



Human Behaviour and the Slippery Slope of Accepting Justification

Platform 12 25

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Presented by Adj. Professor Alistair Ping

a.ping@qut.edu.au

Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

QUT acknowledges the First Nations owners of the lands where we hold our Conference today. We pay respect to their Elders, lores, customs and creation spirits. We recognise that these lands have always been places of teaching, research and learning.

QUT acknowledges the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people play within the QUT community.



The key questions?

How do we disrupt the slide down the slope that leads to homelessness?

How can we understand anti-social behaviours in a way that doesn't vilify the person?

How do we mitigate against offenders that are first time?

What are the key considerations and systems that support decency and co-operation?



Key Theoretical Frameworks

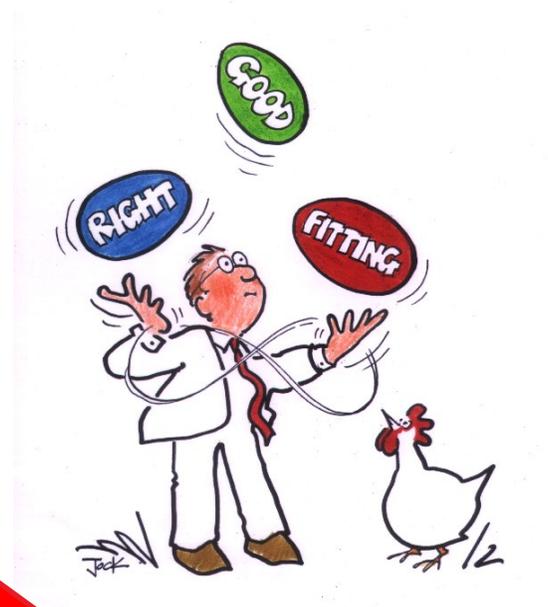
“The branch of philosophy on which we are at present engaged is not, like the others, theoretical in its aim...”

Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, 350BCE p.93

- ❖ **Theory vs Reality (Normative vs Practical Ethics)** – normative ethics asks the question of what a person ought to do, and practical or descriptive ethics considers what a person actually does.
- ❖ **Ethical Decision Making Theory** – Jones Moral Intensity Model 1991
- ❖ **Moral Neutralisation Theory**
- ❖ **Why Good People Do Bad Things** – causal factor model (note Self Identity Theory)
- ❖ **Moral Intention Theory** – Intentions, Actions, Justifications

Normative Ethics Theory

How do you lead a good life?
Or
How ought we to live?



What's right?

- Values and Principles
- Divine command theory
- Kantian universalism
- Aristotle virtue ethics

What's good?

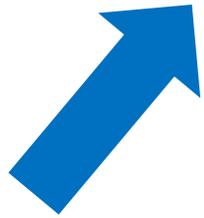
- Outcomes
- Utilitarian thinking
- John Stuart Mill
- Jeremy Bentham

What's fitting?

- Culture and Context
- Ethical relativism

Robin Hood

Robbed from the rich
to give to the poor



Was this
right or
wrong?



Was it a
good
outcome?



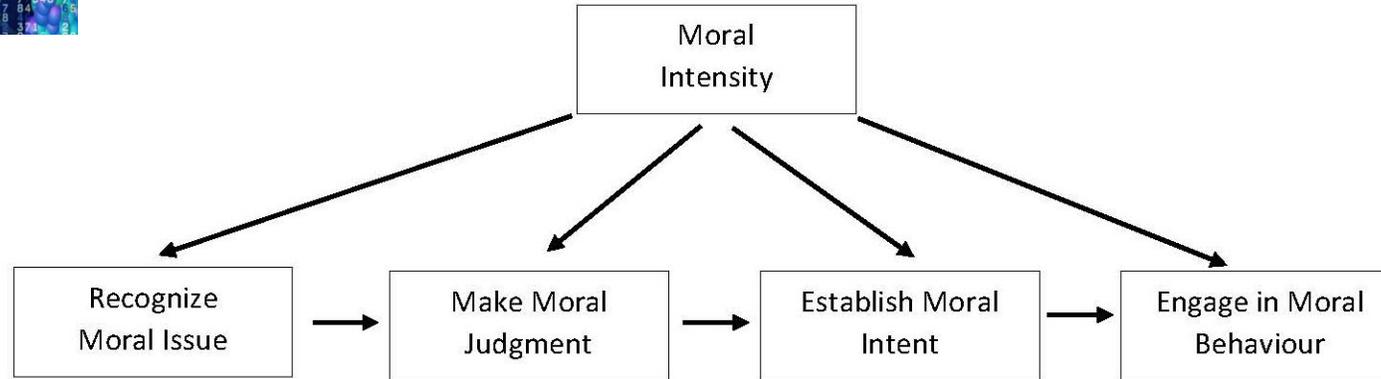
Was it
contextually
fitting?



