



SELF, MOTIVATION & VIRTUE PROJECT NEWS

Corrected version. The previous version of this mailing was incorrectly labeled as "February 2016".

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GOODNESS, SURVIVAL AND FLOURISHING



By Darcia Narvaez, Ph.D.

[Darcia Narvaez](#) is co-PI for the Self, Motivation & Virtue Project and Professor of Psychology at the University of Notre Dame. She publishes extensively on moral development and education. A recent edited volume is [Developing the Virtues: Integrating Perspectives](#) (with Julia Annas and Nancy Snow). She is a fellow of the American Psychological Association and the American Educational Research Association. She is executive editor of the *Journal of Moral Education*. She also writes a popular blog for *Psychology Today* ("[Moral Landscapes](#)").

(This article was originally published in [Philosophical News](#) (12.6). It is



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It was not too long ago that being good went hand in hand with survival and with flourishing. In our ancestral context (99% of human genus history) prior to the dominance of settled, agricultural societies, humans lived in small, nomadic bands. These provided for the evolved needs of offspring and fostered normal-optimal development. Although mortality rates were high before age 15 (similar to before 1850 in Western societies), those who survived were intelligent in knowing how to live well on the earth and with others, including with other-than-humans. Being good was necessary for survival. One learned and followed natural laws or perished, whether laws for child raising, harvesting foods, or living cooperatively with the land.

Unfortunately, in the last 1% of human genus existence, philosophical and practical approaches to living have abandoned the following of natural laws and decided not to live cooperatively with the biodiverse community but instead to dominate it.

"Among "civilized" nations generally, dominant cultural philosophies promote ideas of human separation from and even superiority to the rest of Nature."

As Daniel Quinn* put it, they no longer wanted to leave their fate to the gods, stopping evolutionary processes for themselves and deciding they were the pinnacle of creation/evolution. Among "civilized" nations generally, dominant cultural philosophies promote ideas of human separation from and even superiority to the rest of Nature. This has led to a cavalier attitude toward other-than-humans, to the mistreatment of all life forms (including human). Brute force is used routinely, even with babies. Misbeginnings in early life lead to the underdevelopment of human capacities to do otherwise and an inability to live cooperatively on the earth. This leads to a wish for escape – for a salvation beyond this life – what else can one wish for when one does not understand the laws of one's biocommunity, does not know how to live within it, and lacks the self-regulatory skills that allow for deep bonding to the human and other-than-human community? I briefly examine some of the causes of humanity's current viciousness and absenteeism in relating as a partner to the earth and its entities.

Human Virtue

Often overlooked, Charles Darwin tried to counter now-pervasive views initially popularized by Herbert Spencer and others in the 19th century – that self-interest is a primary feature of human nature. In *Descent of Man*, Darwin pointed to the manner in which the characteristics of humanity's "moral sense" evolved through the tree of life.* Key evolutionary features of the moral sense include the social instincts, taking pleasure in the company of and feeling sympathy for others. Many phylogenetically older species display these characteristics. Accordingly he argued, humans do not *sacrifice* their natures when they behave morally, rather instead they *respond* to them.

"...humans do not *sacrifice* their natures when they behave morally, rather instead they *respond* to them."

But why then are there so many egoists and narcissists among us? Contrary to the assumption that Darwin's "moral sense" is a set of genetic inheritances, empirical research is demonstrating how early experience and caregiver-child relationships shape the type of moral orientation an individual develops-egoistic or communal.* Genes are blueprints that must be deployed properly (epigenetics). It turns out that humans have more epigenetic development after birth than any other animal, making the postnatal environment fundamental to the proper development of personality and human nature.

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* See original article for references.



MEET OUR RESEARCHERS

PAUL CONDON, Ph.D.



Paul Condon (PhD in Social Psychology, Northeastern University, 2014) is co-PI on the SMV-funded project, [Self and Desire as Seeds of Virtue: A Buddhist-Inspired, Multi-Method Investigation](#) and a postdoctoral research fellow in the [Interdisciplinary Affective Science Laboratory](#) at Northeastern University. Dr. Condon's research focuses on the role of emotions and meditation practices in shaping prosocial behavior and health-related outcomes. Learn more about his work and publications at <https://pccondon.wordpress.com>.

