

Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them
Joshua Greene

A grand quest for a universal morality. It can't be done, but trying is nonetheless a fruitful exercise.

Greene supports what he calls a pragmatic utilitarianism by pulling together new and useful observations from a number of different fields. Evolution and evolutionary psychology have found that we are an altruistic species. Having ethical codes for treating other members of a tribe was beneficial to the survival of that tribe. Researchers into the brain and human (ir)rationality such as Daniel Kahneman tell us that our moral choices are made Fast and Slow.

The book makes powerful use of metaphors, starting on the very first page of the book: "To the east of a deep, dark forest, a tribe of herders raises sheep on a common pasture. Here the rule is simple: Each family gets the same number of sheep. Families send representatives to a council of elders, which governs the commons. Over the years, the council has made difficult decisions. One family, for example, took to breeding exceptionally large sheep, thus appropriating more of the commons for itself. After some heated debate, the council put a stop to this. Another family was caught poisoning its neighbors' sheep. For this the family was severely punished. Some said too severely. Others said not enough. Despite these challenges, the Eastern tribe has survived, and its families have prospered, some more than others." His parable goes on, focusing eventually on the individualistic Northerners and collectivist Southerners. Conflicts arise when the forest burns and these tribes meet as they each attempt to impose their native moral systems as they all colonize the newly available land. It doesn't work. It is well-enough drawn that the reader immediately appreciates the parallels to libertarians and progressives in any modern country.

This is the The Parable of the New Pastures, exemplifying the Tragedy of Commonsense Morality, closely related to Garrett Hardin's Tragedy of the Commons, which he also analyzes in depth.

The Fast/Slow metaphor is a camera. Most of the time we use the automatic setting, which gets it right, but some of the time we have to switch to manual mode. The "automatic settings" evolved in tribal settings. Now that we live in a post-tribal world, we need to go "manual" to resolve difficult conflicts. He explores pro-life vs. pro-choice as a case in point.

The third organizing metaphor is Common Currency. Adherents of different moral systems have particular "proper nouns" which mean nothing to the other. Different tribes need to abandon their particulars and search for common interests. Don't be like Pizarro's Conquistadores, whose excuse for massacring the Incas was their refusal to venerate the Holy Bible, or Muslims quoting the Koran to justify genital mutilation.

Greene makes excellent use of whole families of experiments based on a runaway trolley. The gist is that it is in the experimental subject's power to save five lives by sacrificing one. Should he do it if (1) it involves using a switch to shunt the trolley from one track to another, or (2) it involves pushing the

sacrificial victim into the path of the trolley? The answers differ, and an analysis of these questions and myriad refinements of them reveal how we go about our moral thinking.

Greene ultimately endorses a modern utilitarianism, which he calls Deep Pragmatism. Its fundamental tenets are:

1. In the face of moral controversy, consult, but do not trust, your moral instincts. Instead be ready for slow thinking.
2. Rights are not for making arguments; they're for ending arguments. That is, once you define a job as "a right," you have left no room to find common ground with somebody who thinks otherwise.
3. Focus on the facts, and make others do the same. Keep coat-hangers, Bibles and bloody fetuses out of the argument.
4. Beware of biased fairness; our notions differ.
5. Use common currency – scientific fact. Be prepared to use, and allow opponents to use, the tools of science: peer-reviewed research, statistics, surveys, etc.
6. Lastly, Give. Be generous in purse and spirit.

These are immanently reasonable. Practically speaking, they ask that Israelis leave God's bequest of Canaan out of the argument, conservatives abandon the Bible and progressives forget about the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the realm of international treaties, there would seem to be no other mechanism than these rules, and they seem to work. The Law of the Sea, the Kyoto Accords, The Helsinki Accord etc. all depended on them. Them, and a bit of lying, hypocrisy and wishful thinking as well.

This leads to one of the disconnects in the book. Although the trolley metaphor and the brain studies Greene cites throughout refer to individuals, many of the moral decisions he discusses must be resolved at a group level. They often operate differently. Whatever an individual voter believes about capital punishment, abortion or a balanced budget, the decisions are taken in the political arena. Whatever the negotiators may privately think, there will be no mention of the Bible in the text of an agreement.

