

SMV Project e-Newsletter 10 (November 2017)

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# THE SELF, MOTIVATION & VIRTUE PROJECT

Interdisciplinary, Innovative  
MORAL SELF RESEARCH

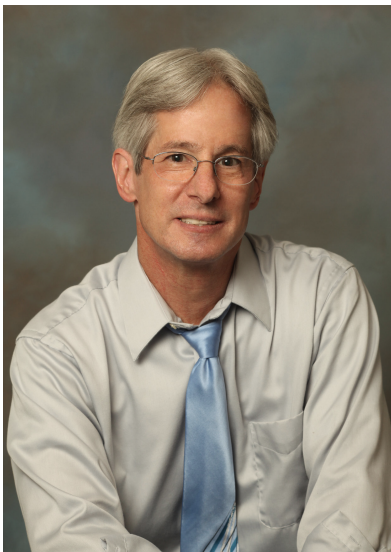
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## SELF, MOTIVATION & VIRTUE PROJECT NEWS

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### ETHICAL PARENTING



[Ross A. Thompson, Ph.D.](#)

*Distinguished Professor of Psychology  
The University of California, Davis*

What are the ethics of parenting? What are the virtues and values that underlie parents' ethical responsibility to their children? What (if any) role does the state play in ethical parenting? These questions have been asked many times before, and recently Diana Baumrind and I were asked to write a chapter on the ethics of parenting for a multivolume *Handbook of Parenting* to be published next year. What made our report different, perhaps, from some others is that we are developmental psychologists with interests in philosophy, and thus we approached these questions from the multidisciplinary perspective that characterizes the work of the *Self, Motivation,*

*and Virtue Project.*

Developmental psychologists typically characterize parenting in terms of practices rather than character. Although we appreciate, on reflection, that both are important, most of our research focuses on parental behavior (e.g., sensitivity, warmth, communication) and its effects on offspring. My coauthor, for example, is well known for her landmark research on the practices of different parenting types (authoritative, authoritarian, permissive) on children's development. Perhaps the focus on parenting behavior is because the study of parenting is closely linked to reports to improve it, and it seems easier to change parenting practices than the character of parents.

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***"...character development is foundational to socialized conduct: we study the practices that contribute to children becoming compassionate, responsible, self-regulated, kind people. This provides another approach to the ethics of parenting through virtue theory. As virtue ethicists have long argued, parents are responsible for the tutelage that is necessary to enable children to develop the habitual practices and the practical wisdom necessary to the growth of virtuous character."***

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With this orientation, Baumrind and I proposed a mixed rule-utilitarian argument to justify parental responsibilities to protect, nurture, and socialize children, including rights to regulate children's conduct consistent with their developing capacities to do so on their own. It is a "mixed" argument because in addition to the utilitarian welfare-maximizing principle is an additional justice principle warranting justification for unequal treatment of family members, such as children differing in age, need, or other characteristics. As developmentalists, we recognize that although parents may be motivated to act in consistent ways to further the interests of offspring, they necessarily should and do treat children differently based on their developmental needs and capabilities, and our mixed rule-utilitarian argument captures this developmental orientation.

[Read more >>](#)



## MEET OUR RESEARCHERS

Jack Bauer, Ph.D.

[JACK BAUER](#) is Professor of Psychology at University of Dayton. His research examines how people construct their life stories in ways that facilitate human flourishing. He has authored [The Transformative Self: Identity, Growth, and a Good Life Story](#) (Oxford, forthcoming) and co-edited [Transcending Self-Interest: Psychological Explorations of](#)



[the Quiet Ego](#) (APA Books).

For the most part I go about my days exploring what makes life meaningful and otherwise good. I do this professionally by specializing in developmental and personality psychology, studying scientifically and philosophically how people create and recreate a sense of self-identity and meaning in life as they construct their life stories in conjunction with the people around them—all the while developing over the course of adulthood within their cultural and historical contexts—and then by writing about all this in very long sentences. My hope is that the study of such topics will nudge society toward a more humane understanding of personhood in all its varieties and conditions, leading to choices, actions, and interactions that promote human flourishing.

I've been deeply, even ludicrously fascinated by questions about life's meanings and motives and virtues ever since I can remember. But I first became interested in studying people's life stories when, as the editor of a small-town newspaper, I realized how much I loved writing feature stories of people's lives.

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## Peggy DesAutels, Ph.D.



[PEGGY DESAUTELES](#) is Professor of Philosophy at University of Dayton. Her publications have focused on moral psychology, neuroethics, and feminist ethics. Her books include [Feminists Doing Ethics](#), [Moral Psychology](#), and [Global Feminist Ethics](#).

