

## HOW TO REFORM MORAL EDUCATION SO THAT IT CEASES TO BE THE PRIMARY CAUSE OF INEQUITY AND SOCIAL INJUSTICE

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**Abstract:** Evaluativism is a substantially subconscious bias which causes us to disregard the perspectives of others whose genes lead them to opposing moral positions. We will discuss scientific evidence that evaluativism stunts moral learning, is a leading cause of inequity and social injustice, and is reinforced primarily (although perhaps unintentionally) by moral education. Rather than suspend moral education until we can distinguish those moral disagreements which actually do stem from error and ignorance from those which stem from valuable evaluative diversity, this paper considers more practical reforms.

**Keywords:** Evaluativism, diversity, reform

*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work. – Ephesians 4:14-16 (NIV)*

This paper offers: 1. Evidence that moral education is a primary cause of social injustice and inequity, and 2. Practical reforms that could be made to moral education so that it may cease to be such a cause. This paper will start, however, by reviewing the concepts of evaluative diversity and evaluativism, since its general argument will be that moral education, in its current form, institutionalizes evaluativism, much as slavery institutionalized racism.

Evaluative diversity, sometimes called "moral diversity," is familiar to professional moral educators. We are generally aware of the distinctions between consequentialism, deontology, and virtue or role ethics. However, moral educators may misunderstand the origins and functions of evaluative diversity. Some believe evaluative types are mere theories, of which one is most correct. Some believe they are developmental stages, of which one is most mature. A third explanation for the origins and function of evaluative diversity runs

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parallel to the explanation for the diverse types of cells found in our bodies: The body as a whole is able to accomplish more by specializing into diverse parts. Rather than privilege one type over the others, this third explanation posits interdependence between the specialties (Dean, 2012; Hong & Page 2001; Santos-Lang, 2014a; Weisberg & Muldoon, 2009).

The evolutionary inevitability of specialization can be recognized by noting that rate of social evolution is limited by at least four distinct factors:

1. Rate at which novel configurations are produced
2. Selection pressure privileging better configurations
3. Fidelity with which proven configurations are reproduced
4. Network localization

A society which evolved specializations such that different individuals are optimized for different factors would out-compete other societies because it would evolve more quickly. Evidence of physiological predispositions towards different moral sensibilities suggests that such specialization has already begun among humans (Alford, Funk & Hibbing, 2005; Bouchard & McGue, 2003). At present, some people may seem to shift evaluative specializations, much as sequential hermaphrodites shift sex, while other people manifest inflexible classifications like “Aspie,” “die-hard conservative,” “Highly Sensitive Person (HSP),” or “social gadfly.” However, we should expect social advance to reduce evaluative hermaphroditism and to increase the number of specialties. Interdependence inevitably evolves.

The four specializations described above form the GRIN model (Santos-Lang, 2014a):

- **Gadfly** (novel configurations) pragmatic ethics (creativity)
- **Relational** (network localization) virtue or role ethics (empathy)
- **Institutional** (fidelity of reproduction) deontology (self-control)
- **Negotiator** (selection pressure) consequentialism (prudence)

These types were defined in terms of computer algorithm components (Santos-Lang, 2014b), then a psychological instrument called the GRINSQ was created to measure their manifestation in humans (Santos-Lang, 2014c). The GRINSQ was validated, and the bi-modal distributions it produced confirmed that humans already specialize into at least these four types. Furthermore, statistical relationships to political orientations, personality, and vocation

implied that GRIN specialization helps explain why we divide into the personalities, political parties, and vocations that we do.

