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Reading Questions for April 13

These questions cover Derek's and Nate's presentations and an article by Shaun Nichols called "How psychopaths threaten moral rationalism: Is it irrational to be amoral?" The answers do not have to be turned in. You will probably have to read more than once to get the answers.

Background:

We'll start with Derek and Nate's Q and As. Next we'll continue our discussion of the question: What can mental disorders tell us about minds and their properties? Today we're looking at what research about psychopaths indicates about the way that we form moral judgments. In particular, he'll argue that the moral judgments of psychopaths are seriously disrupted and that this is the result of emotional shortcomings, rather than rational shortcomings, which seems to show that our moral judgments do not derive (merely) from our rational capacities.

Questions:

1. (*) What questions do you have for Derek?
2. (*) What questions do you have for Nate?
3. In sections III and IV.1 (pages 290-5) Nichols explains what he means by "empirical rationalism" and gives evidence that psychopaths have a defective capacity for moral judgments. What does he mean by empirical rationalism? What information does he provide regarding the moral judgments of psychopaths?
4. (*) In the rest of section IV (pages 295-301), Nichols considers various explanations of psychopath's deficit in moral judgments. Which explanations does he think are good? Which bad? Why? Is he right? Why?