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# Protected Values and Other Types of Values

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**Abstract:** Protected values (PVs) are values protected from trade-offs with other values. They are absolute in this sense. People hold these values even when they do not necessarily abide by them in their behavior. I suggest that most of these values are a subset of deontological rules, defined by their absoluteness. Their origin may be understood by looking at the origin of deontological rules more generally, which includes religious (hence sacred) values among others. But PVs are usually maintained by lack of reflection of the sort that would see counterexamples to their absoluteness. PVs often have other characteristics that would lead to classification into other types of values: they are often moralistic (imposed on others regardless of the willingness of others to accept them); they are about morality rather than convention and thus independent of authority or social consensus; and they often concern second-order preferences (values for values). Especially in combination with these other properties, PVs can be harmful in the domain of politics. Education in the sort of reflection that would lead people to question them could improve the political situation around the world.

**Keywords:** Protected values, religious values, utilitarianism, moralistic attitudes, in-group parochialism

## 1 Introduction

Values, as I use the term, are the criteria by which we evaluate states of affairs and the choices that lead to them. When making decisions, we often confront trade-offs between values, such as those concerned with self-interest versus and those concerned with doing the right thing. Other terms used for the same idea are ‘goals’ (used mostly to avoid the awkwardness of saying ‘achieve a value’) and ‘attributes’ (in the context of formal decision analysis, where each attribute is assigned a weight representing its value). Values are about how people think, not what they express in their behavior. Of course, people try (to varying extents) to act consistently with their values.

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In this paper, I present a loose classification of values that includes and re-describes most values that are often called ‘sacred’, with emphasis on the role of values in politics. I briefly discuss the relation of these values to morality and citizenship.

## 2 Protected Values

Baron and Spranca (1997) were concerned about the possible existence of values that seem to be absolute. Our concern started with attempts to measure values for the purpose of public decision making. In principle it might be possible to use public values as an input to such decisions in a utilitarian fashion. We would measure the values of the people and aggregate them so as to determine which of two policies was superior in the achievement of everyone’s goals. A classic example is whether people are willing to pay the extra cost of oil and gasoline that would result from the use of double-hulled tankers designed to prevent oil spills of the sort that fouled Prince William Sound in 1989. Attempts to apply values to this question often involved trade-offs, such as that between protecting the natural environment and the cost of fuel. Many people asked questions like this refused to answer. They said that the environment was an absolute value, that they would in principle be willing to pay any amount to protect it, and (in particular) that they would not accept any amount of money in return for allowing the environment to be spoiled. If we take these sorts of answers at face value, it would seem that they assign infinite weight to the environment. If we aggregate their values with those of others who are willing to make trade-offs, the values of others have no effect: when infinity is averaged with anything else, the result is still infinity.

We thus thought of examining values that were ‘protected’ from trade-offs in this way. Perhaps ‘absolute values’ would have been a better term. Drafts of our paper were titled ‘Sacred values’, but Mark Spranca convinced me that many of these values need not have anything to do with religion, unless you say that (for example) environmentalism is a religion, which seems like a stretch. We defined protected values as “yes” answers to the following two questions, for each issue examined: “This should be prohibited no matter how great the benefits from allowing it.”; “If this is happening now, no more should be allowed no matter how great the benefits from allowing it.”

We found a number of these values that were widely endorsed, and others that were endorsed less widely. For example, 83% of our sample said that “Destruction of natural forests by human activity, resulting in the extinction of plant and animal species forever” should not be allowed, no matter how great the ben-

efits. Other examples were raising a normal child's IQ with drugs (56%), forced abortion for population control (67%), and assisted suicide (28%). Note that the last example was politically controversial (as were others we asked about), with many people on the other side. Note also that people may violate their own values in their behavior (e.g., participating in activities that lead to the destruction of forests), but this does not mean that they do not endorse the value; presumably they would feel guilty if they paid attention to what they were doing. Note also that some of these values are probably related to religion, hence 'sacred' in a literal sense. I shall discuss this possible link later.

People who held these values tended to agree that "It is equally wrong to allow some of this to happen and to allow twice as much to happen. The amount doesn't matter." In one condition, we told subjects to answer the questions about absoluteness, amount, etc., for our list of values without indicating which values they were rating, so that their ratings were completely private. (We said we were interested only in the relations among them.) The overall endorsement of protected values (PVs) remained roughly the same, which led us to conclude that these apparent values were not the result of posturing for the sake of public consumption.