How we make decisions (in Theory)

Ethical Decision Making Theory

Existing Theory – Jones Moral Intensity Model (1991)



Two fundamental assumptions:

1. That ethical decision making is a *rational*, cognitive process that can be taught
2. That unethical behaviour occurs due to:-
 - Greed
 - Poor Character
 - Bad values

Conclusion: Bad People Do Bad Things

Implications: 1. Weed out the 'bad' apples 2. Re-educate on character and values 3. Establish strong deterrents



**What happens in
REALITY?**



Moral Neutralisation Theory

- Researchers (Sykes and Matza 1957) studying juvenile delinquent behaviour in New York in the 1950s assumed that delinquent youths held anti-social values but found instead that they held the **SAME** values as mainstream society concluding:-

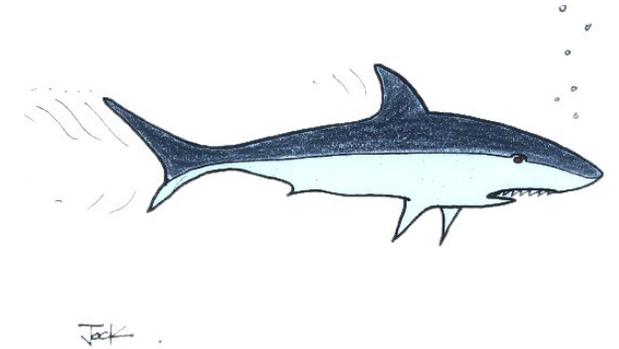
“It is now largely agreed that delinquent behaviour, like most social behaviour, is learned and that it is learned in the process of social interaction.”

“...much delinquency is based on what is essentially an unrecognized extension of defences to crimes, in the form of justifications for deviance that are seen as valued by the delinquent but not by the legal system or society at large.”



A wake up call

- Only 5% of the population could be considered 'bad'
- 90% of first time fraud offenders have NO criminal history
- About ¼ of fraud involves collusion
- Psychopaths have the same capacity for ethical decision making as everyone else
- They just don't care
- The common trait of the 'Dark Triad' (sociopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism) is **a complete lack of empathy**





Inter-disciplinary Theory

Social Psychology – we are not as smart as we think we are

- Cognitive biases cause us to miss ethical issues due to perceptual blindness
- We over estimate our own ethical behaviour and think we are more ethical than others
- We re-write history in our own favour
- We change our self concept according to circumstances (Self Identity Theory)
- We over estimate dispositional factors and under-estimate contextual factors

Inter-disciplinary Theory

Criminology – our rational mind protects our self concept



- We use ‘moral neutralizations’ to enable us to do bad things without having to assess ourselves as being bad.
- One’s concept of Justice is key
 1. Denial of Responsibility – “It’s not my fault”
 2. Denial of Injury – “It’s not hurting anyone”
 3. Denial of the Victim – “They deserved it”
 4. Condemnation of the Condemners – “You think I’m bad but you should see them”
 5. Appeal to Higher Loyalties – “I did it for you”
 6. Everyone else is Doing It – “I had no choice but to follow suit”
 7. Claim to Entitlement – “I deserve it”



Inter-disciplinary Theory

Neuro-cognitive science – we are cognitive misers

- Two inter-related processes are used – a sub-conscious reflexive pattern matching cycle (system #1) and a higher order reasoning cycle (system #2).
- The majority of the time we are using the reflexive cycle and engaging in pattern matching from past experience.
- Rational higher order decision making is not normally engaged until after the event and only in order to justify why we made the decision we did.
- **Our mind works more like a lawyer defending a client than a scientist objectively assessing facts**



What triggers this process?