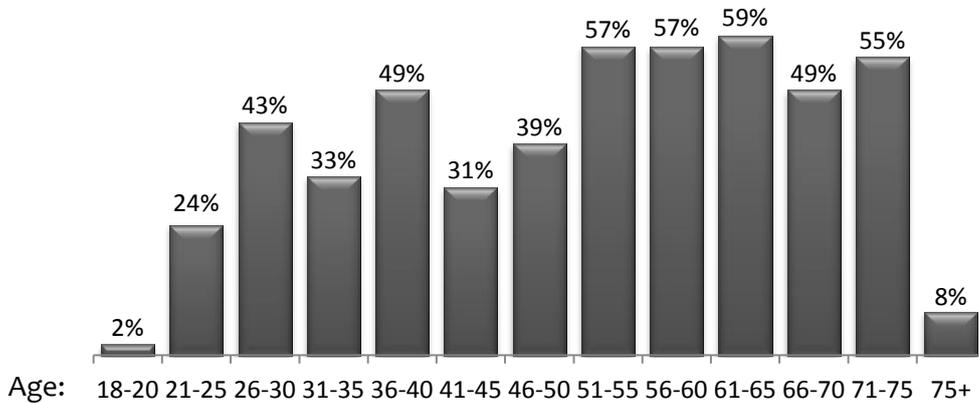
The validation study also found that people of certain GRIN specializations are far more likely to be accused of a crime or other serious betrayal of trust. A justice system which discriminates against genes associated with race or evaluative type may be practical, but would be unjust. The likelihood that modern justice systems have this nature raises the importance of examining evaluativism in detail.

Rather than appreciate our GRIN diversity, we seem to discriminate against people who do not share our own evaluative type. Like the word "racism", the word "evaluativism" refers both to a kind of discrimination and to the philosophical theory offered to justify it. In summary, the theory claims that disagreements stemming from evaluative diversity cannot be properly resolved, so we will produce greater value by interacting more with people who share our own evaluative dispositions (Field, 2000). Note that our earlier explanation for why the evolution of specialization is inevitable rejects the assumption that disagreements should be resolved.

First off, the theory of evaluativism is testable, and the experiments thus far show that segregation reduces both conflict and innovation. Segregated design teams win only half as much (Wilde, 1997; Wilde, 2008). Secondly, the bias supposedly justified by the theory of evaluativism typically manifests subconsciously. The same techniques that are used to demonstrate subconscious racist biases demonstrate subconscious evaluative biases, and demonstrate that our evaluative biases impact us even more than our racist biases (Haidt, Rosenberg & Hom 2003; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). As one example, recent research found that judgments of scholarship applications are racist 73% of the time and evaluativistic 80% of the time. The theory of evaluativism certainly does not justify this discrimination—the criteria for awarding the scholarship were supposed to be neither racist nor evaluativistic—and evaluativism may typically manifest as such out-of-control instinct.

GRIN-type is classified as an invisible stigmatized identity because some people can hide it to avoid oppression. *Lee Daniels' The Butler* describes two examples: Cecil felt pressure to disguise his evaluative type at work, thus giving his employers the impression that he shared their evaluations. In Cecil's family, the power roles reversed—Cecil could disclose his evaluative identity at home, but his son, Louis, had to keep his values “in the closet.” Evaluativism also features strongly in *Atlas Shrugged*, *The Giver*, *The Last Air Bender*, and the *Divergent* series. The general populace may lack the language to measure and discuss evaluativism formally, but has clearly demonstrated interest in the topic.

## Variance in Political Attitudes Attributed to Genes (by Age)



From Hatemi et al., 2009, based on the Mid Atlantic Twin Registry (n=12,000)

Louis resolved the pressure to conform by leaving his family, and such segregation may be typical. This graph shows the results of a twin study. The variance in expressed values explained by genes is shown to differ by age. Values align with genetic predispositions only at ages of privilege. Among subjects between the ages of 21 and 25, the researchers found that values aligned with genetic predispositions only if the subject had left the parental home (Hatemi et al., 2009). In other words, it is the environment, rather than age, that prevents people from living their own values. The moral development we think we observe in college students might actually be realization of genetic predispositions blocked by parenting. The increasing alignment with genetic predispositions from ages 26-50 may reflect coping with oppression faced from employers, and the loss of alignment past age 75 may reflect new oppression from becoming dependent. It would be interesting to explore whether evaluativism interacts with other forms of privilege as it does with ageism. Measures of evaluative diversity in churches, political parties, and industries reveal segregation which probably occurs for the same reason.