My research focuses on the role of compassion in shaping prosocial behavior and supportive relationships, and contemplative practices to increase compassion. In a series of studies, I have investigated the impact of compassion on moral-decision making, whether meditation increases compassion, and the psychological processes that explain how compassion and meditation work.

My interest in compassion as a topic of academic research was shaped through a Jesuit education and a series of psychology courses on human emotion, flourishing, suffering, and attachment. One experience in particular sparked my interest in compassion. In a course on the psychology of suffering, attachment, and contemplative practice, the professor, Kent Hoffman, asked each student to write on a 3x5 card "the voice in your head that you wish you did not have to listen to throughout the day". Dr. Hoffman then read aloud the anonymous statements: *You are not worthy to be loved. You will always be alone. You'll never accomplish anything. It's only going to get worse.* Our voices revealed a common thread of self-criticism, doubt, fear, and

shame. I was struck by the suffering that seemed to define the human condition, but also the potential to transcend that suffering through compassion and social connection. Sharing this experience with classmates lessened the burden that we each individually carried, and compassion for others revealed a doorway to building a stronger community.

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Christy Wilson-Mendenhall, Ph.D.

[Christy Wilson-Mendenhall](#) (Ph.D., Emory University) is co-PI on the SMV-funded project, [Self and Desire as Seeds of Virtue: A Buddhist-Inspired, Multi-Method Investigation](#) and currently an Associate Research Scientist in the [Interdisciplinary Affective Science Lab](#) at Northeastern University and Massachusetts General Hospital. She received her Ph.D. in Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience from Emory University in 2010, where she conducted research as a National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow. Publications and further details about her research program can be found on [her website](#).



My expertise bridges cognitive, affective, and contemplative science to investigate the underlying mechanisms of the dynamic and varied emotional feelings that people experience in day-to-day life and their implications for well-being. My research career started in cognitive science and neuroscience, with the intrigue and challenge of studying the basic mechanisms that underlie how we make sense of the world. Because my graduate mentor, Dr. Lawrence (Larry) Barsalou, had recently published a highly influential theoretical article on the human conceptual system, the energy and focus in the lab was one of innovation and discovery. Larry and I developed a new line of research focusing on how abstract concepts develop in memory and shape our understanding of the world (i.e., concepts like “convince” that do not point to a specific concrete thing).

A few years into this work, we began collaborating with Dr. Lisa Feldman Barrett to integrate our work on abstract concepts with her emerging theoretical ideas about the nature of emotion, which she had recently received an NIH Director’s Pioneer award to pursue. During an initial development period, the three of us met weekly to discuss theory and design. This experience – talking each week with senior colleagues who are intellectual pioneers in their respective areas – was formative. I was incredibly inspired by the new ideas that were emerging at this intersection. Serendipitously, around the same time, I began participating in interdisciplinary dialogues with a network of scholars who were interested in contemplative science, including Dr. John Dunne. The confluence of these interactions seeded initial insights that theoretical ideas in Buddhist philosophy offer a framework in which to think about well-being that aligns with many of the basic science constructs that I study.

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John Dunne, Ph.D.



[John Dunne](#) (PhD 1999, Harvard University) is a researcher on the SMV-funded project, [Self and Desire as Seeds of Virtue: A Buddhist-Inspired, Multi-Method Investigation](#) and holds the Distinguished Chair in Contemplative Humanities, a newly endowed position created through the [Center for Healthy Minds](#) at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. He also holds a co-appointment in the new Department of Asian Languages & Cultures. John Dunne's work focuses on Buddhist philosophy and contemplative practice, especially in dialog with Cognitive Science and Psychology. His publications appear in venues ranging across both the Humanities and the Sciences, and they include works on Buddhist philosophy, contemplative practice and their interpretation within scientific contexts. His current research focuses especially on meta-awareness, compassion, and in both theoretical and practical terms.

In 2000, during my first stint on the faculty at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, one of my undergraduate students introduced me to the neuroscientist [Richard J. Davidson](#). Richie and I immediately discovered that we had a number of friends and acquaintances in common, and as Richie learned more about my work in Buddhist epistemology, he asked me to assist him with a new project: an intensive empirical study of long-term Tibetan meditators. Working back then with Richie and our collaborator Antoine Lutz, I learned that my previous work on Buddhist theories of mind, perception, and concept formation not only made sense to these scientists—that work also turned out to be highly useful for understanding and empirically examining the specific practices that were the focus of that study. I also discovered that the empirical examination of contemplative practices greatly enhanced my understanding of Buddhist philosophical issues, and it also enabled my research to move beyond the disciplinary boundaries that were its initial frame.

