) judgments about less serious or traumatic norm violations.

Similarly, I would contend that my remarks about consequentialism make it quite plausible, at least on phenomenological grounds, that a lot of imprecise estimation and ‘gut consultation’ is needed to weigh up values, even if one is a hedonist, but especially if one is not. Already, cases of values-weighing would make for very informative experiments regarding how emotional certain values-weighing decisions are (e.g., ‘If forced to anonymously tell invading aliens to blow up either the White House or the Supreme Court, which one should you say to blow up?’). But we might also wonder if judgments about such cases would differ
psychologically from cases where constraints are weighed against dire consequences (e.g., ‘should you steal $500 of medicine if you can save the lives of 12 African strangers?’).  

Certainly a wiser answer to this article would not be to ignore all the problems I have raised here for Greene. The proof of Greene’s hypothesis will be in the pudding (as it were). The proper response to me is to eat: to branch out Greene-style research in the ways I have suggested.

V. Conclusion

Greene has shown to a significant extent that something like ‘up-close-and-personal’ harms (as he initially characterized them)—at least, murders, allowances of death, and allowances of rape—are often met with a significant emotional response, which it is probably not inaccurate to characterize as ‘alarm-like’. And he has shown that something like ‘impersonal’ harms are met with a less emotional, more ratiocinative response.

But it would take more than he has done to show which ‘alarm-like’ emotional responses, if any, are responding mostly or even significantly to certain morally irrelevant factors, and if so, which factors. Until Greene shows this, it remains unclear whether these factors are to be associated with deontology as he suggests. It also remains open to the proponent of deontology to suggest cases where deontological intuitions are plausibly not produced by responses which are either alarm-like or unreliable, as well as to point to cases on the basis of which consequentialist intuitions would seem to be produced by alarm-like and/or unreliable emotions. All this leaves it quite clear that Greene has shown little about the natures of consequentialism, deontology, or types of judgment typically associated therewith.


\[19\] Call these two parenthetical examples Experimental Proposals H and I.