We also proposed, but did not clearly test, the possibility that PVs were largely prohibitions of acts rather than prohibitions of omissions (hence injunctions to act regardless of the cost). Ritov and Baron (1999) found that the tendency to hold PVs was correlated with the willingness to tolerate large harms from omission in order to avoid smaller harms from action, a willingness that we termed 'omission bias'. Baron and Ritov (2009) went further along this line of reasoning. We pointed out that you can behave consistently with most PVs against action, but not with PVs against omission, especially if you have more than one of the latter (thus creating conflicting absolute duties). And, indeed, when we asked explicitly about the two kinds of PVs for the same outcomes, people were much more likely to endorse action PVs than omission PVs (15% vs. 8% over all items).

We were surprised that subjects did endorse omission PVs to some extent. How is it possible to think that failing to prevent an abortion, or the loss of an endangered species, is an absolute requirement? You can spend your whole life doing nothing else but trying to prevent abortions. As I will suggest shortly, our subjects just did not think these questions through. Their answers were unreflective. Yet another explanation is that people would endorse a form of 'possibilism', namely, the idea that our decision making should concern only options that are possible for us, and that the option of spending every minute on a single project is not a possible option, it is not in the set of options that anyone can realistically

consider.<sup>1</sup> Thus, a duty to prevent abortions, in practice, means a duty that exists only when the opportunity to exercise it is presented. The opportunity need not be sought out.

PVs seem to arise from rules, the sorts of rules that constitute most versions of deontological morality. Thus, the origin of PVs in history and in individual development may be tied up with the origin of deontology in general. Note, however, that deontological moral rules are not typically understood as absolute; many are *prima facie* obligations, i.e., considerations that must be considered but may be traded off with other considerations (Ross 1930). When people come to think of such rules as absolute, they may simply fail to reflect on the kinds of conflicts that may arise.

### 3 PVs and Reflection

Baron and Leshner (2000) suggested that PVs were “strong opinions, weakly held” (193). Specifically, they are held unreflectively. When we asked subjects to think of counterexamples in which they thought the benefits of violating a PV would justify the violations, most subjects could think of them in a few seconds, despite having just said that the violation was wrong regardless of its benefits. In a few cases, they could not think of counterexamples, but they might be able to accept them if they were offered.<sup>2</sup> We concluded that most PVs were ‘weakly held’ because they had not been subjected to this sort of reflection. When they were subjected to it, they usually yielded with little resistance (at least for the moment).

The type of reflection at issue is what I have called “actively open-minded thinking” (AOT; Baron 1993; 2008; Baron/Gürçay/Metz in press). Following many others, I argued that the only reliable way to reach better conclusions through thinking is to subject pet conclusions to possible criticism, not just by being open to it but also by searching actively for alternative conclusions and arguments against the favored one. Thus, if you think you favor an absolute rule, you should try to think of reasons why it should not be absolute. The conclusions we found

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<sup>1</sup> The same argument can be used to deflect several objections to utilitarianism, taking the form of pointing out that it leads to infinite obligations, or obligations to do things that we just could not do, like killing ourselves or our children for the benefit of others.

<sup>2</sup> For example, one of the strongest PVs in later studies was the prohibition of cloning humans for reproduction. A possible counterexample is this: The world’s atmosphere has just been temporarily polluted with a toxin that has destroyed the function of human sperm and has thus prevented all normal reproduction for the present generation. The only way to create the next generation, which will not be affected, is by mass cloning of those now alive.

concerning counterexamples suggest that, indeed, many people who held PVs were not searching for such criticisms, and it wasn't usually because they were unable to think of them if they tried.

Note that AOT is one type of reflection. It should be distinguished from reflection that takes the form of bolstering a pet conclusion, or reflection that involves choosing a more systematic approach to answering some question (Baron/Gürçay/Metz in press). The choice of a systematic approach may account for results from many studies showing that people who strive for accuracy in problem solving, even at the expense of speed, perform better in a variety of tasks. Such concern for accuracy is often measured with tricky problems such as valid syllogisms with conclusions that are empirically false. People who do well at this task also take longer. Although AOT may involve taking longer for the sake of accuracy, the reverse is not necessarily true. Accuracy in problem solving, of the sort that results from the use of a systematic procedure, need not require AOT. Measures of AOT correlate more highly with utilitarian moral judgment than do problem-solving measures (Baron/Scott/Fincher/Metz 2015), and also with liberal/progressive political ideology in Americans (Baron in press a).

