

Lesson Manuals

Lesson 2: Uncovering the roots of our differences

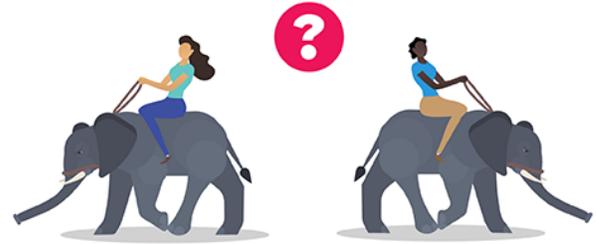
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In Lesson 1, we learned about the elephant (our automatic thinking) and the rider (our controlled thinking). We saw that our elephant generates automatic emotional reactions to things, and our rider tends to defend our automatic intuitions.

Our elephants' intuitions shape the way we interpret information, which can lead two people to look at the same set of facts and reach entirely different conclusions.



But where do these intuitions come from?

When we encounter a moral dilemma, why does one person's elephant have one reaction and another person's elephant have a different one?

We'll answer these questions — and more — in this lesson. By the end of this lesson, you'll:

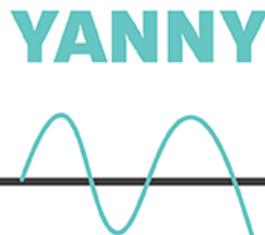
- Discover how our moral worldviews are formed
- Reflect on your deepest core values
- Understand how our different worldviews explain divisions within our society

Let's get started?

Let's begin by doing a quick exercise.

In 2018, the internet went wild after this audio clip was posted online because people couldn't agree on a seemingly simple question: What word is being said?

[Click](#) to give it a listen.



What sound do you hear?

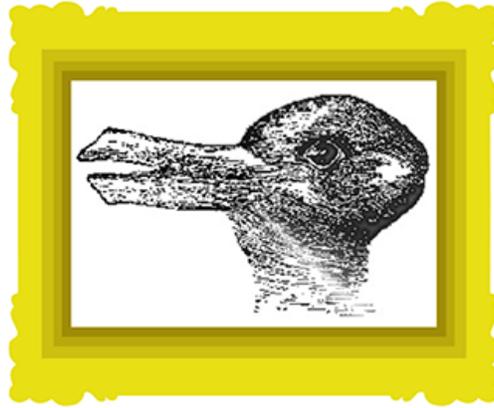
Yanny

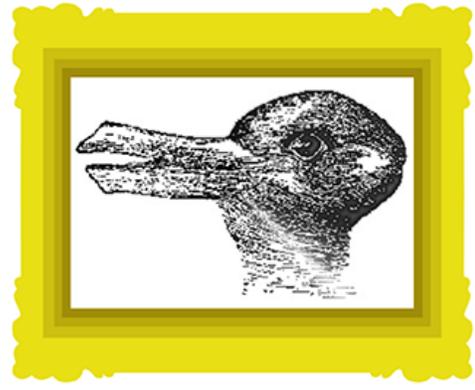
Laurel

About 50% of people hear the word "Laurel," and the other half hear the word "Yanny." Crazy, right?

Even though we know half of people hear something else, we can be completely convinced that what we hear is the *only* possible way to interpret that audio clip.

Let's do another example. Take a look at the image below:



What do you see? [Select all that apply]		
		A. A rabbit
		B. A duck
Both A & B	A	B
Nicely done!	You're right! You probably see a rabbit facing right with its ears sticking out to the left.	You're right! You probably see a duck facing left with its beak slightly open.
	But there's another way to see it.	
	It's possible to also see a duck facing left with its beak slightly open. The beak of the duck becomes the ears of the rabbit.	It's possible to also see a rabbit facing right with its ears sticking out to the left. The ears of the rabbit become the beak of the duck.
	Try taking another look:	

What's going on here?

The picture contains two images in one. Some people immediately see a duck, others instantly see a rabbit. Once again, people have the exact same information in front of them, but they reach different conclusions.

In the duck/rabbit image, most people can see both images. But with the Yanny/Laurel audio clip, most people can only hear it one way no matter how hard they try.

We only know there are two ways to hear the clip because we interact with people who hear it differently, and they tell us about their experience.

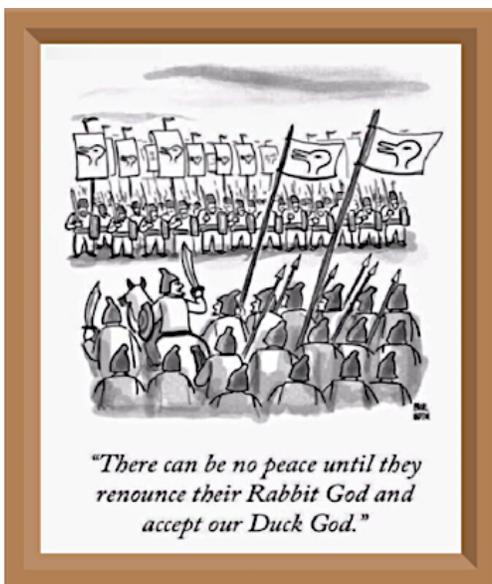
But imagine we never interacted with those who heard the opposite sound? We'd never realize there can be another way to hear the audio clip.