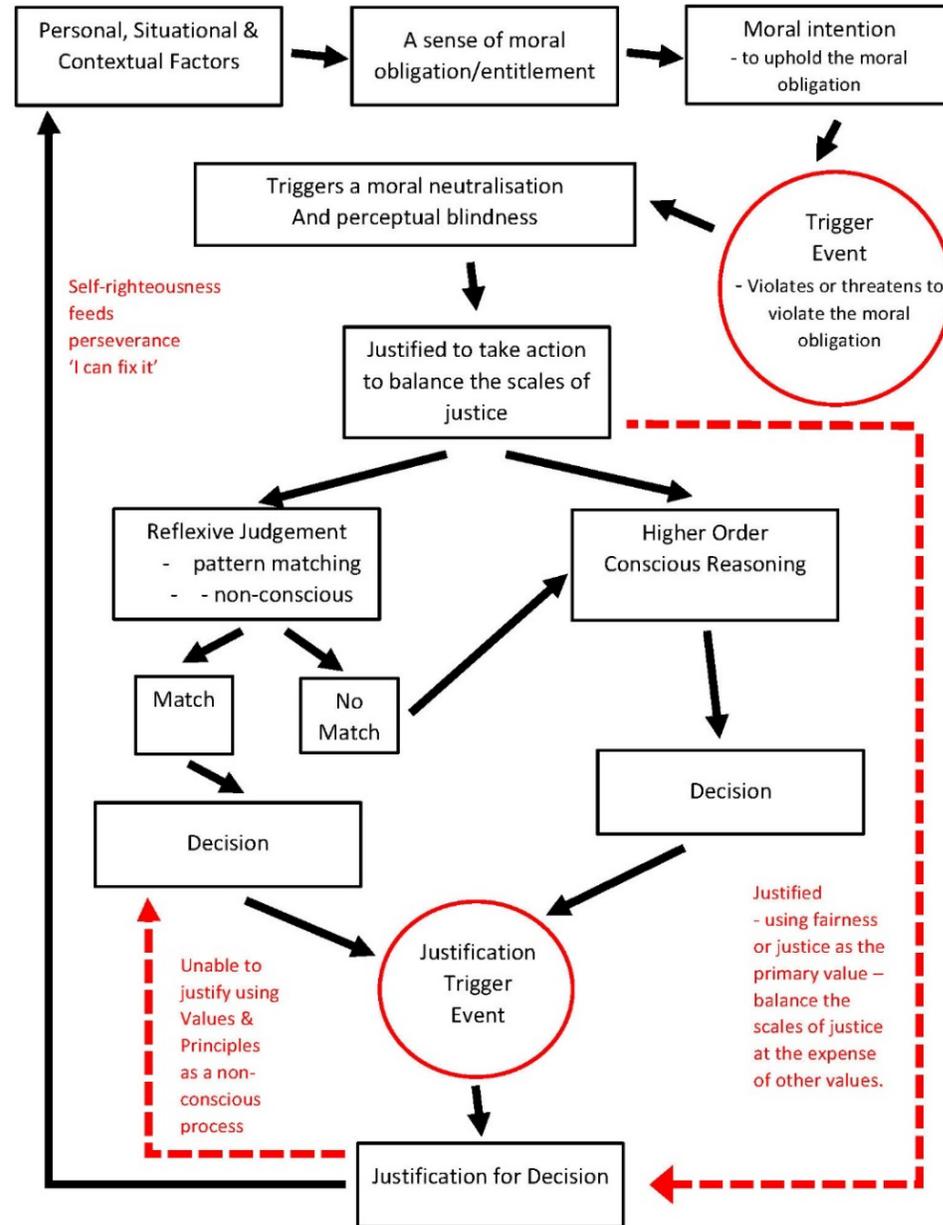


Why Good People Do Bad Things

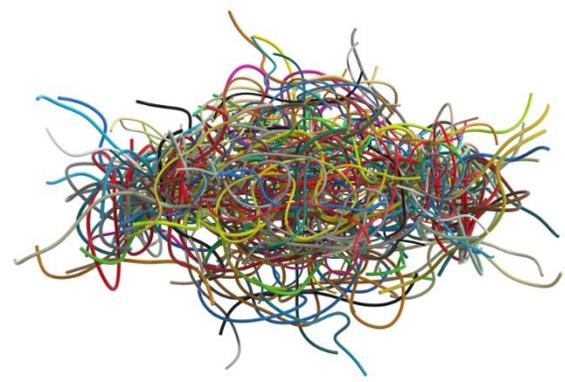
Causal factor model

CAUSAL FACTOR MODEL OF UNETHICAL OUTCOMES

A.C.Ping 2015



The Triggers



1. Challenging personal, situational and contextual factors diminish our ability to self-regulate – hence we ‘think fast’ make emotive decisions and justify our decisions **AFTER** the event.
2. A trigger event that we perceive as being unfair or unjust provokes us to take a **BAD** (unethical) action that we justify using a moral neutralisation.
3. Confirmation **BIAS** means that once we have made a decision we will dismiss any evidence that questions its validity.
4. The next time we face a similar situation we pattern match assuming – if it has worked before it will work again – hence we begin the slide down the **SLIPPERY SLOPE**
5. These actions change the story we tell about ourselves and change our **SELF-IDENTITY**