To ask whether AOT is negatively correlated with PVs, I examined data from several studies completed for other purposes.<sup>3</sup> The measure of AOT was indirect; it asked people about their beliefs about the nature of good thinking.<sup>4</sup> Previous studies (Baron 1993; Baron et al. in press) had found that these beliefs were correlated with more direct measures of thinking itself, but the correlations were moderate. And these studies were done as many as 7 years apart, on the same subjects, who were members of a panel that did various studies (mostly U.S. adults, with a majority of women). Despite these difficulties, the (Pearson) correlation between the AOT score and the tendency to endorse PVs was  $-.24$  ( $p = .017$ , two tailed).<sup>5</sup> This result supports the conclusion that PVs are the result of lack of actively open-minded reflection on the question of whether rules should be considered absolute.

Note that people may still 'reflect' on their values by bolstering them. In "belief overkill" (Baron 2009), people seem to manipulate their beliefs so that all

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3 The studies and data are all in my web site: <http://www.sas.upenn.edu/~baron>. The numbers are pv2 and pv3 for the PVs (located under pv and ritov) and mk4, obd5, mfl4, bok1, args1a, args1b, args2c, args2f, args4, args5, args6, args7, args8, args9 (under bg, mfl, old, crt) for AOT.

4 Typical items, answered on a five-point scale of agree/disagree, were: "Allowing oneself to be convinced by an opposing argument is a sign of good character", and "Changing your mind is a sign of weakness" (reverse scored). The scale is at [http://www.sjdm.org/dmidi/Actively\\_Open-Minded\\_Thinking\\_Beliefs.html](http://www.sjdm.org/dmidi/Actively_Open-Minded_Thinking_Beliefs.html).

5 Different subjects did different versions of each questionnaire in different studies. When the subject did it more than once, the average of all scores was used.

them point in the same direction on some matter of policy. For example, those who oppose rights for homosexuals also tend to believe that it is ‘curable’, so that those who remain homosexual are at fault for avoiding the cure. When beliefs are held in the face of considerable counter-evidence, just because they fit with other beliefs, people most likely have engaged in active reasoning to criticize that potential counter-evidence (as argued by Lord/Ross/Lepper 1979), but this sort of reflection is the opposite of AOT.

## 4 Origins of Moral Rules

PVs take the form of rules that regulate behavior. They usually concern properties of behavior other than its consequences. They are thus deontological to this extent (Baron/Ritov 2009). Although the effort to follow deontological rules usually leads to better consequences, we are supposed to follow them even when they clearly do not. In this regard, their existence is somewhat puzzling. It is easy to see how cultures and individuals could come to endorse social norms (Bicchieri 2006) that promote good outcomes for everyone. But how could we become so attached to rules that often lead to worse outcomes? Thus, the origins of PVs are tied together with the origin of deontological rules in general. If we can understand where rules come from, we might also be in a better position to understand the large individual differences that exist in both utilitarian judgments and PVs.

I have suggested (Baron 2011; in press b) that moral rules can be understood as arising in the course of individual development and, in an almost parallel fashion, over the course of cultural history. Culture is relevant to individual development because children learn it, and they are limited somewhat by its limitations. Moreover, cultural change does not typically replace old ways of thinking; these continue to exist alongside the new ones, creating a source of individual differences.

The origin of deontology may lie in the terms and concepts of law (Baron 2011), such as specifying what is forbidden, permitted or required (as a duty). One way in which this happens is that, in the course of development, children learn first about the internal law of the family, the rules that govern children’s behavior in some households. For toddlers, most of these rules are prohibitions, as toddlers do not yet have duties or responsibilities. This is a possible origin of the omission bias. As children get older, they transfer this concept of rules to other sources of rule making, such as schools, and the law of the state. If and when they come to think about morality as distinct from law, it is natural to transfer the *form* of legal

concepts (i.e., rules about what is forbidden, permitted or required) to this new domain.

A similar developmental process may have occurred throughout the evolution of culture, as argued in detail by Hallpike (2004). It seems likely that the state as we know it began largely with the growth of cities, hence large populations of people who did not know each other personally. State control and the promulgation of laws was further abetted by the invention of writing (Mullins/Whitehouse/Atkinson 2013). Laws were codified in documents, most of which did not survive, famous exceptions being the Code of Hammurabi, and parts of the Old Testament. Religious and civil law were not distinguished. The concept of morality, as distinct from law, was not yet part of the common culture. Thus, many of these rules were religious rules and would be thought of as sacred, in the sense of being part of a larger set of beliefs and prescriptions that were interrelated and that involved supernatural entities.