Just think about all of the things we experience that we're completely certain about. Other people might experience these things differently, and we don't even realize it!



That's pretty strange to think about!

Here's a little cartoon showing how this can be taken to the extreme:



The two groups at war are holding flags with an *identical* image — but they're interpreting the image differently! They're each so convinced of their own righteousness that they're willing to go to war over it to defeat the other side.

Of course, this is meant to be a joke. But the important thing to remember is that versions of this happen in real life. Two people can interpret the same information differently and be certain that they're correct.

All too often, people believe their interpretation is morally superior and the other view is invalid. They start thinking about the other person as an opponent that needs to be defeated.

But why does this happen?

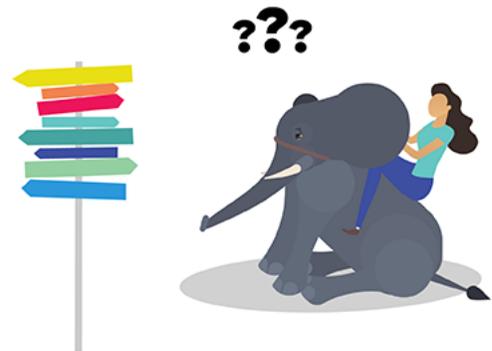
The duck/rabbit image and the Yanny/Laurel clip can be explained by the same underlying phenomenon about how our brains work.

You can think of our brain as an interpreter. We are constantly moving throughout the world, encountering new information through each of our senses (sight, hearing, smell...). Our elephant works at lightning speed to form a quick impression of all of this information, so we can make sense of what we're experiencing.

When we encounter ambiguous information — like an illustration with two images in one, or an audio clip that contains multiple frequencies — our elephant isn't sure what to do. It's a lot harder to interpret the information, because there isn't a clear answer.

But, our brain needs to make sense of the information. Otherwise, we'd be totally confused! So our elephant interprets what we're experiencing by making a quick guess based on our intuitions.

Although the original information was messy and unclear, we get the impression that our interpretation is completely accurate. It can then be very difficult for us to see things in a different way.



To summarize, which of these best explains why different people can perceive the same phenomenon (like Yanny/Laurel) differently?	
Each person's brain generates an interpretation of the information we encounter	Each of our brains allows us to perceive the world exactly as it is
	
Exactly!	Not quite. Our brains have to interpret the information that we take in through our senses. Different people's brains can come up with different interpretations of the same phenomenon.

This lesson about perception extends to things that are much more profound than rabbits, ducks, and audio clips. It applies to how we interpret everything we experience.

As we go through life, we all have a particular worldview — a particular lens through which we view the world. As the physicist Albert Einstein famously said, "Reality is merely an illusion, albeit a very persistent one."

What does that mean?

We don't actually see the world as it "really" is. Rather, we each invent a subjective interpretation of reality. This is our unique worldview.

But we don't realize that our worldview is subjective! The invented reality that we create and experience is so convincing that we can't help but perceive it as being objectively true.



If we don't acknowledge that our worldview is subjective, we can fall prey to what's called **naïve realism**: the tendency to believe that we see things as they really are, and that anyone who sees things differently is probably crazy, stupid, or evil.

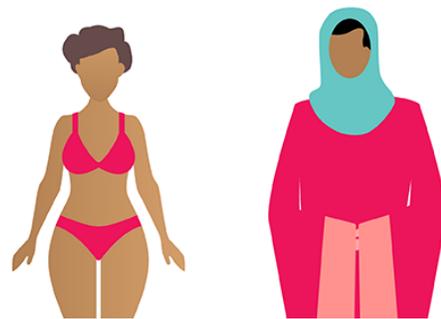
And just think — if we're convinced we're right and other people are nuts, other people are probably thinking the same thing about us!

But where does my subjective worldview come from?

Your worldview is unique to you, but other people play a huge part in laying the groundwork for how you interpret the world.

Let's think through an example.

One woman might think of her bikini as a symbol of feminist empowerment. She feels free to dress however she chooses. In contrast, she might think wearing a headscarf is a reflection of patriarchal oppression and harmful gender norms.



Another woman might have the opposite interpretation. She might think her headscarf is empowering. In contrast, she might think of the bikini as a symbol of patriarchal oppression and harmful gender norms.