"Happiness" is the guiding principle of Bentham and Mill's Utilitarianism. Greene's analysis is a bit lopsided. He equates living with happiness. I would argue, how can you know? Most people go through life rather happiness-neutral. In the trolley metaphor above, suppose the five were all depressive, and the one was a young father with a promising career? This goes to questions as to the purpose of our life here on earth, which are of course extremely value-laden. There can be many perspectives:

- 1) Saving a maximum of human lives, as Greene would do. Possible alternatives might be:
- 2) Minimizing human suffering
- 3) Maximizing human fulfillment, as per the Maslow triangle
- 4) Maximizing the economic life of the Earth's resources.

- 5) Maximizing humanity's potential for achievement, per Charles Murray
- 6) Ensuring humankind's long term survival

Greene doesn't talk about other scenarios for the trolley dilemma. Suppose the five victims were carrying a flag that said "Viva la Raza?" Suppose they advocated gay pride, or identified them as cancer victims? Suppose the one person was known to be a great gospel singer? I posit that people's moral judgments would be swayed by such data. Human life is a very crude metric. The best that can be said is that it is convenient.

We evolved as altruistic beings to support the success of our tribes. We evolved to out-compete other tribes. The world remains the same place. If tribes are not competing as vigorously for scarce resources it is only because of a modern factor that Greene does not mention at all: we are not reproducing ourselves, so there will finally be room for everybody. This represents a triumph for the moral views espoused by Planned Parenthood and GLAAD, though not all would endorse them. If, however, we continue to compete as tribes, it does not make sense that we cede our drive to do so by subscribing to a common morality which weakens us. This is especially true if the discussion is about unilaterally assuming such a moral position, when others such as Muslims will not reciprocate.

Sir Arthur Keith addressed this issue seventy years ago in *Evolution and Ethics*. He concluded, as do I, that Christianity, progressivism and evolution must remain in ways mutually incompatible. If you turn the other cheek, they will take advantage of you. The same with excessive altruism.

A second question which Greene does not address is the gap between good intentions and actual outcomes. He contends that there is really only one moral side to the global warming argument. He asks "Why, then, do so many American political conservatives deny the facts on climate change, in apparent defiance of their own interests?" I would answer that the opponents (1) do not question global warming or the increase in greenhouse gases, but rather the speed at which it is happening, the threat it poses, and the political measures proposed and taken to counter it. Greene's statement would challenge the sincerity of Fritz Vahrenholt, Fred Singer and even Stewart Brand. I would argue that these gentlemen rigorously follow Greene's six rules of deep pragmatism, and that he should read them. Moreover, they challenge the purity of the motives of the extreme environmentalists and the business interests they represent. The same can be said for almost any government program. President Johnson launched a war on poverty. Nixon launched a war on drugs. Bush II launched a war on high-school non-completion. Have they won? They have accrued tremendous vested interests, but have they even made any progress? A deep pragmatist should measure programs by their likelihood of success, not their noble intentions. Moreover, they should "sunset" programs that don't work. Can anybody name a defunct program? Some civics students estimate that the benefits outweigh the costs and unintended consequences in fewer than five percent of legislated programs. Yet every such program claims to be pursuing moral, virtuous ends.

Morality is different when government coercion comes to bear. It is virtuous of me should I choose to follow Greene's advice and give some fraction of my income to the suffering poor. It is a moral deed. It

is a different matter if government forces me to do so. It is not a moral act, but an act at the point of a gun. Do I as a voter have the right to point a gun at my neighbor and compel him to be charitable? That's what is happening. Obamacare expressly charges more to some classes of people in order to subsidize other classes of people. The citizen has no choice but to enroll. Is it moral for government to do this?

Once some supposedly moral cause attracts government money, many immoral types come out of the woodwork. I recently read that even AIDS is such a case. Inventing the AIDS virus. Suspicious to me, rather than argue the merits of the case the advocates of current programs are going out of their way to denigrate this author and anybody who supports him. If he is right, many lives have been sacrificed through toxic treatments that were thoroughly necessary, and much money has been wasted.

