

Public Abstract

First Name:Jeffrey

Middle Name:Benjamin

Last Name:White

Adviser's First Name:John

Adviser's Last Name:Kultgen

Co-Adviser's First Name:Alexander

Co-Adviser's Last Name:VonSchoenborn

Graduation Term:FS 2006

Department:Philosophy

Degree:PhD

Title:**Conscience: The Mechanism of Morality**

Conscience is frequently cited and yet its mechanism is not understood. Conscience is most familiar as a voice protesting against actions which compromise personal integrity. Persons also cite conscience as that which directs towards actions such as seeking political office and sending soldiers to war. In order to explain the scope of its influence, this text develops a view of cognition in which conscience is foundational. The text melds thousands of years of philosophical tradition into the cutting edge of neurological research. The focus is a rethinking of the most philosophical of all questions: what is the meaning of life? The result is the ACTWith model of conscience. The model provides a system for the conceptualization of moral problems grounded in a thorough understanding of cutting edge neurological research. It provides a psychology which does not treat morality merely as an add-on to a primarily rational animal. It does so by uncovering the role of conscience in motivating an individual to do the right thing in every situation. The model is finally tested against the most compelling moral problem ever to face humanity: what can I do about global warming? Can conscience and philosophy help to save the world? This work shows that it can.