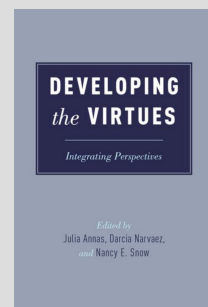
In more recent years, two especially important styles of contemplative practice have caught my attention. The first style is broadly known as mindfulness, and in this area, my work has focused especially on understanding mindfulness in its many varieties but also in terms of its specific mechanisms. One key mechanism is the notion of “dereification,” which amounts simply to the capacity to experience one’s thoughts just as thoughts, and not as real representations of the world.

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS & NEWS

Professors Julia Annas, Nancy Snow and Darcia Narvaez edited a collection of essays titled, [Developing the Virtues: Integrating Perspectives](#), published by Oxford University Press in September 2016. Contributors SMV Core Project Team Members, Drs. Jennifer Herdt, Daniel Lapsley and Ross Thompson.

A [Mind & Life Institute](#) research team, lead by SMV researcher, Dr. Feldman Barrett, has partnered with Northeastern University to launch "[Qwantify](#)." Quantify is a scientific research study seeking thousands of public participants to download and use a free app to answer the question, “What do you want, right now?” Read the [press release](#)



or learn more at <http://qwantify.org/>.

SMV Research team member, Dr. Paul Condon, published "[The Perils of Empathy](#)" in the *Wall Street Journal* (12/2/16).



The Monist published an issue on "Virtues," which included papers from SMV researchers. Dr. Peggy DesAutels wrote on "[Power, virtue, and vice](#)" and Dr. Mark Alfano coauthored the paper "[Virtue, Situationism, and the Cognitive Value of Art](#)."

Watch Professor Marvin Berkowitz discuss [character education as developing children into good people](#).



We are actively seeking submissions for the SMV Project's [Moral Self Archive](#). Submit materials [here](#), or contact Max Parish (smvproject@ou.edu) with any questions.

SELECTED RECENT PUBS & PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SMV LEADERSHIP TEAM



Dr. Owen Flanagan

- Flanagan, O. (2017). [Addiction doesn't exist, but it is bad for You](#). *Neuroethics*, 1-8.
- Flanagan, O. (2016). [Does Yoga Induce Metaphysical Hallucinations? Interdisciplinarity at the Edge: Comments on Evan Thompson's Waking, Dreaming, Being](#). *Philosophy East and West*, 66(3), 952-958. [PDF](#)
- Flanagan, O., & Ivanhoe, P. J. (2016). Moderating Ego in East and South Asia: Metaphysical Habits of the Heart. In K. W. Brown and M.R. Leary (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Hypo-Egoic Phenomena*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [Read on Google Books](#)



Dr. William Fleeson

- Fleeson, W., & Furr, R. M. (2016). Do Broad Character Traits Exist? Repeated Assessments of Individuals, Not Group Summaries from Classic Experiments, Provide the Relevant Evidence. In I. Fileva (Ed.), *Questions of Character*, 231-248. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hartley, A. G., Furr, R. M., Helzer, E. G., Jayawickreme, E., Velasquez, K. R., & Fleeson, W. (2016). [Morality's centrality to liking, respecting, and understanding others](#). *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 7(7), 648-657.



Dr. Douglas Fry

- Anwar, F., Fry, D. P., & Grigaityte, I. (2016). Reducing Aggression and Violence. In B. Bushman (Ed.), [Aggression and Violence: A Social Psychological Perspective](#). New York: Routledge.
- Fry, D. (2016). [Understanding lone actor terrorism: Past experience, future outlook, and response strategies](#) [Book Review]. *Journal of the Australian Institute of Professional Intelligence Officers*, 24(1), 43.



Jennifer Herdt, Ph.D.

- Herdt, J. (2017). [The pain in the gift and the gift in the pain](#). *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 30(2), 1-9.
- Herdt, J. (2016). [Proximate common goods in the context of pluralism](#). *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 46(3), 583-602.
- Herdt, J. (2016). [Aquinas and democratic virtue: An introduction](#). *Journal of Religious Ethics* 44(2), 233-245.
- Herdt, J. (2017). Strengthening hope for the greatest things: Aquinas's redemption of magnanimity. Presented at [Virtues of Greatness: Approaches to the Past and Present of Magnanimity](#) (University of Birmingham, England) Jan. 21-22.
- Herdt, J. (2016). The problem of human making from pietism to Hegel. Presented at Oberlin College, Nov. 10.