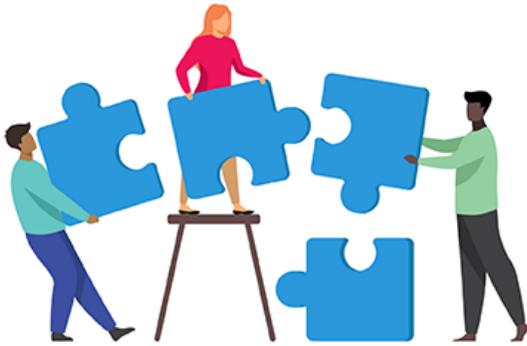
For this topic, there are so many factors that can influence someone's conclusions. Your own view likely reflects your individual preferences and life experiences, but also a number of social factors — the specific culture(s) you've lived in, how you were raised, and what kind of messages you've encountered in your community.

[Tell me more](#)

Moral communities

Just as people can interpret an ambiguous visual image or audio clip in two different ways, different communities can also interpret ambiguous social events in different ways. Especially when it comes to moral issues.

Throughout human history, people have come together to form **moral communities** — groups that create their own shared understanding of morality. We do this intuitively, because sharing values, norms, and traditions enables us to cooperate with other people and coexist harmoniously.



Belonging to a moral community is an integral part of the human experience. It's a critical part of our ability to function in society.

But we may not even realize that we belong to a particular moral community until we find ourselves in the midst of a different community with its own distinct worldview.

Have you ever found yourself among a new group of people, and been struck by how different their beliefs, values, and customs are from yours?

Yes

Most of us have had these types of experiences. You've seen for yourself how different groups of people develop different ways of seeing the world — these are moral communities in action.

No

Most people have had experiences like this at some point in their lives. Perhaps you've experienced these types of differences in a more subtle way, between two communities you belong to. For example, between your immediate family and the home of distant relatives, or between your religious community and your secular school.

When you observe that different groups of people develop different ways of seeing the world, you're seeing moral communities in action.

Let's consider an example of how different moral communities can develop opposite views from each other.

You may have observed that in some cultures, arranged marriages (marriages where people who don't know each other are paired up to become life partners) are viewed as a beautiful way of building a solid foundation for healthy and happy families. People within these moral communities might develop the sense that it's a fact that arranged marriage is good for society.

Other cultures view arranged marriages quite differently: They see this practice as an unacceptable way of taking away individuals' freedom to choose their own life partners. People within these moral communities may have the impression that it's a fact that arranged marriage is *harmful* to society.

We're going to share a metaphor that can help you understand how our moral communities play a role in shaping our interpretations of reality.

Have you ever seen the movie *The Matrix*?

Of course!

No — what's it about?

In the movie, the main character learns that the world that everyone was experiencing was actually a false reality called "The Matrix."

All of humankind was experiencing a collective hallucination — like a shared dream state — that they all think is real life.



When a group of people shares a moral worldview, it's as if they're all participating in the same collective hallucination about morality. It's like they're all inside "The Matrix," but they don't know it.

If you were the only person dreaming, other people outside the dream would probably snap you back to reality.

But if enough people participate in the same shared hallucination, they all reinforce each other's impression that the dream is reality. The whole moral community comes under the influence of naïve realism. They are thoroughly convinced that how they see things is just how things are, and anyone else who sees things differently is wrong.

Whoa...

Our moral communities *intensify* our individual impressions that how we understand morality is the only way it can be understood.

Morality binds and blinds us: Morality binds us together into tightly-knit groups, and then it blinds us to other possible ways of seeing the world.



It's just like what we saw with the two groups at war over the duck/rabbit image. Each group is so confident that its interpretation is correct that they can't recognize any other way of seeing the image.

Our moral community tends to have the same effect on us when it comes to our views about what's right and wrong.

To summarize, which of the following describes the influence of our moral communities?

Our moral community often makes it difficult for us to acknowledge alternative ways of thinking about what's right and wrong

Our moral community exposes us to all possible ways of thinking about what's right and wrong, so we can choose our own outlook on morality



Exactly!



Not exactly. Our moral community tends to emphasize one particular way of understanding morality. Over time, this tends to make it difficult for us to acknowledge alternative ways of thinking about what's right and wrong.

Basically, different moral communities develop distinctive moral worldviews. These different worldviews can lead individuals to see their community's understanding of morality as the one true way of answering questions about what's right and wrong.

But what leads to these differences in moral worldviews?

You tell me

The six "taste buds" of morality

There's a useful metaphor to understand what's causing these differences in worldviews: **the mind is like a tongue with six taste buds.**

We all have the same taste buds on our tongues (salty, sweet, sour, bitter, and savory), but we all have different taste preferences. Some of us have a strong sweet tooth; others prefer more salty foods.



Each culture ends up generating its own cuisine with its own flavors and seasonings. And even within any given culture, people vary. They don't all react to the same foods in the same way. We all end up with our own unique taste palate.

How does this relate to morality?