**Now what?
How do we disrupt
this process?**



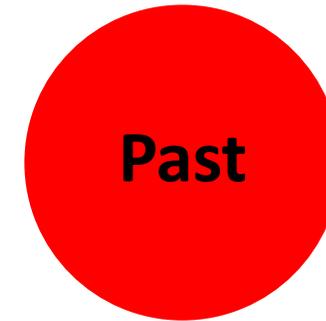
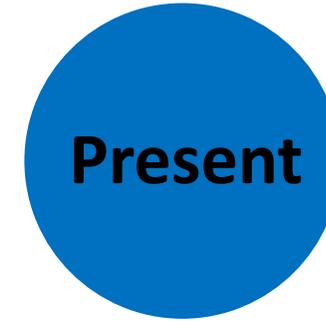
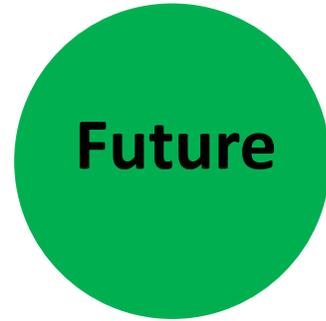
Shift from **Reactive thinking** to **Intentional thinking**

1. Reactive thinking focuses on what's wrong with someone and how to fix them – it assumes that we are rational beings.
2. Intentional thinking focuses on what we intend to create together – it accepts the complex nature of human behaviour and that we are all in this together.
3. Moral intention theory is a dynamic intentional theory that proposes that the key to the creation of ethical outcomes and the minimisation of unethical outcomes is **the ability to define, enact and protect moral intentions.**



Moral Intention Theory

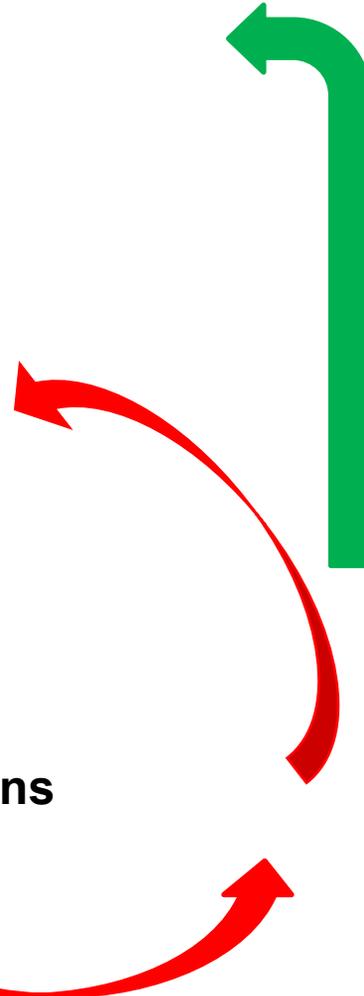
Manage Intentions, Actions, Justifications



