

Title: "A Theory of Moral Authority: Moral Choices Under Moral Network  
Externality"  
(with Avner Greif)

Abstract: Why do people choose to follow a demanding moral authority even in situations in which a less demanding alternative exists? Can social imitation alone sustain meaningful moral equilibrium? What factors underpin and limit the power of moral authorities? This paper addresses these questions by developing a choice-theoretic model of moral authorities, moral standards, and moral behaviour. We show that sustaining meaningful moral behaviour is possible if some actors choose to provide, and others choose to follow, a person providing moral guidance. Our theory builds on literature in cultural evolution, biology, and psychology on how guilt has become an adaptive trait.