Laws (before the existence of lawyers) should be, and were, easy to understand and remember. This is true for toddlers and early citizens alike. Such laws did not list possible exceptions, and it would have been difficult to try. They were thus simple and categorical, much like the PVs we have examined. Most exceptions that people can think of, when they think about simple rules, are cases in which the rule makes consequences worse, and it is difficult to foresee many of them.

The concept of morality as distinct from law and custom emerged fully only with the beginnings of philosophical reflection, which, to my knowledge has been done systematically only in the last 3,000 years of human existence. In research on moral judgment, we assume that our subjects understand this concept, as we ask ‘moral’ questions and try to make our subjects understand that we want moral answers; we are not testing knowledge of law or custom. Yet, as Hallpike points out, older forms of reasoning continue to exist even while they are understood and explained in a new framework.

It is thus natural for people to think of morality as a kind of law that transcends the law of nations or religions but still has the form of law, namely, rules about what is permitted, forbidden, or required. That is, I suggest, the bases of deontology. Even the writing of some moral philosophers is difficult to distinguish from that of appellate judges. They are trying to write rules that will work, analogous to rules of the law but more general, yet still rules.

Utilitarian thinking (as it exists in those who do not get it from studying the writings of philosophers) may arise from deeper AOT-reflection (reflection of the AOT type) on questions of purpose. Why should we adopt these rules? Why follow them when they seem to make things worse? How can we justify them? Some people may arrive at the idea that they are justified by the fact that they (usually)

produce better outcomes for everyone, so they are thus well suited serve as social norms. Yet, the simplest rule of all is perhaps “Try to choose in a way that yields the best outcomes on the whole”.

Utilitarian thinking of this sort may arise naturally in the course of individual development (Baron 1990). In this form, it may have existed in parallel with deontology throughout human history. Children are often taught morality through questions like, “How would you feel if someone did that to you?” Such perspective taking is consistent with judgments based on consequences, although full consideration of consequences for everyone may require imagining how various other people are affected and trying to balance competing effects. Thus, we find substantial individual differences in utilitarian thinking depending, perhaps, on how people learned morality in the first place, even in the complete absence of any formal education in moral philosophy (Baron in press b). Those who learned through such perspective taking could become impatient with rigid rules that seem to them to ignore, too often, the perspectives of those affected.

The role of religion today is complicated, because there are many religions with many different values that might be called sacred. However, parts of Christianity and Islam, at least, seem to attempt to maintain a view that explicitly opposes AOT and encourages the maintenance of deontological rules. Jared Piazza and his collaborators (Piazza 2012; Piazza/Landy 2013; Piazza/Sousa 2014) found that consequentialist and utilitarian judgments were negatively correlated not only with political conservatism and religiosity but, especially, with a belief in “divine command theory”, the claim that people are incapable of understanding or questioning God’s moral pronouncements and should not try to do so. Baron et al. (2015) found that a measure of belief in this theory was strongly negatively correlated with a self-report AOT scale and with utilitarian moral judgment. Some cultures (or sub-cultures) teach, from childhood up, that excessive thinking, curiosity, and questioning are wrong and should be discouraged. In sum, to the extent to which PVs are related to deontological rules, it seems that some religious cultures inculcate these rules in their followers and actively discourage them from questioning.

## 5 Moralistic Values and Second-order Preferences

PVs as I have defined them are a particular sort of value that might be called sacred. Their defining property is their absoluteness. In politics, PVs lead their holders to advocate extreme positions that seem excessive to those who are more AOT-reflective, e.g., a ban on abortion even when it saves the life of the mother or even



**Table 1:** Types of values.

Object	Dependence on others	Order	Examples
Self	Independent (Self-serving)	First Second	Sexual preferences Wanting to have heterosexual preferences
	Dependent (Altruistic)	First Second	Wanting to take action for homosexual rights Wanting to be the sort of person who wants to take action for others' rights
Other	Independent (Moralistic)	First	Wanting homosexuals to behave like heterosexuals
		Second	Wanting homosexuals to change their sexual preferences
	Dependent (Moral)	First	Heterosexuals wanting homosexuals to satisfy their preferences
		Second	Wanting others to have consistent first- and second-order sexual preferences

when the fetus will die anyway. Other kinds of values affect politics in similar ways.