Moral Foundations Theory

A team of psychologists studying morality wanted to make sense of a puzzling question: Why are there so many similarities in morality across cultures, traditions, and individuals, but also so many differences?



To answer this question, they examined different fields of research, including evolutionary and cognitive psychology, cultural anthropology, sociology, philosophy, and religion.

Based on their research, these psychologists developed a theory called **Moral Foundations Theory** to explain how we develop our moral worldviews.

Go on...

The idea is that we all share a set of innate and universal **moral foundations**, which serve as the building blocks of morality — just as our taste buds serve as the building blocks of our food preferences.

Like with our taste buds, we all begin with the same six moral foundations: Care, Fairness, Authority, Loyalty, Sanctity, and Liberty (we'll explain in more detail soon).

Although we all share these same foundations, we draw on them in different ways and to different degrees to form our specific moral worldviews.

What do you mean?

Similarly to how we form our taste preferences, we form our moral worldview through a combination of many factors:

- We all begin with the same moral foundations, which stem from our **shared evolutionary heritage**
- Our worldview is then influenced by the **cultures** in which we are raised
- Our **specific upbringing** influences how our worldview develops
- Our own **unique life experiences** continue to inform our worldview



We all end up with worldviews that are as unique as our fingerprints!

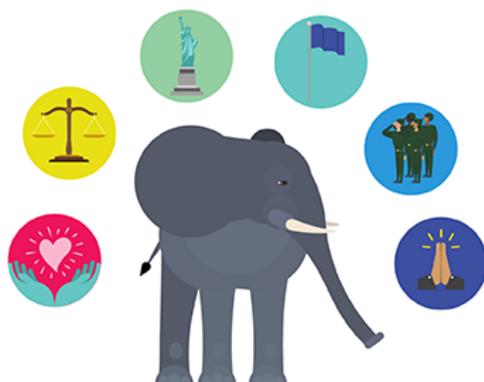
While we can agree on a lot of things with other people, no two people will agree on absolutely everything. Let's review!

Which of the following does the taste bud metaphor teach us?	
We all have the same moral foundations, but we build upon them differently to create our unique worldview	Some people have a more refined sense of taste than others in terms of food and morality
	
Exactly!	Well, it's possible that some people do, but the metaphor is meant to show how our minds are like tongues in that we all share the same foundations for morality (and taste), but we build upon them in different ways to create our own moral worldview (and taste preferences).

Does this connect back to the rider and the elephant?

Intuitions come first, reasoning comes second

Yes, it does! Our elephants' automatic intuitions are shaped by our moral foundations!



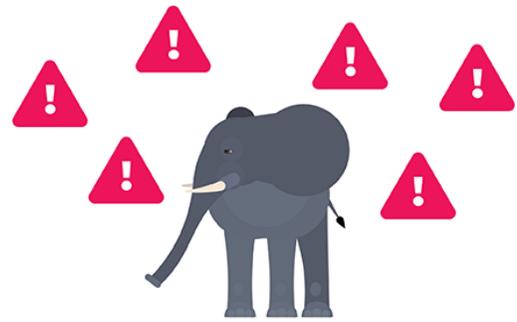
This is what causes us all to have different snap judgments about social issues and practices (for example, arranged marriages). It's because our moral worldviews make use of the moral foundations in different ways and to different degrees.

Our moral foundations underpin our most deeply-held beliefs and core values. These beliefs and values have a powerful influence over all of our thoughts, feelings, and actions — but they play an especially powerful role in our automatic thinking (our elephant).

So what does this mean?

When we encounter information that has to do with morality, our elephant has an *instant reaction* based on our moral worldview. Sometimes this leads us to feel automatic urges to condemn something immediately.

Rather than assess the issue from a more objective standpoint, our rider often comes along and develops sophisticated arguments to justify the elephant's deep intuitions.



We learned about this process in the last lesson.

It can be summarized with the principle:

Our intuitions come first, our reasoning comes second.

Now let's find out what the moral foundations mean.

Let's do it!

As we mentioned, according to **Moral Foundations Theory**, there are six different moral "taste buds" in our minds:



Everyone has all six of these foundations in their mind, similarly to how we all have five different taste buds on our tongue.

But different people and cultures make use of the moral foundations in different ways and to different degrees. The way in which we rely on these foundations shapes our core values and worldview.

These foundations seem pretty random. How did you land on this list?

Good question! While these six foundations might seem arbitrary, there's a tremendous amount of research that went into this selection, and there are very specific criteria for something to be considered a moral foundation.

You might also be thinking that there's a value that's incredibly important to you that you don't see on this list. The idea behind the moral foundations is that they are the *building blocks* of morality. They represent various categories of values.



We build upon the moral foundations to form our specific values. If there's a value that you care a lot about and don't see in this list, it can be traced back to one of the moral foundations. Stick with us and we'll help connect these dots!