It first struck me in graduate school that knowing moral theory or even teaching moral theory doesn't appear to correlate with actually living a moral life. Ever since this realization, I've devoted my research to better understanding the varieties of psychologies of those who live morally and to providing realistic guidance for how best to both flourish and live morally in our everyday lives. On my view, a good moral theory should provide useful norms for our day-to-day moral perceptions, deliberations, choices, and practices. It should

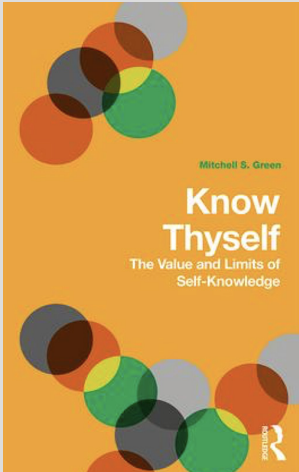
accommodate human cognitive constraints and respond to the complexities of actual experienced lives. In other words, our moral theories should be psychologically and socially realistic. I also stress that our moral theories and norms must be responsive to the fact that we live in a society in which some are systematically disadvantaged because of their gender, race, or class.

In order to provide realistic and non-idealized moral norms, I draw on contemporary moral theory, feminist theory, and advances in social psychology, cognitive science and neuroscience.

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## RECENT PUBLICATIONS & NEWS

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Mitchell Green recently published [Know Thyself: The Value and Limits of Self-Knowledge](#) (Routledge, 2017). *Publisher's Description:* "Know Thyself: The Value and Limits of Self-Knowledge takes the reader on tour of the nature, value, and limits of self-knowledge. Mitchell S. Green calls on classical sources like Plato and Descartes, 20th-century thinkers like Freud, recent developments in neuroscience and experimental psychology, and even Buddhist philosophy to explore topics at the heart of who we are. The result is an unvarnished look at both the achievements and drawbacks of the many attempts to better know one's own self." [Learn more>>](#)

Open-mindedness is typically conceived as an intellectual virtue. But in Anna Cremaldi and Jack M. C. Kwong's paper, "[Is Open-mindedness a Moral Virtue?](#)" (*Ratio*, September 2017), they argue there are good reasons for thinking open-mindedness is a moral virtue as well. [Learn More>>](#)



SMV Core Project Team Member, Dr. Howard Nusbaum, and his colleagues Patrick B. Williams, Greg Poljacik, Jean Decety recently published research that suggests "[Loving-kindness language exposure leads to changes in sensitivity to imagined pain](#)", (*The Journal of Positive Psychology*, April 2017).

In "[On the Promotion of Human Flourishing](#)" (*Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 2017), Tyler J. Vanderweele argues that "Many empirical studies throughout the social and biomedical sciences focus only on very narrow outcomes such as income, or a single specific disease state, or a measure of positive affect. Human well-being or flourishing, however, consists in a much broader range of states and outcomes, certainly including mental and physical health, but also encompassing happiness and life satisfaction, meaning and purpose, character and virtue, and close social relationships." He also proposes measures of human flourishing, and discusses broader policy implications. [Read More>>](#)

### Beacon Project Summer Seminar: "Character and the Morally Exceptional: Empirical Discoveries and Moral Improvement"

June 18-28, 2018, Wake Forest University

Seminar Leader: Dr. Christian B. Miller, A.C. Reid Professor of Philosophy



THE BEACON PROJECT

Becoming a virtuous person is one of the central goals of the ethical life. But how good of a job are most people doing in becoming virtuous? And are there any plausible strategies for cultivating the virtues and becoming morally exceptional which can help us to do better? This seminar will examine these two questions in detail. In the first half, we will see whether character traits even exist in light of results in psychology. The second half will turn to various strategies for trying to bridge the gap

between the character we actually have, and the virtuous character we should strive to obtain. Developing and justifying such strategies is one of the most underexplored areas of ethics, although in recent years it has gained increased attention. Here we will look at new work by Nancy Snow, Jonathan Webber, Julia Annas, and Alan Wilson, among others, some of which has not appeared in print yet.

Participants will have their travel, meal, reading materials, and lodging costs covered. They will be housed at the Graylyn Conference Center ([www.graylyn.com](http://www.graylyn.com)), one of the nicest facilities in the country. Seminar meetings are expected to last roughly three hours per day, and will conclude on Thursday, June 28 so that all participants can attend the Beacon Project Final Conference on June 28-30. We are also very happy to announce that Alan Wilson, Nancy Snow, and Daniel Russell will be visiting the seminar as well. The application deadline is **December 15, 2017**. For more details please visit: <http://www.moralbeacons.org/summer-seminar/>

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

## SELECTED RECENT PUBS & PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SMV LEADERSHIP TEAM



### Dr. Owen Flanagan

- Flanagan, O. (2017). [Against the drug cure model: Addiction, identity, and pharmaceuticals](#). *Philosophical Issues in Pharmaceuticals*: 221-236.
- Flanagan, O. (2017). The role of pain in Buddhism. In J. Corns (Ed.), [The Routledge Handbook of Philosophy of Pain](#) (288-296). New York: Routledge.



### Dr. William Fleeson

- Fleeson, W. (2017). [Challenging Doris' attack on aggregation: Why we are not left "completely in the dark" about global virtues](#). *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, 20(3), 519-536. ([Open access article](#))
- Fleeson, W. (2017). ["Differentiating the everyday emotion dynamics of borderline personality disorder from major depressive disorder and bipolar disorder."](#) *Personality Disorders: Theory, Research, and Treatment*. Published online October 24, 2017.