Moralistic values (Baron 2003; Promberger/Baron 2014) are those that people want to impose on others, even when the others do not accept these values and do not benefit from the imposition. The imposition of alien values without any benefit thus makes the situation worse from a utilitarian point of view. Many moralistic values, but not all, arise from religion. They include such values as opposition to homosexuality, or (for a secular example) fashion and taste in dress or decor.

We can classify values in general as applying to the evaluation of self or others, as dependent or independent of the values (goals) of others, and as concerning behavior or values themselves (*table 1*). The four main categories are Self-serving, Altruistic, Moralistic, and Moral. Self-regarding values are those for one-self. These can include altruistic values. In utility terms, I can increase my own utility by buying things for myself or for others, or giving to charity. And to some extent the self-benefit of these things is why I do them. Note that true altruism means taking other people's values into account; hence, it is dependent on their values. If I buy someone a present that I would like, knowing that the recipient does not like it at all, this is not altruism.

By contrast with self-serving values, other-regarding values are the values that I have for what others do or what they want. I act on these values by advocating them in various ways, through sanctions I impose (such as shunning people of whom I disapprove), gossip, or political action. These are the kind of values that maintain social norms, because we act on them in various ways.

These values can also be dependent or independent of the values of others. The ones that are dependent are, in a sense, a social expression of altruism. When we act to promote these values, we are acting to promote morality, at least in the utilitarian sense of the term.

The values that are independent of the values of others are moralistic.<sup>6</sup> They represent our attempts to impose certain values on others, whether the others like it or not. In utilitarian terms, when these values conflict with the values of others, their imposition can make people worse off. Some deontological rules, when followed, fall into this category, such as those arising from evangelistic religions.<sup>7</sup> Beyond evangelism, arguably, some opponents of abortion or ‘artificial birth control’ are acting out of a rule that comes from their own religion, yet trying to impose the rule on everyone without necessarily caring whether the others come to accept their religion or not.

Baron (2003) reports evidence suggesting that moralistic values exist, and that many PVs turn out to be moralistic. For example, in one study, subjects were asked about whether certain behavior should be allowed, such as ‘testing a fetus for IQ genes and aborting it if its expected IQ is below average’. Subjects were classified as having a PV if they agreed that ‘This should be banned no matter how great the need’, even if the consequences of allowing it were better. The value was counted as moralistic if they still wanted it banned ‘if almost everyone in a nation thought that the behavior should be allowed’.

Values may also be classified in terms of whether they are first-order or second-order preferences. The latter are preferences for preferences. For example, opponents of homosexuality can oppose just the behavior, or, also, the desires that lead to the behavior. Cohen and Rozin (2001) find that people of different religions differ in their attitudes toward these. Jews tend to think that a man who desires to have sex with young children but restrains his desire is no more blameworthy than someone who doesn’t have the desire, but some Christians feel that the desire itself is morally wrong.

Promberger and Baron (2014) report other evidence that such preferences exist, are somewhat independent of first-order preferences, and influence attitudes toward public policies. For example, when subjects were asked about a policy legalizing gay marriage (the study being done before it was legalized in the U.S.), they usually wanted other people to *like* the same thing that they did, e.g., like

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<sup>6</sup> Sen 1970 uses the term ‘nosy preferences’ for a similar idea.

<sup>7</sup> Many religious rules apply only to those who accept the religion, hence do not involve attempts to impose them on others. Traditional Judaism requires observing the sabbath but holds that gentiles do not have this obligation; hence the custom of the ‘shabbas goy’, the gentile who is hired to do the work that Jews must not do themselves.

the policy if they liked it. When they were asked how they would feel about the policy as a function of what actually happened to other people's preferences as a result of adoption of the policy, they favored their choice more if others came to feel as they did, and less if others did not. Thus, the effect of a policy on second-order preferences was part of liking or disliking the policy itself. If you oppose gay marriage then you will look more favorably on a policy that leads to a shift in others' preferences toward opposition. Such second-order preferences may be particularly relevant with respect to policies that lead to the loss of environmental amenities, such as open spaces, that people now enjoy. People of the future may not value these amenities simply out of ignorance of their possible existence. We do not know whether these second-order preferences are absolute (like PVs), although it seems likely that they are when the first-order preferences are absolute.