We'll now go through the foundations one by one to explain what they mean. At the end of each foundation, we'll ask you two questions. Afterwards, we'll show you what your responses indicate about your moral foundations.

Great



1. Care

The Care foundation serves as the basis for caring for others and trying to prevent harm. This underlies the values of kindness and compassion.

A person who relies heavily on the Care foundation would probably prioritize being gentle and kind, and would probably value this in other people.

A person who doesn't rely on this foundation very much is more likely to value being tough and independent.

Now, let's briefly evaluate your reliance on the Care foundation.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

One of the worst things a person could do is hurt a defenseless animal.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

2. Fairness

We all want to be treated fairly and we dislike when people cheat, even when we're not the ones who are directly affected by the cheater's actions.

This foundation underlies the values of justice, equality, and reciprocity. It's also connected to the values of honesty and integrity.



Now, we'll ask you some questions to evaluate your reliance on the Fairness foundation.

When the government makes laws, the number one principle should be ensuring that everyone is treated fairly.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

It's morally wrong that rich children inherit a lot of money while poor children inherit nothing.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

3. Loyalty



The Loyalty foundation underlies the drive to be loyal to groups that we're a part of — for instance, our family, school, neighborhood, religious community, sports team, etc.

This foundation also forms the basis of values like patriotism, being a team player, and self-sacrifice for the sake of the group.

Now, we'll ask you some questions to evaluate your reliance on the Loyalty foundation.

It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

4. Authority

The Authority foundation underlies the value of respecting traditions, laws, leaders, elders, and other forms of authority that you consider legitimate.

If you value treating your parents or grandparents with respect, this stems from the Authority foundation.



Now, we'll ask you some questions to evaluate your reliance on the Authority foundation.

Respect for authority is something all children need to learn.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

If my teacher ordered me to do something that seems wrong to me, I would obey anyway because I'm obligated to do so.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

5. Sanctity



The Sanctity foundation underlies the notion that certain things are "pure" or sacred, and that they should be protected or treated with reverence.

This can manifest in treating objects and beliefs as sacred. It can also underlie the notion of treating the human body like a temple that must not be desecrated.

Now, we'll ask you some questions to evaluate your reliance on the Sanctity foundation.

People should not do things that are disgusting, even if no one is harmed.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

Chastity is an important and valuable virtue.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

6. Liberty

The Liberty foundation underlies our desire for autonomy — the freedom to make our own decisions. This serves as the basis for the ideal of individual freedom, as well as the desire to eliminate oppression.



Now, we'll ask you some questions to evaluate your reliance on the Liberty foundation.

Society works best when it lets individuals take responsibility for their own lives without telling them what to do.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

I think everyone should be free to do as they choose, so long as they don't interfere with other people's freedom.

Strongly disagree

Disagree

Slightly disagree

Slightly agree

Agree

Strongly agree

Review

Thanks for sharing! We'll reveal your results shortly.

You might be thinking, what does this all mean?



Care



Fairness



Liberty



Loyalty



Authority



Sanctity

To recap, we all begin with the same six moral foundations in our minds. These foundations serve as the *building blocks of morality*.

We each rely on the foundations in different ways and to different degrees. The particular way that each of us relies on the moral foundations is shaped by a number of factors, including our heritage, the culture in which we grew up, and our life experiences.

These various factors lead us to form our underlying core values and our particular worldview. This is what shapes each person's automatic intuitions.

Due to the uniqueness of our experiences, we each end up with a worldview as unique as our own fingerprints. Our worldview then influences the way we interpret the world around us. It causes our elephant to have powerful feelings about what's right or wrong.

To summarize, how does Moral Foundations Theory explain the origins of our intuitions about morality?	
Different people develop different intuitions about morality, as a consequence of their particular culture, upbringing, and personal experiences	We all develop the same intuitions about morality based on the six foundations
	
Correct! Each individual develops their own moral worldview using the six moral foundations. Our intuitions about morality reflect the unique way that we make use of those foundations.	Not quite. Different people develop different intuitions as a consequence of their culture, upbringing, and personal experiences. Each individual develops their own moral worldview using the six moral foundations. Our intuitions about morality reflect the unique way that we make use of those foundations.

Now, are you ready to find out about your foundations?