Young people might hide their evaluative identities intentionally, much as many homosexuals hide their sexual identities until they leave their parental home. However, the mechanisms of evaluative closeting can be far more insidious: Perhaps for regulatory purposes, human brains require different resources to manifest each GRIN-type (e.g. see

Grace, Floresco, Goto & Lodge, 2007; Hagger, Wood, Stiff & Chatzisarantis, 2010; Zak, Stanton & Ahmadi, 2007). Depriving a subject of the required resources would force him/her to evaluate in a different way, thus replacing that person's GRIN identity with another, like in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. It is well-known that various social environments differently impact the availability of these resources in the brain, and it is very likely that privileged persons optimize their environments to support their own GRIN type at the expense of anyone not sharing that type. In other words, ignorant of our interdependence, we probably favor the development of environments—homes, workplaces, churches—which seem to protect freedom on the surface, but which sap the freedom of the under-privileged at a psychological level.

One could see this data as a picture of a world with no better means to resolve moral disagreements than through economics. Lacking understanding of our interdependence and thus of our optimal relationships, the people of this world award moral authority to the biggest breadwinners. On this view, men and women want jobs because we have failed to arrange freedom for everyone, and breadwinning is how we compete over what little freedom exists. Imagine a world in which the ends of this graph close in as automation increases unemployment. Imagine that the hump of people in the center who are financially independent and thus able to live their own morals gets narrower and narrower. More and more people become dependent on someone else for financial support. Imagine a world in which only 10% of the people are breadwinners, and the other 90% cannot be themselves. Being free from employment, able to spend one's time as one pleases should be a dream come true, but tie unemployment to oppression and the paradise we are approaching becomes as volatile as a powder keg!

The threat of widespread evaluativism doesn't overshadow concerns about equity and justice. To the contrary, it may be the source of those concerns. If slavery didn't include evaluativism, slavery would be something like volunteerism. It would be something like a mother up all night to nurse a child she loves, or a soldier proudly serving his nation, or an athlete pushing her body to the breaking point. Although these activities may be arduous, they stem from the values of the actors, so we can hardly call them "slavery." We cannot be slaves to our own values. Only under conditions of evaluativism can we remain oppressed. Take the evaluativism out of social injustice and inequity, and you may find nothing immoral left.

Evaluativism seems to be our fundamental moral problem, and it is institutionalized in modern society much as racism was institutionalized in economies of slavery: Abusers are

unaware that they are doing anything wrong. Victims are unaware that they are being abused. Yet here are the consequences:

1. The victim is not merely eliminated as though murdered, but his/her rights become the tool of the oppressor as the victim casts votes and behaves in ways he/she otherwise would not.
2. The puppet, left in the place of the victim, experiences a conflict between physiological predispositions and engineered environments. This is the feeling that one does not "fit in," and it is a significant form of suffering even if it does not result in suicide.
3. As societies effectively lose evaluative diversity, they become less able to innovate solutions to social problems ranging from climate change to ethnic conflict. Much as loss of biodiversity can collapse an ecosystem, it is plausible that loss of evaluative diversity has collapsed, and will collapse, nations, businesses, families, and other institutions.
4. Because we love people, such as our own children and grandchildren, who might not share our own GRIN types, evaluativism can block our most precious relationships.

### **The Impact of Moral Education**

The debate over the origins of evaluative diversity betrays the impact of moral education on evaluativism. Do moral disagreements stem from error, from immaturity, or from specialization? As in the nature-nurture debate, the correct answer is surely "all of the above." Mixed origins create a special problem for moral education. The success of moral education has been measured as reduction of moral disagreement, so, as moral education evolved to be a mechanism of correction and maturation, it also evolved to be a mechanism of evaluativism.

To extricate evaluativism from moral education would require dividing the realm of moral disagreements into those resulting from specialization vs. those resulting from error and immaturity. This process is very much like the attempt to divide biodiversity into valuable biodiversity vs. problematic biodiversity. We are confident that certain organisms, such as invasive species, do not deserve protection. We are also confident that certain broad categories of biodiversity, such as plants and predators, are essential to the ecosystem. Yet there is a middle-ground where ecosystem managers have yet to determine whether an element of biodiversity is valuable or not.

We should expect ethicists to cope with similar uncertainty, confident that certain moral disagreements should be preserved, confident that certain other moral disagreements should not, and uncertain about the disagreements in between. Sorting disagreements from the third category into the first and second should be our primary research project, and can proceed through refinement to our model of specialization, but moral education has instead served as a weapon used by people of one specialization to oppress people of the others. Our most evaluatively segregated environments tend to be the loci of moral education—the family, the workplace, academia, the congregation, the political party. If the goal of moral education is to become more moral, then it has been counterproductive; by segregating us, it slowed the rate at which we innovate better moral practices.