The politics of the Holocaust are similar. Anybody who questions any aspect of the Holocaust is automatically branded an anti-Semite. Unless, inconveniently, they are Jewish, such as Norman Finklestein or Noam Chomsky. Then the question becomes, how can they betray the tribe? There seems to be a concern not to find the truth, but to protect Jewish interests. Greene quotes a clever retort that Alan Dershowitz made to an unnamed "Holocaust denier" who asked for a debate. I'm sure that the person would not characterize himself as a denier, simply one attempting to clarify the facts, such as how many really died. I would encourage Greene to follow his instincts, and distrust anybody who wraps themselves in the banner of morality just as surely as he correctly distrusts those who wrap themselves in rhetoric about rights or religion. Shutting people up, refusing to hear arguments on the Holocaust, AIDS or global warming, cannot be the moral course of action.

You can picture Greene fielding these arguments, which he has surely heard before, at the Starbucks at Harvard Square. For both of us it would be an intellectual game. Now try to transpose the argument into real life. Real people don't think about these issues – they mostly just act. Imagine his country cousins at Bates College, in Lewiston, Maine. Catholic charities have inundated them with an influx of Somalis. The locals are not sufficiently cosmopolitan to appreciate the chance to observe a new culture, learn a new language, or try a new cuisine. They are very upset that the welfare rolls (and taxes) have risen, standard in schools have dropped, and crime has risen – especially rape. Where is morality in this? Are the locals simply being parochial, or do they have a moral right not to have asylum seekers foisted on them? What morality compels accepting them? This is not a question to answer immediately, but note that the morality looks different from Harvard Square than Lewiston.

This also begs the question with regard to Greene's list of a prioris. His six points above ask people engaged in moral discussions to reason, to make an intelligent examination of the facts. He implicitly posits that we have the education and intelligence necessary to do this. It is the fate of mankind that most of us don't. Greene's tribe – obviously Jewish – is uniquely well positioned to do these things. My tribe doesn't as much. That's why we hire guys like Dershowitz when we need top-rate help. And other tribes I'll not name are far less gifted than my own. A universal morality, deep pragmatism, is only pragmatic if you have the brains to make it work. Works well at Harvard – but it may be that it can't be generalized.

That's a wrap. Still five stars, for framing the question so well and the well-presented research.

Notes

Moral Tribes

Rule No. 1. In the face of moral controversy, consult, but do not trust, your moral instincts*

Rule No. 2. Rights are not for making arguments; they're for ending arguments

Rule No. 3. Focus on the facts, and make others do the same

Rule No. 4. Beware of biased fairness; our notions differ

Rule No. 5. Use common currency – scientific fact

Rule No. 6. Give

Dear Dr. Laura,

Thank you for doing so much to educate people regarding God's Law. I have learned a great deal from your show, and I try to share that knowledge with as many people as I can. When someone tries to defend the homosexual lifestyle, for example, I simply remind him that Leviticus 18: 22 clearly states it to be an abomination. End of debate. I do need some advice from you, however, regarding some of the specific laws and how to best follow them.

When I burn a bull on the altar as a sacrifice, I know it creates a pleasing odour for the Lord (Lev. 1: 9). The problem is my neighbors. They claim the odour is not pleasing to them. Should I smite them?

I would like to sell my daughter into slavery, as sanctioned in Exodus 21: 7. In this day and age, what do you think would be a fair price for her?

I know that I am allowed no contact with a woman while she is in her period of menstrual uncleanness (Lev. 15: 19– 24). The problem is, how do I tell? I have tried asking, but most women take offense.

Lev. 25: 44 states that I may indeed possess slaves, both male and female, provided they are purchased from neighboring nations. A friend of mine claims that this applies to Mexicans, but not Canadians. Can you clarify? Why can't I own Canadians?

I have a neighbor who insists on working on the Sabbath. Exodus 35: 2 clearly states he should be put to death. Am I morally obligated to kill him myself?

A friend of mine feels that even though eating shellfish is an abomination (Lev. 11: 10), it is a lesser abomination than homosexuality. I don't agree. Can you settle this?

Lev. 21: 20 states that I may not approach the altar of God if I have a defect in my sight. I have to admit that I wear reading glasses. Does my vision have to be 20/ 20, or is there some wiggle room here?