## 6 Morality vs. Convention

Elliot Turiel (1983; 1989; 2002) argued that apparently moral judgments were often judgments of social convention. A child might say that it is wrong for a boy to wear a skirt to school, but the same child would admit that it would not be wrong if everyone thought it was perfectly fine, or that it would not be wrong if some authority, such as a teacher, said that it was fine. Truly moral judgments would hold independently of authority and independently of any social consensus, hence generalizable to all places and times. Some Catholics think that artificial birth control is wrong despite the social consensus around them saying that it is even desirable, and some would say that it would still be wrong even if the Pope said it was not wrong. This would be a truly moral principle.

Baron and Spranca (1997, table 2) found that PVs were usually seen as moral in this sense. Most subjects who saw prohibitions as absolute also answered positively to 'This would be wrong even in a country where everyone thought it was not wrong' and 'People have an obligation to try to stop this even if they think they do not'. And the proportion of responses to these items was considerably lower when the subject was opposed to the policy in question but did not answer these questions affirmatively (and of course much lower still when the subject was not opposed to the policy at all). Thus, people think of their PVs as independent of authority and social consensus, hence truly moral. A value of this sort is consistent with efforts to change the behavior and values of others. Such efforts might be seen as unjustified intrusions in the case of values that were not seen as moral in this sense.

## 7 Effect on Politics

What values are absolute, permitting no exception, moralistic, and held without regard to the opinions of others, people feel morally obliged to advance these values in the political domain. Ideally, these values should be imposed on the world or at least everyone in a modern, diverse nation like the United States. Failing that, at least like-minded people could join together in an authoritarian state that would enforce a particular creed, such as the caliphate now sought by some in the Middle East.

PVs like these become particularly relevant when they are combined with ‘parochialism’, i.e., a bias toward the interests of an in-group that exists even when the harm to an out-group exceeds the benefit to the in-group, so that the net effect is negative. Nationalism (perhaps as distinct from patriotism) often takes this form. Baron (2012, Experiment 4a) found that certain parochial values were also protected and moralistic, for some people. For example, given the action such as “Private universities in the United States accept foreign students while rejecting some U.S. students who are almost as well qualified” or “[...] give financial aid to foreign students while denying it to some U.S. students who are almost as needy”, some U.S. subjects (26% and 16%, respectively) thought that the action should be banned regardless of its benefits, no matter how great they were.

Parochial values may also result from a lack of AOT-reflection, although I have no direct evidence of this. Parochial views are subject to questions about justification. Just as slavery of blacks and suppression of women have given way in much of the world, nationalism and other forms of parochialism seem similarly arbitrary. I am not saying that all in-group preferences would or should disappear with sufficient AOT-reflection. For example, some of these preferences arise from a socially supported distribution of responsibility in which local governments (including national governments as distinct from world government) are responsible for decisions with mostly local consequences; such a system is more efficient for some decisions. However, many parochial preferences could not be so easily justified, when the needs of outsiders are considered.

When people impose unreflective beliefs and values on others through their political behavior, they make others worse off, for reasons that, at least for the others, have no justification in terms of compensating benefits for anyone, or in any other terms. Such behavior is thus immoral in this sense. It is a problem. The solution to this problem need not lie in the application of crude incentives such as punishment. Rather, we have a political responsibility to support educational efforts to teach better thinking. Students in school should learn that PVs can be questioned by thinking of counterexamples. And they should at least consider

when and why we might be justified in imposing values on others, paternalistically, when they do not accept these values.

## 8 Conclusion

I have summarized most of the evidence for the existence of explicitly endorsed moral values that are thought of as protected from trade-offs with other values, hence absolute. These values are present in people's thinking, not necessarily their behavior. Yet thinking itself influences behavior, especially in the political sphere, where much behavior is the expression of conclusions reached by thought, e.g., pulling a lever in a voting machine.

Most of these values yield fairly easily to challenges that result from a person's own thinking, when this thinking is actively open-minded, hence searching for counter-arguments as well as supporting arguments. They may also yield to challenges from arguments posed by another person, but this has not been tested. Thus, they are maintained because they are not challenged. Still, they must come from somewhere. I suggested that they result from carry-over from the form of simple legal or household rules to moral judgments, both in the course of human history and in the course of individual cognitive development.

The rules of interest are truly moral. They are seen as applying regardless of the opinions or preferences of others. Such a willingness to ignore the opinions of others leads people to try to impose these rules on others, regardless of their preferences. This effort can be harmful when the rules conflict with what is truly good for other people. They thus contribute to the sort of dysfunctional politics that we see in much of the world today.

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