### **Reforming Moral Education**

Moral education can be reformed. Like reforming our relationship with our biological ecosystems, this reform must advance under conditions of incomplete knowledge, yet it can advance. Here are four practical suggestions with which to start:

1. Teach that it is not the student's job to be right
2. Foster multi-level love
3. Propagate teachings which facilitate humility
4. Build a research program to study interdependence

The next stage in the evolution of our morality comes with the realization that moral agents are obliged to stop being independent moral agents, and to instead become part of something larger. This doesn't necessarily entail relinquishing individualism; for example, Socrates identified himself as an individualistic part of a larger moral agent when he compared himself to a gadfly. Each type of person relates to the larger agent in a different way. Regarding the morals of belief development, this is known as the shift to social epistemology, but it applies to morality in general.

If you are a part of a larger moral agent, like a neuron is a part of a brain, then it is not your job to be right. It is the job of the moral agent to be right. Your job is to be yourself. It is the job of the court to be right, and the job of each attorney to argue his/her side. That means it is often the job of an attorney to be wrong. If an attorney refuses to argue their side, because they think their side is not right, then they are not doing their job, and they put the entire court

system at risk. They are playing God. The new lesson moral educators should teach is “Be yourself.”

Teaching students to be themselves can require more than mere explication of theory. It can require multi-level love. Does my son believe that I love his parts as more than mere parts of a whole? If not, then I am teaching my son that he would not be lovable if he were a mere part. One way to foster multi-level love is to show videos of skin cells healing a wound, so we can build empathy for skin cells. We need to expand our empathy not just to a wider range of individuals, but to a wider range of levels.

The third practical suggestion is to use what worked in the past. The doctrines of Judaism, Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, and Science were analyzed to determine their GRIN biases. The analysis showed that all eight include the same six criticisms of specific GRIN-types (Santos-Lang, 2014a). The most plausible explanation for this convergence on these six teachings is that the teachings have proven effective.

What makes the teachings effective? Each exposes a fatal flaw of one or two GRIN types that is not a flaw of the other GRIN types. This works the same way as the argument which persuades us to protect our biological ecosystems—it enables us to find humility through the realization that no part of the whole, including ourselves, is viable alone. Each student can be humbled by at least one of the teachings. Then, when everyone has respect for each other, we can cope with our diversity.

The final practical reform has less to do with the classroom than with this conference. Modern society relies on groups of peer-reviewers to test various claims. However, the disciplines into which reviewers divide do not necessarily reflect the structure of knowledge to be discovered, so progress can require the introduction of new disciplines. For example, the claims discussed in this paper extend across many disciplines, and that handicaps society's ability to test them.

Thus, the final practical reform suggested here is the formation of a new disciplinary focus on “interdependence.” Our bodies contain a wide diversity of cells, including bacteria, only some of which are interdependent. Our ecosystems contain a wide diversity of organisms, only some of which are interdependent. Our societies contain a wide diversity of value-sets, only some of which are interdependent. Even atoms and sub-atomic particles may be interdependent. It is difficult to name an area of our world in which the research puzzles of interdependence are not relevant:

- When does interdependence out-perform independence?
- How does one distinguish the interdependent elements of a system from elements which are not interdependent?
- How does one conceive the agency of elements which are valued for the diversity they bring to higher-level agents?

Over the last century, moral education has been counterproductive. It has served to institutionalize evaluativism much as slavery institutionalized racism. But the field could extend to include education about interdependence, about how to measure interdependence, and how to foster the humility interdependence requires. Rather than be obsolesced by the study of interdependence, the field of moral education could expand to fill that gap in society itself. Instead of selling moral education (like the rest of education) as a means to produce independent workers and voters, we would need to sell it as a means to prevent accidental violations of rights, to maximize mental wellness, to accelerate innovation, and to heal relationships. If these new motives are just as interesting to moral educators, then shift is possible and moral education need not suffer the same fate as slavery. Like the field of medicine, it can adapt to the scientific discoveries which challenge its earlier concepts.

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