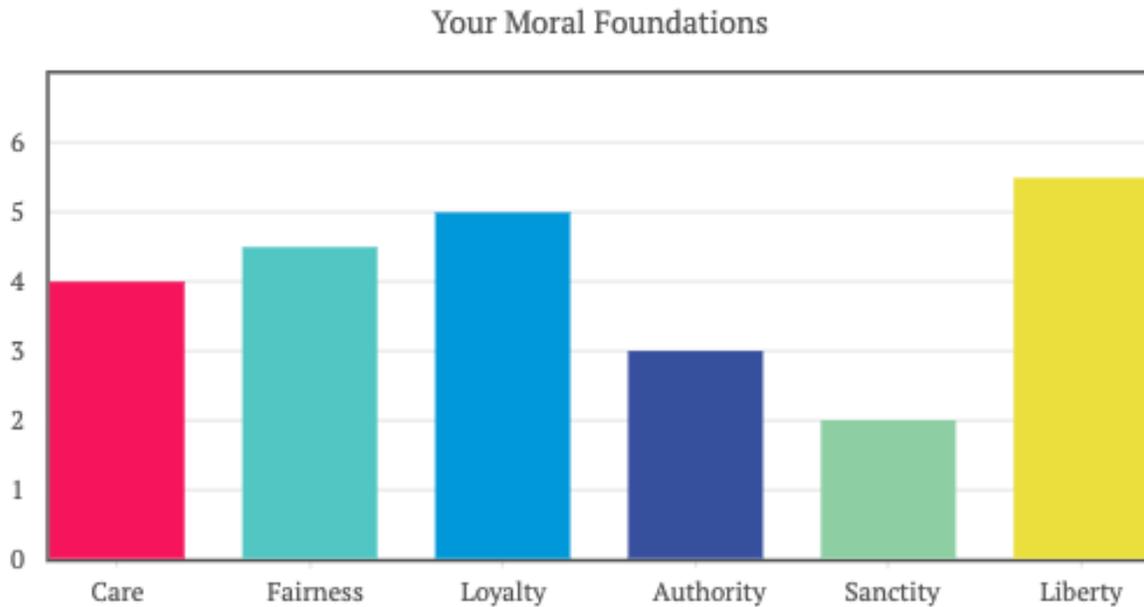
Yup!



Behind the scenes, our expert scientists have been working hard to identify your unique set of foundations, based on the answers you provided.

And...

[Sample results below. Learner's graph will vary depending on their answers to the quiz questions.]



A note about the accuracy of these results

These results are from a mini-version of the full Moral Foundations Questionnaire. They're meant to provide you with a taste of your moral worldview. If you'd like to get more accurate results, we've provided a link to the full questionnaire in your summary email.

If they scored high on "Care"...

Based on your prioritization of the Care foundation, you're likely very compassionate. You are probably very sensitive to the well-being of others and want to protect others from harm or suffering.

If they scored high on "Fairness"...

Based on your prioritization of the Fairness foundation, it's likely you care a lot about equal treatment of yourself and others. You're also likely to get upset when people are cheated, treated unfairly, or taken advantage of.

If they scored high on "Loyalty"...

Based on your prioritization of the Loyalty foundation, it's likely important to you to "be a team player" when it comes to groups that you are a part of, such as your family, community, or school. You may also feel a strong devotion to your country or religion.

If they scored high on "Authority"...

Based on your prioritization of the Authority foundation, it's likely important to you to respect elders, leaders, and others who are in positions of power. It might bother you when people are disobedient or rebellious against authority figures.

If they scored high on "Sanctity"...	Based on your prioritization of the Sanctity foundation, you might feel strongly that certain things are sacred — for instance, the body, life, or the institution of marriage. It's likely that you believe these things should be protected and treated with respect.
If they scored high on "Liberty"...	Based on your prioritization of the Liberty foundation, you likely care a lot about people having autonomy to make choices for themselves. You may care a lot about ensuring people's rights and freedoms.
If they didn't score high on any foundations...	Based on your responses, there doesn't seem to be any particular foundation that you emphasize very strongly.
If they scored equally on all foundations...	Based on your responses, you seem to value all of the foundations equally.

Do these results seem to match up with the way you would describe yourself?

Not at all

Slide to answer

Absolutely

If their answer was closer to "Not at all"

In what way did your results seem surprising or inaccurate?
 [Your answers might help us refine this quiz in the future!
 But you can leave this blank if you're not sure how to explain it.]

Enter text...

What's important to remember is that we all rely on each of the six foundations to some degree. Even if you tend to prioritize certain foundations more than others, you'll likely still rely on the other foundations in certain circumstances.

Let's dig a bit deeper to explore your moral foundations and where they might come from.

Let's do it!

Exploring your unique worldview

Remember, we're all born with the same moral taste buds. As we get older, our worldview evolves and is shaped by our unique life experiences.

For this next exercise, we'd like you to reflect on what aspects of your background and life experiences have informed your most important values.

Take a look at the following list of values associated with each of the moral foundations.

 <p>Care</p> <p>Kindness Empathy Peace Charity</p>	 <p>Fairness</p> <p>Equality Justice Honesty Integrity</p>	 <p>Liberty</p> <p>Freedom Autonomy Individualism Independence</p>	 <p>Loyalty</p> <p>Family Friendship Community Patriotism</p>	 <p>Authority</p> <p>Respect Tradition Duty Lawfulness</p>	 <p>Sanctity</p> <p>Spirituality Purity Faith Modesty</p>
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Identify 3 values from this list that are highly important to you.
 [Don't worry about selecting your exact "top three" values.
 All that matters is that the values you select mean a lot to you.]