Most of my male friends get their hair trimmed, including the hair around their temples, even though this is expressly forbidden by Lev. 19: 27. How should they die?

I know from Lev. 11: 6– 8 that touching the skin of a dead pig makes me unclean, but may I still play football if I wear gloves?

My uncle has a farm. He violates Lev. 19: 19 by planting two different crops in the same field, as does his wife by wearing garments made of two different kinds of thread (cotton/ polyester blend). He also tends to curse and blaspheme a lot. Is it really necessary that we go to all the trouble of getting the whole town together to stone them? (Lev. 24: 10– 16) Couldn't we just burn them to death at a private family affair like we do with people who sleep with their in-laws? (Lev. 20: 14)

I know you have studied these things extensively, so I am confident you can help. Thank you again for reminding us that God's word is eternal and unchanging.

Your devoted disciple and adoring fan,
J. Kent Ashcraft

Greene, Joshua (2014-01-02). *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them* (Kindle Locations 2855-2864). Atlantic Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

In chapter 1, I summarized a general scientific theory of morality, reflecting a consensus that's been building since Darwin: Morality is a set of psychological adaptations that allow otherwise selfish individuals to reap the benefits of cooperation.

Greene, Joshua (2014-01-02). *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them* (Kindle Locations 2933-2936). Atlantic Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

Israel Eritrian refugees Sweden

Greene's treatment of slavery – look at New Testament. Apartheid

Law of the Sea; Helsenki agreements

Haidt has a more specific theory about why liberals and conservatives disagree. According to this theory, called Moral Foundations Theory, liberals have impoverished moral sensibilities. Haidt identifies six “moral foundations,” which can be labeled in positive or negative terms:

care/ harm,
fairness/ cheating,
loyalty/ betrayal,
authority/ subversion,
sanctity/ degradation,
and the recently added liberty/ oppression.

Each foundation has a corresponding set of moral emotions. For example, the value of care is associated with feelings of compassion. The value of sanctity is associated with feelings of awe (for that which is sanctified) and disgust (for that which is defiling, the opposite of sanctifying). Haidt compares these moral-emotional dispositions to the tongue's five chemical taste receptors. Just as our tongues have distinct receptors for sweet, salty, sour, bitter, and savory foods, our moral minds have six distinct moral receptors, capacities to respond emotionally to actions and events that are related to the six moral foundations. For example, a suffering child engages the moral mind's care/ harm receptor, producing feelings of compassion.

Greene, Joshua (2014-01-02). *Moral Tribes: Emotion, Reason and the Gap Between Us and Them* (Kindle Locations 5375-5383). Atlantic Books Ltd. Kindle Edition.

Happiness, the objective of utilitarianism, is not a self-sustaining in the itself. Evolution favors populations that reproduce themselves. Happiness is not not a necessary part of that equation.

There is a passage in which greens talks about creating jobs as a trade-off that the government must make. The government cannot create private sector jobs; governments can only create government jobs, and they're not even very good at that.

His treatment of common one is good. The example of the trolley, was a switch on one hand and pushing the heavy fell onto the tracks on the other, those point out the real divergence in our thinking between fast and slow. We do have to moral senses.