Daniel Lapsley, Ph.D.

- Lapsley, D. (2016) Moral self-identity and the social-cognitive theory of virtue. In L. Annas, D. Narvaez & N. Snow (Eds). [Developing the virtues: Integrating perspectives](#). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. [PDF](#)
- Lapsley, D. (2016). Teaching moral development. In M. Cecil Smith & N. Defrates-Densch (Eds). [Challenges and innovations in educational psychology teaching and learning](#). Information Age.
- Lapsley, D. (2016). [On the prospects for Aristotelian character education](#). *Journal of Moral Education*, 45, 502-515.
- Lapsley, D. & Woodbury, R. (2016). [Moral character development for teacher education](#). *Action in Teacher Education*. 38, 194-206. [PDF](#)
- Lapsley, D. (2017). Situationism and the Pyrrhic defence of character education. In C. Miller & W. Sinnott-Armstrong (Eds)., [Moral Psychology Vol. 5: Virtues and Vices](#). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.



Dr. Darcia Narvaez

- Narvaez, D. (2016). [Revitalizing human virtue by restoring organic morality](#). *Journal of Moral Education*, 45(3), 223-238.
- Narvaez, D., Braungart-Rieker, J. M., Miller-Graff, L. E., Gettler, L. T., & Hastings, P. D. (Eds.). (2016). [Contexts for Young Child Flourishing: Evolution, Family, and Society](#). Oxford University Press.

- Arrows, F., & Narvaez, D. (2016). Reclaiming our indigenous worldview: a more authentic baseline for social/ecological justice work in education. In N. McCrary & E. W. Ross (Eds.), [Working for social justice inside and outside the classroom: a community of teachers, researchers, and activists](#), 93-112. Peter Lang, New York.



Dr. Ross Thompson

- Waters, S. F., & Thompson, R. A. (2016). [Children's perceptions of emotion regulation strategy effectiveness: links with attachment security](#). *Attachment & human development*, 18(4), 354-372.
- Thompson, R. & Lavine, A. (2016). The Development of virtuous character: Automatic and reflective dispositions. In J. Annas, D. Narvaez & N. Snow (Eds.). (2016). [Developing the Virtues: Integrating Perspectives](#). New York: Oxford University Press.



Dr. Nancy Snow

- Annas, J., Narvaez, D. & Snow, N. (Eds.). (2016). [Developing the Virtues: Integrating Perspectives](#). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Snow, N. (2016). How habits make us virtuous. In Annas, J., Narvaez, D. & Snow, N. (2016). [Developing the Virtues: Integrating Perspectives](#). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Snow, N. (2016). Virtue as social intelligence: An overview. Presented at *Morality, Moral Philosophy, and the Humanities in the Age of Neuroscience*, Kent State University, Nov. 19.
- Snow, N. (2016). Love in religion. Presented at *Love in Religion Conference*, Oxford University, Nov. 9-11.



Dr. Linda Zagzebski

- Zagzebski, L. (2016). Korean translation of: *Virtues of the Mind*. D. Chang (Trans.). CIR, Korea.
- Zagzebski, L. (2016). Faith and Reason. In J. Hawthorne, H. Cappelen and T. Gendler (Eds.), [Oxford Handbook of Philosophical Methodology](#). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. (2016). [Virtuous exemplars: Moral understanding, emulation, and resentment](#). Presented at Loyola Marymount University, CA, Sept. 27. Also presented as the Malcolm Reid Lecture, Gordon College, MA, Oct. 27. [Watch the Video](#)



Dr. Michael Zampelli

- Zampelli, M. (2016). "Strutting and Fretting" on the seams: Jesuit performance in the United States. Presented at *Fordham University, Lincoln Center*, Nov. 2; *Fordham University, Rose Hill*, Nov. 17.
- Zampelli, M. (2016). The good, the true and the beautiful: Pedro Calderón de la Barca's Two Dreams at LaMama ETC. With *George Drance and the Magis Theatre Company*, *Sheen Center for Thought and Culture*, New York, Dec. 6.

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