Kindness	Honesty	Family	Tradition
Charity	Freedom	Patriotism	Spirituality
Justice	Independence	Respect	Faith

Thanks for sharing!

How do these values influence the way you live your life?

[For example, can you identify how your values affect your behavior, preferences, or interests?
 Or, have your values influenced the issues you care most about?]

Enter text...



To a large extent, our values are shaped by our heritage, communities, and personal experiences.

Take a moment to think about what might have led [the three values they selected above] to be particularly important to you.

Can you describe some ways that your unique life experiences influenced your values and the things you care about?

[Each of us could probably write a whole memoir about this, if we reflected on it long enough! Don't worry if you can't get to all of the details in one paragraph, or if you aren't sure that this is the very best response you could give.]

Enter text...

Thanks for sharing!



Now, imagine you had never had those particular experiences. How do you think your values and views might be different?

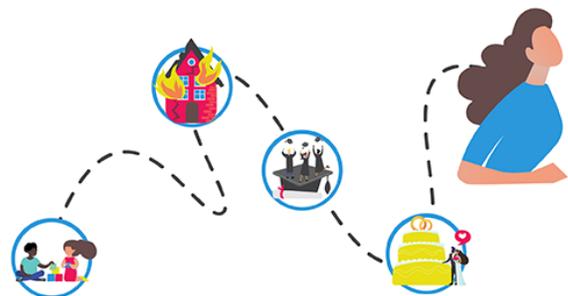
Enter text...

Thanks for sharing!

As you just saw in this exercise, we all have a unique series of experiences. These various experiences lead us to a personal, subjective understanding of the world around us.

These kinds of formative experiences can deeply impact our values and beliefs. It's important for us to remember that other people also have a unique worldview, shaped by their own particular life experiences.

In order to engage constructively with people who are different from us, we need to understand not just what they believe, but how they arrived at those beliefs in the first place.



One of your classmates may be protective of the individual freedoms that make up the Liberty foundation because her family members are refugees who fled an authoritarian government.

Another classmate might value Authority because his ethnic community taught him to be proud of the traditions that make up his heritage.

Yet another classmate might value Sanctity because her faith gave her stability and purpose while coping with her parents' divorce.



Everyone we meet has their own reasons for why they value what they value. Oftentimes, our values are shaped by aspects of our personal histories that are invisible to others.

We can understand others better when we look for the moral foundations beneath their views.

What do you mean?

When someone disagrees with us, we might be quick to assume the absolute worst about them. We often assume that they're badly intentioned, selfish, or ignorant.

But when other people disagree with us, even on issues we care extremely deeply about, it's probably not because they're evil. It might just be because their life experiences caused them to construct a moral worldview that relies on the moral foundations differently than we do.

They are likely equally sincere and heartfelt about their views and values. In a future lesson, we'll show you how you can reveal which moral foundations are influencing people's views on the issues they care about.



The important thing to remember is *all* of the foundations can be meaningful and important — in different ways for different people.

Not sure what we mean? Let's think back to the taste buds metaphor again.

Okay

You probably have friends or family members with very different taste palates than you.

Maybe you've been to a restaurant and your friend happily ate a dish that made you feel like your mouth was on fire. Or maybe you love stinky cheese, but your sibling can't stand it.



The thing is, our disagreements about values and politics emerge in much the same way. Just as the taste buds on our tongues might make us more sensitive to spicy food, our minds can be more or less sensitive to Fairness, Loyalty, or any of the other moral foundations.

How are you feeling about all of this?	
I think I get it	I don't buy it
Great! Obviously, this isn't a perfect metaphor. Of course, our judgments about food aren't equivalent to our judgments about ethics.	Sure, it's not a perfect metaphor. Of course, our judgments about food aren't equivalent to our judgments about ethics.
A Thanksgiving dinner debate about gun control will probably get way more heated than a debate about how to season the turkey.	A Thanksgiving dinner debate about gun control will probably get way more heated than a debate about how to season the turkey.



What is true regarding both food and morality, though, is that each of us is sensitive to different things.

And just as multiple people can have different, equally valid perspectives on whether a restaurant serves good food, they can have different, equally valid perspectives on ethical issues, too.

Are you saying that all moral worldviews are equally valid?