### Dr. Douglas Fry

- Anwar, F., Fry, D. P., & Grigaityte, I. (2017). [Aggression prevention and reduction in diverse cultures and contexts](#). *Current Opinions in Psychology*, 19, 49-54.
- Fry, D. P., and Souillac, G. (2017). [The original partnership societies: Evolved](#)

[propensities for equality, prosociality, and peace](#). *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies*, 4(1), 1-27.



**Jennifer Herdt, Ph.D.**

- Herdt, J. (2017). [The pain in the gift and the gift in the pain](#). *Studies in Christian Ethics*, 30(2), 158-166.
- Herdt, J. (2019, September 9). *Enacting integrity*. Paper presented at the Integrity, Honesty, and Truth Seeking Conference, Institute for the Study of Human Flourishing, University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.



**Daniel Lapsley, Ph.D.**

- Lapsley, D., & Hardy, S. A. (2017). Identity formation and moral development in emerging adulthood. In L. M. Padilla-Walker & L. J. Nelson (Eds.), [Flourishing in emerging adulthood: Positive development during the third decade of life](#) (14-39). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Alfano M, et al. (2017). Development and validation of a multi-dimensional measure of intellectual humility. *PLoS ONE* 12(8), 1-28. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0182950>.



**Dr. Darcia Narvaez**

- Narvaez, D. (2017, September 23). [How to be happy: A new book, \*Your Resonant Self\*, gives excellent advice, but something's missing](#) [Blog Post]. *Moral Landscapes: Psychology Today*.
- Narvaez, D. (2017, January 22). [Is humanity's moral sense inherited or nurtured?](#) [Online Article]. Available at [kindredmedia.org](http://kindredmedia.org).
- Narvaez, D. (2017). [Morality: Seeds must be planted rightly in early life](#) [Online Article]. Available at [kindredmedia.org](http://kindredmedia.org).
- Narvaez, D. (2017). "Farewell to readers." *Journal of Moral Education* 46(4): 337-338.



**Dr. Howard Nusbaum**

- Nusbaum, H. C. (2017, January). [Robust science depends on understanding the science of humans](#). *Association for Psychological Science Observer*.
- Nusbaum, H. C. (2017, January). [The relationship between mental and somatic practices and wisdom](#). Keynote address presented at the Meeting on Character, Wisdom, and Virtue, Oriel College, Oxford University.



**Dr. Ross Thompson**

- Newton, E. K., Thompson, R. A., & Goodman, M. (2016). [Individual differences in toddlers' prosociality: Experiences in early relationships explain variability in prosocial behavior](#). *Child Development*, 87(6), 1715-1726.
- Thompson, R. A. (2017, April). *Is attachment theory a moral development theory?* Paper presented at the Development of Character: Attachment Theory and the Moral

Psychology of Vice and Virtue, Conference 3: Attachment, Vice, and Psychopathology,  
University of California, Davis, CA.



#### Dr. Nancy Snow

- Snow, N. (Ed.) (2017, June). [New directions in character and virtue](#). *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice: Special Issue (20)3*.
- Snow, N. (2017, August 30). *Hope as a democratic civic virtue*. [Institute for the Study of Human Flourishing Colloquium Series](#), The University of Oklahoma, Norman, OK.
- Snow, N. (2017, October 14). *Fundamental hope, meaning, and self-transcendence*. Virtue, Happiness, and the Meaning of Life Capstone Conference, University of Chicago, Chicago, IL.
- Snow, N. (Forthcoming in 2018). [The Oxford handbook of virtue](#). New York: Oxford University Press.



#### Dr. Linda Zagzebski

- Zagzebski, L. (2017). [Exemplarist moral theory](#). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. (2017). Authority in religious communities. In W. J. Abrahams & F. D. Aquino (Eds.), [The Oxford Handbook of the Epistemology of Theology](#). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Zagzebski, L. (2017, October 5). *Exemplarist moral theory*. Keynote address presented at the Conference on Exemplarist Moral Theory, University of Genoa, Genoa, Italy.
- Zagzebski, L. (2017, October 10). *The two greatest ideas*. Public lecture presented as the Cardinal Mercier Chair, University of Leuven, Belgium.
- Zagzebski, L. (2017, October 11). *Epistemic authority*. Paper presented at the Cardinal Mercier Chair Workshop, University of Leuven, Belgium.



#### Dr. Michael Zampelli

- Zampelli, M. (2017). Performing arts. In T. Worcester (Ed.), [The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits](#). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zampelli, M. (2017). Dance. In T. Worcester (Ed.), [The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits](#) (216-217). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zampelli, M. (2017). Theater. In T. Worcester (Ed.), [The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits](#) (781-781). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Zampelli, M. (2017). Vocation. In T. Worcester (Ed.), [The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the Jesuits](#) (833-833). New York: Cambridge University Press.

If you would like to contribute a news item, publication, or newsletter article,  
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