Intention

Actions

Justifications



- What are we trying to create together?
- What are the Values that we want to live by?
- What's our Moral Intent?

- Personal, situational and contextual factors

- Subjective interpretations of justice
- Moral neutralisations
- Us and Them
- If only...

Thinking Shift Required



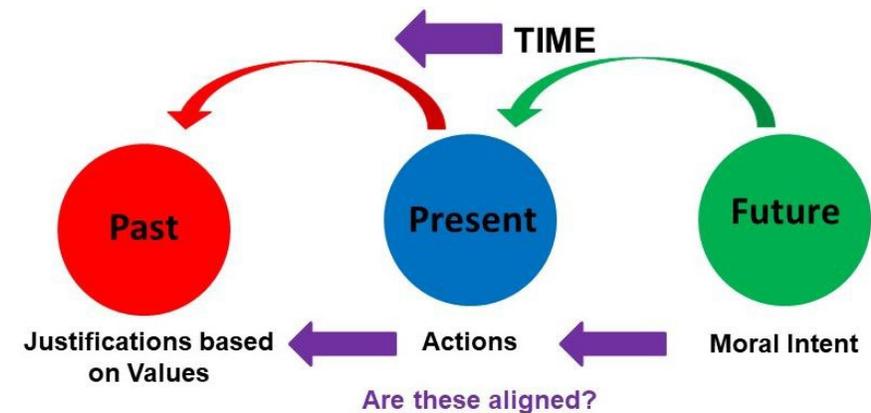
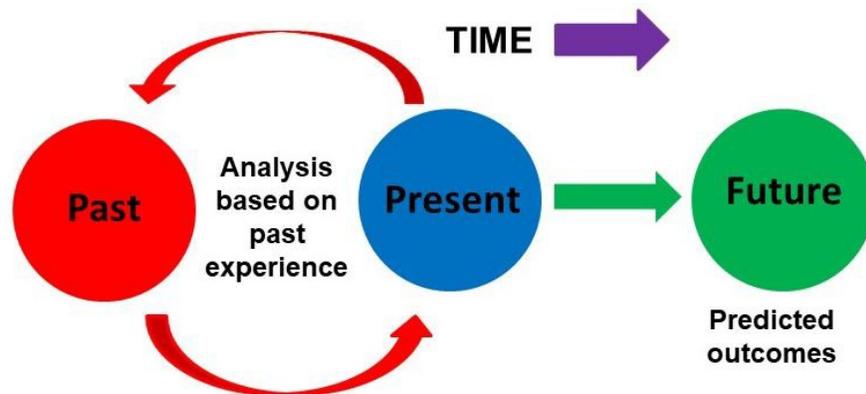
Reactive Thinking

- What's the root cause of this problem?
- Find a solution (a fix)
- Project it forwards assuming we know the future



Moral Intention Theory

- What are we trying to create together?
- What actions are aligned to that?
- Are we justifying our actions based on our Values?





What would good look like?

“The only thing that will redeem mankind is co-operation.”

Virgil

Moral Behaviour in Animals

(Frans de Waal 2011)

- Fairness – and a justice process that supports this
- Reciprocity – the key to co-operation
- Empathy – to feel another’s emotion – key to synchronization
- Safety – physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and material
- Humility – the willingness to admit failure.
- Learning – requires an agreed reset process

“The problems that exist in the world today cannot be solved by the level of thinking that created them.”

Albert Einstein



Questions and Reflections



Profit Studies