Moral relativism vs. moral pluralism

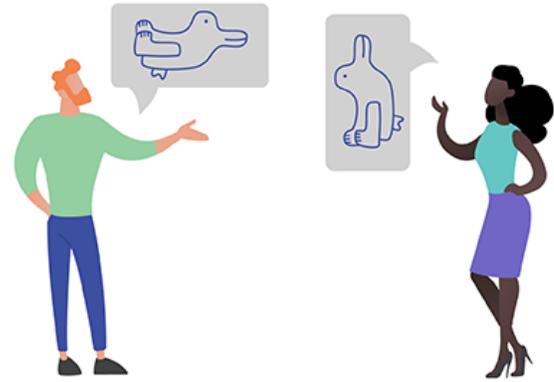
Great question! We want to be clear that we are not saying that all beliefs and worldviews are equal. Unfortunately, some beliefs and worldviews truly are harmful, cruel, or hateful.

We are not advocating for **moral relativism**: the view that all moral worldviews are equally valid. This outlook can be used to justify moral worldviews that promote violence, hatred, and suffering.

Instead, we're advocating for the idea of **moral pluralism**: the belief that there isn't only one true morality for all people, in all times, and places.

Pluralism means that there are many acceptable moral worldviews out there. Though that doesn't mean that every worldview is acceptable.

The important thing to keep in mind is that it's possible to have a different moral worldview from someone else, without one person being right and the other being wrong. Two people can disagree about a certain issue while both having valid positions.



To summarize, which is a more accurate definition of moral pluralism?	
Different cultures can have different views of morality without either being wrong	People who disagree with my view of morality are wrong
	
Exactly!	Not quite. The idea of moral pluralism is that different cultures can have different views of morality without either being objectively right or wrong.

It may not be intuitive to think in this way off the bat. Remember, we're all prone to *naïve realism* — believing that we see things as they really are.

Our elephant forms instant gut reactions about what we believe is right or wrong based on our particular moral foundations. As a result, it can be hard to accept that others could be right even when they see things differently.

But before passing judgment on people, we should take the time to examine the other person's worldview and consider the moral foundations that underlie it. We might arrive at a very different understanding than what we got from our initial impression.

But what about people and movements that are legitimately bad?

That's a great question. As we mentioned, we are not making the case that all worldviews, beliefs, and ideas are correct. Some are harmful and inaccurate, and some people are acting in bad faith. We're going to dig into this topic in a lot more detail in a future lesson. We'll help you to hone your judgment about whether someone is acting in good or bad faith, and when you might want to draw the line on having a conversation with them.

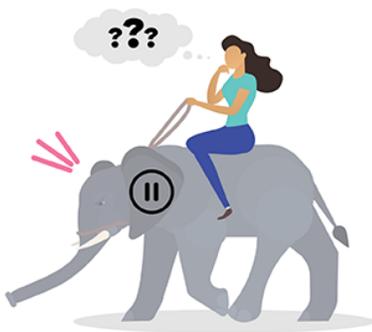
There are three important takeaways we can learn from the moral foundations.

What are they?

Takeaways

Takeaway 1. Because we all begin with the same moral foundations in our minds, we each have the potential to form many different moral worldviews.

Takeaway 2. Since all worldviews stem from the same moral foundations, we all have the capacity to step outside of our own moral worldview and try to understand the worldviews of others. Sometimes, we might even find out that we have more in common than we thought.



Takeaway 3. People who disagree with you are usually just as well-intentioned, sincere, and genuine about their beliefs as you are.

Rather than assuming the worst of others, we should try to give people the benefit of the doubt before casting judgment. Hit pause on your elephant to give your rider a chance to evaluate things from a more objective standpoint.

To wrap up, let's learn how we can apply the insights from this lesson to our everyday lives. For that, let's learn a...life hack!

Let's do it!



Life Hack

Remember the life hack from our last lesson? This time, you'll try out Taking the Reins again, but with a new twist.

The next time you find yourself having a "Yanny/Laurel" moment — where you have one opinion about what's right and can't understand how someone else could possibly have a different one — try this:

Step 1. Detect when your elephant is taking charge

Here are some warning signs this might be happening:

You feel:

- Flashes of deep emotion
- Your heart starts to beat faster
- Your body starts to tense up

You think extreme things like:

- "This is obviously right (or obviously wrong)"
- "Everyone agrees that..."
- "There's only one possible way to think about this"



Step 2. Pause to slow down

Take a few breaths. This calms down your elephant, so your rider can regain control.



Step 3. Correct your elephant's missteps

You can do this by asking yourself tough questions, like:

- "What moral foundations am I using to decide whether this is right or wrong?"
- "What moral foundations are underlying the other person's position?"
- "Can I find a way to understand where the other person is coming from, even if I disagree with their position?"



Got it

Self-Reflection

Before we wrap up, let's do some brief self-reflection.

What's the key takeaway you learned from this lesson?



In the upcoming week, how will you implement this key takeaway in your life?



That's it for Lesson 2!

We'll send you a summary of the material in this lesson in 24 hours.

We'll show you how becoming more intellectually humble can improve your decision-making, relationships, and happiness. It even allows us to adopt a healthier and more productive approach to disagreements!