With regards to thinking fast and slow, his right to say that we have two moralities. And to his credit, he does talk about evolution. Ultimately, our morality is inward, and we compete between groups. I have reference to Sen. Arthur Keith, ethics and evolution, ethics and evolution, would be in order. Greene's thinking is in hypotheticals, about what might be better for a policy to implement. What he does not take into account his government's inability to realize the policies that they attempt. Other authors have estimated that the percentage of legislation that actually achieves its intended purpose without officer is offsetting negative unintended consequences, is only 5 to 10%. So whatever the moral whatever the morality of the intention, one must look at the practical outcomes. The socialist socialists are great on good intentions, but not so good on coming through with real solutions. The touchstone models that Greene referred to throughout the book are the tragedy of the commons, and the tragedy of common sense morality. Common sense morality he defines was a several clear flaws. He his outline of the problem is excellent. This goes back to his opening paradox, that of the four tribes and their pastureland. Location 2664. Who gets to decide how to maximize happiness? Amy says that Foss or Kings no work, so we're better off with a representative democracy free press and widely accessible education. This is the modern prescription. One has to ask how well it is working. This seems to be exactly the problem in America. The the government has run away and is dictating what happiness what should be to people who really would rather simply be left alone. A great case in point is Obama care. The conclusion that Greene comes to his with the 400 and tribes should sit down together and come up with a common set of moral rules that they can all follow. Another alternative might be simply to negotiate borders and each one of their own way. It seems is the changing people's moral orientations is one of the hardest tasks in the world. Her willingness to put our nose and two other people's business, to tell Muslims what morality should be in their own countries, the darkness into a lot of trouble. Even within our own society are the adventures of government tells us how to live, which creates a lot of resentment. We come into the question of coercion. Tribals would tribes with a collectivist bent are must have coercive laws in order to get everybody to toe the line. That coercion is vested in the government. In any practical society. The Tramway problem is an interesting analysis of happiness. It equates living with happiness. Of course, the people on the railway can be presumed to want to live. But it is hard to say that being alive can ship it contributes a positive way to the greatest happiness. A passive, Buddhist approach, over the trolley Glover will would be would seem to me to be a perfect person perfectly defensible it perfectly defensible position. When people are dead, happiness is no longer an issue. Conclusion 2700 or thereabouts he talks about rights. Rights trump consequences. The consequences of pushing the man in front of the trolley may be good from a utilitarian standpoint, but pushing them off the track is a pushing them onto the tracks is a gross violation of his rights. Greene does not go into any enumeration of rights, but is certainly on a fruitful path, because rights are a major major issue in the debate on morality. Greens says that the religious robots accept any argument that there are always Scripture is not right. In this he is right. However there are people who were on the thoroughly secular side to take equally nonsensical points of view about Saddam recycling one's garbage cutting trees and other everyday activities. What kind of car you drive, how much you drive her certainly areas in which the ecological left would like to tell us all how to live, on the basis of similar Scriptures.

Which brings me to another question. Greene treats the anti-global warming people as being unlettered, and pretends that they cannot be a scientifically reasoned opposition so global warming. I

offer that there are several good authors who are in far quite well informed, better informed than Greene himself, on the issue. They don't necessarily disagree with the principle that will warming ought to be stopped, but they certainly disagree strongly on the amount of global warming that is taken place, and the nature of the steps that ought to be taken to counter it. Greene is in my view venturing into dangerous territory when he tries to make a categorical claim about the people who are against global warming. They are not barbarians.

Green frames his moral dilemmas as if the individual has a choice. This is a bit disingenuous. They feed the questions which are put to this test but questions for four society. The question is whether or not to legislate, and the squares people to do what the majority, or the people in power, believed to be the right thing. His questions can comparing happiness, assuming that is the absence of pain, mosquito bites and broken knees, this will be. However his assumption is one that we are in that position to make the choice freely and are not under question. A part of our happiness is in the sense of freedom, being free to make our own choices in matters like this. Six location 3238. The author claims that will end bent them change the the, "wrestled moral philosophy away from automatic settings and traded over almost entirely to the brain general purpose problem solving. This is an interesting proposition. One of the issues that Greene does not go into his collective decision-making. Collective decision-making is certainly involved in most of the major issues of our day. And although the collective may pretend to use utilitarian type reasoning, and fact is almost always quite the opposite. We pretend that the climate change crowd is operating on her motives. They like to pretend. But in fact they are viewed careerists driven by the same sort of petty concerns as everybody else. They explained a concern for the poor of the world, but like Al Gore, continue to live in their 40s were mansions and try to speaking engagements everywhere without regard to the to what is going to the heirs of the people breeze. Faye and abstract recognition that utilitarianism may be away for a single person to resolve moral issues is vastly different than supposing that a society might of employer utilitarian morality to resolve issues conference. We always pretend that we take a utilitarian approach, but the coalition that supports whatever decision is that is not acting on utilitarian motives. Are uniformly – there's no way to know. Greens utilitarianism posits a single wife as a universal measure. Not all would agree. I have my own list of seven or eight moral imperatives which can compete with us. I should drag out that list. When I think where it is. That list is in my review of works of \$60 billion question.

