The puzzle of resultant moral luck arises when we are disposed to think that an agent who caused a harm deserves to be blamed more than an otherwise identical agent who did not. One popular (but controversial) perspective on resultant moral luck explains our dispositions to produce different judgments with regard to the agents who feature in these cases as a product not of what they genuinely deserve but of our epistemic situation. On this account, there is no genuine resultant moral luck; there is only luck in what evidence becomes available to observers. In this paper, I develop an evolutionary account of our inclination to take the results of actions as evidence for the mental states of agents, thereby explaining why the resulting intuitions are recalcitrant to correction. The account explains why the puzzle of resultant moral luck arises: because our disposition to take the harms agents cause as evidence of their mental states can produce intuitions which conflict with those that arise when we examine agents’ mental states without reference to the results of their actions. The account also helps to solve the puzzle of resultant moral luck, by providing a strong reason to ignore the intuitions caused by our disposition to regard harms as evidence of mental states. Since these intuitions arise using an unreliable proxy for agents’ mental states, they ought to be trumped by more reliable evidence.

What motivates moral behaviour? Is it Knowledge? Reasons? Empathic compulsion? In fact, we may be guided less by what we know to be morally right than by a sense of personal responsibility to be consistent with the kind of person we think we are in moral terms; our moral identity. This proposition has gained significant traction over the past two decades, initiated in large part by the early writings of developmental psychologist Augusto Blasi. The idea necessarily entails developmental concerns, since no-one disputes that an awareness of identity is absent in the newborn. Contrary to prevailing views in Psychology, that moral identity emerges during very early childhood or alternatively in
adolescence, we entertain the idea that moral identity emerges during middle childhood, when children first become capable of self-reflection and of thinking about themselves in generalised terms. Furthermore, we suggest that the ability to experience and attribute self-directed shame also emerges at this age, and that it does so as a consequence of an emerging moral identity. Identity, we propose, is the cornerstone of both moral responsibility and of shame experiences. Initial findings from research examining these propositions are promising.

7.00 Dinner: TBA but most likely a restaurant in Crows Nest or North Sydney
Friday May 30
Room 708 Building W6A (NOTE DIFFERENT LOCATION)

10.30-12.00 Keynote: Fiery Cushman (Brown), Why Learning Matters for Morality.

Humans use punishment and reward to modify each others’ behavior, and we also learn from others’ rewards and punishments. This simple dynamic animates much of our moral psychology, and I explore two of its consequences in detail. First, human punishment should be adapted to the contours and constraints of human learning. This can explain a peculiar feature of our moral judgments that philosophers call "moral luck": the fact that accidental outcomes play a large roll in determining punishment. Second, the architecture of human learning should dictate when and how we choose to harm others. I borrow from current neurobiological models of reinforcement learning to understand why we deem some harmful actions impermissible and others permissible. These case studies illustrate the role that learning systems play as a basic organizing principle in the moral domain.

12.00-1.30 Lunch

1.30-2.30 Marc de Rosnay and Ming Yuan (Sydney), You are who you are when no one is watching: Australian and Chinese children’s use of contextual and motive information when making moral trait inferences

The two studies presented here examine how children (aged 4 to 8 years) and adults from Australia and China make moral trait inferences on the basis of self-presentational motives (i.e., behaving prosocially for personal gain). It was found that children did not start to negatively evaluate protagonists whose prosocial behaviors arose from self-presentational motives until about 8 years of age, at which time they judged that protagonists whose prosocial behaviors arose from altruistic motives to be nicer. Young children, and especially the 4-year-olds, were insensitive to contextual cues betraying self-presentational motives, and they were also susceptible to a recency effect, such that their trait judgments were highly influenced by the outcome of the last behavior exemplar in the story vignettes: they did not seem to make trait judgments based on all previous information. Moreover, Chinese children were more sensitive to contextual and motive information than Australian children. Eight-year-olds from China, but not Australia, were able to spontaneously infer a protagonist’s self-presentational motives and make negative evaluations of the protagonist when they observed that his/her prosocial behaviors were only manifest in the presence of an authority figure (i.e., a teacher). These older Chinese children also expected more positive future behaviors from the altruistic protagonists than from the protagonists who had self presentational motives, thus demonstrating a clear cultural difference in sensitivity to contextual information when making trait inferences.
2.35-3.35  Daniel Cohen (CSU), *Responsibility and the Reactive Attitudes: Using IAT to evaluate Strawson’s claim that judgements of responsibility require emotional engagement with wrongdoers (i.e. via the ‘participant stance’).* (Co-authors: Jeremy Goldring (CSU), Lauren Saling (CSU), Neil Levy (Melbourne/Oxford).)

3.35-3.55  Coffee

4.00-5.00  Graham Wood (UTas), *From action-based value representations to belief in objective value*

5.00      Close