

Decision Processes Colloquia

Monday, October 15, 2018

Where: 350 JMHH

When: 12:00 – 1:15 pm

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Moral Circles, Political Divides

ABSTRACT:

The idea of the moral circle pictures the self in the center, surrounded by concentric circles encompassing increasingly distant possible targets of moral concern, including family, local community, nation, all humans, all mammals, all living things including plants, and all things including inanimate objects. I present the idea of two opposing sets of forces in people's moral circles, with centripetal forces pulling inward, urging greater concern for close others than for distant others, and centrifugal forces pushing outward, resisting "drawing the line" anywhere as a form of prejudice and urging egalitarian concern for all regardless of social distance. This centripetal/centrifugal forces view is applied to current moral debates about empathy (e.g., parochialism vs. universalism) and about politics (e.g., nationalism vs. globalism). I argue that this view helps us see how intercultural and interpersonal disagreements about morality and prejudice are based in intrapersonal conflicts shared by all people.