To 41% locations for 68

Greene talks about the sacrifices that an individual could make in order to save another life someplace in the world, life is somebody that he doesn't know. This begs the question of reciprocal Olli. Could there be any assurance that that other person would be aware, would give a damn? All of this must take place in a social context, but Green is working with him the realm of individual conscience Greenport semester morality up not is a unifying theme of the existing moralities, but as a replacement morality. How can they are creditors, East-West Thorson South, agree on a meta-morality? In a way the notion of a meta-morality has been applied in the European Union. The United Nations tries as well. There are uniform laws on immigration. They are uniform in eliminating the death penalty. They are uniform or try to be uniform in their treatment of asylum-seekers. They try to be somewhat uniform in their social policies regarding pensions, healthcare and so on. Has it worked?

Between sets up a dichotomy. You have to look for some independent moral authority God, reason, or science, he says correctly that none of them serves, or look for some other moral truths that we resolve our disagreements.

The fallacy is that he is looking for something that can resolve disagreements on a global scale. We don't have to do that. If we live within our own nations, among people like ourselves and make her own moral decisions within that contract within that said context, we can use negotiation to mediate the differences believed that arise between countries. We need some sort of an international system, but we have one. The world Court, and various trade bodies. The absolute equality of human lives, there is a section that simply doesn't serve us. Look at what Israel does. Rejecting every tree and asylum-seekers. No, Jewish lives are worth more than veterans. And they are the one nation in the world that is not afraid to claim that. We talk about rights and duties had 48% rights is something that seem to have been invented, and people and that the map well to justify pre-existing moral positions. We present a very good diatribe on rights, rights or devised as a means of moving emotionally held positions into the realm of rational of rational, fast brain to slow brain, without so wondering them not subject to rational analysis. The author says that we should be highly dubious of claims of rights, and ask people to argue the utilitarian merits of a given situation without resorting to rights. Abortion would be a case in point. Don't belabor the question of the women's right to choose for the child's right to life. Look at what is good for yields the best overall result. He follows by saying that there are some moral absolutes, some things that are common sense and do not need to be argued. The morality of slavery and Holocaust denial or to them. The choice of being pro-choice pro-life is a pragmatic one. He worked for pragmatic reasons. It's hard to stop people from doing what they what they want to do. The law needs to have a practical aspect to it, and I believe that the solution is practical. The other question is one of coercion. We should have as a principle, not an overriding principle but a strong one, the coercing people was generally bad. Pro-life coerces people. Greene quotes can't is saying that blacks are fit only to be slaves. He doesn't mention that this is also the widespread widely held position of most people that saw him, including George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and even. Charles Darwin was the descendent of abolitionists and led abolitionist sentiments himself, he chose to remain silent on the issue open champion the equality of the black man. People would simply not have accepted it. His contemporaries and cousin Golson Spencer and others stated there without reservation that they believe that the bike was not up to the same levels of accomplishment. So the bottom line, Green keeps coming back to use meta-morality, embracing all peoples. This would be appropriate to a New World order sort of solution. What is wrong with leaving individual sets of people alone, which set their own moral codes within their own countries, with international law and other such apparatus to handle the handle the intersections where the two have to if you have to interact with one another. What's to like? Will other things, and green sees himself for two years, recognizes the distinction between his positions and those of others, and entries those who disagree with them with respect. He is able to outline both sides of an argument. This is quite admirable.

The conservative arguments against Libertarians presented on locations 56 5461 or rather predictable. They were good question on health insurance; should society let the uninsured man's children dying?

Seems to me to be a false question. The alternative is to have a government system administered by a plethora of inept bureaucrats, just far too complex for the putative beneficiaries to understand. In a practical sense – call was deeply pragmatic – if the man has any standing whatsoever in his community, the child will not die. For instance, some of my 19th-century relatives were performed. They grew up in orphans home. Society took care of itself, with our government spending and.

And this is the issue. How do you get things done efficiently. Very seldom is government the answer. So it's not positive roles for government which has proven over and over to be inept at undertaking. Six

Accept as axioms:

All peoples have substantially equal intellectual ability

All peoples are capable of the moral reasoning being discussed