



International Philosophical Conference

# New Moral Intuitionism

Its Possibilities and Challenges

**GDAŃSK, 6–7 JUNE 2014**

The University of Gdańsk  
The Institute of Philosophy, Sociology and Journalism



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*Abstracts*

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## Forms of Empathy and Moral Intuition

Empathy has become one important, considered factor in contemporary moral psychology. Particularly since studies stemming from social psychology, neurosciences and psychiatry have manifested that emotions may play a significant role in determining moral decision-making and intuition, also the role of empathy has increasingly been explored. However, such explorations have remained ambiguous and often superficial, for one notable reason: the vagueness of the term “empathy”. The paper seeks to map out key definitions of empathy and their potential links to moral intuition. First, it will distinguish between different forms of empathy and, second, investigate the type of epistemological underpinnings they offer for moral intuition. Finally, the paper shall conclude by arguing that forms of empathy and ensuing moral intuitions based on other-directed intentionality ought to be prioritised.

Particularly four types of empathy need to be distinguished, and these are “affective empathy”, “cognitive empathy”, “projective empathy” and “embodied empathy”. Affective empathy gained grounds already from the philosophy of David Hume, and in its contemporary form is often described as “resonation” with the emotive states of other individuals, whereby one gains an immediate, instant sense of “feeling with” another. Cognitive empathy, similarly supported by Hume, defines empathy as inference or perception without an affective component. Projective empathy, historically rooted in the theories of Adam Smith, positions empathy

as a simulative process of projecting one's own emotions into the situation of another person, and embodied empathy, which gains support from phenomenology and particularly Max Scheler, claims that empathy stems from embodied states of intersubjectivity. It will be argued that whilst all four forms of empathy may – and indeed often do – spark moral intuitions, these intuitions have important epistemological differences. This stems from the relation between oneself and others, implied by the different definitions: within cognitive and projective empathy, one positions oneself as the reference point of emotive interpretation, whilst in embodied and affective empathy, the other is similarly positioned. As a result, the first two are placed on a self-directed epistemological setting, whereas the latter two are other-directed. The ensuing moral intuitions may, thus, be differently aimed in regards to their orientation or more broadly intention. After providing concrete examples of these differences of intuition and intention, it will be concluded that, taking into account how “moral agency” requires an element of other-directedness, it is moral intuitions based on affective and embodied empathy that ought to hold normative primacy.

Robert Audi

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## Intuition, Understanding, and Self-Evidence

### I. Two Conceptions of Intuitions

- A. Doxastic: intuitions as a kind of belief
- B. Experiential: intuitions as occurrent, non-doxastic, broadly intellectual, and characteristically presentational
- C. Five notions to be explicated for understanding of intuition of either kind and ethical intuitionism in general:
  - 1. Cognitive intuitions: intuitions *that p*—propositional *content*
  - 2. Intuitiveness: *p's appearing intuitive*—evoking what might be called the sense of non-inferential credibility;
  - 3. Propositional intuitions: propositional *constitution*—propositions taken to be intuitively known; cf. data.
  - 4. Property intuitions: roughly, direct apprehensions of concepts, properties, or relations;
  - 5. Facultative intuition: a kind of apprehensional capacity, roughly a non-inferential capacity by which we know what we intuitively do know
- D. Types of propositional objects of cognitive intuitions: singular, general, necessary, contingent, a priori, empirical;
- E. Categories of possible content of cognitive intuitions: at least normally, non-sensory; cf. perceptual content and non-inferential knowability.
- F. Evidential potential: doxastic intuitions can transmit justification; experiential intuitions can confer it. Cf. knowledge.



1. The apparent prevalence of the doxastic conception in ethics (at least in the twentieth century) and of the experiential conception in at least recent epistemology
2. A possible explanation of this difference (and of why both conceptions are needed)

## II. Self-Evidence

- A. The evident includes the perceptually evident.
  1. 'It is evident that p' is factive.
  2. Being evident, like being self-evident, does not entail being compelling (entailing belief upon comprehending consideration).
- B. Self-evidence: a self-evident proposition is, roughly, a truth such that any adequate understanding of it meets two conditions: (a) in virtue of having that understanding, one is justified in believing the proposition (i.e., has justification for believing it, whether or not one in fact believes it); and (b) if one believes the proposition on the basis of that understanding of it, then one knows it.
- C. Self-evidence entails neither unprovability nor obviousness, nor compellingness.
- D. Adequate understanding: a multifaceted notion with semantic, extensional, inferential, critical, and explanatory dimensions
- G. A Rossian example: the prima facie obligation not to lie
  1. One interpretation: Informationally speaking to someone self-evidently entails there being, and at least normally, the speaker's having, a reason not to lie to that person.
  2. The reason is overridable but sufficiently strong to justify abstaining from lying in the absence of any conflicting reason.

### III. Understanding, Justification, and Reasons

- A. If adequate understanding of a self-evident proposition entails having justification for believing it, does understanding constitute a reason for believing it? If reasons are expressible by that-clauses, then apparently not.
  - 1. Facts as well as true propositions are so expressible. Is it would the fact that one understands  $p$ , not one's understanding itself, that justifies one's belief that  $p$ ?
  - 2. Is this fact equivalent to the concrete state of affairs, my understanding  $p$ ?
  - 3. An instructive perceptual analogy
- B. The distinction between reasons and grounds
- C. The connection between this distinction and the difference between inferential and non-inferential justification
- D. The ontological side of the perceptual analogy
  - 1. Neutrality with respect to the possible contingency of the self-evident (and the a priori in general)
  - 2. Explains why the self-evident need not be analytic

### IV. Is Intuitionism Without Self-Evidence Possible?

- A. Objects of intuitive knowledge need not be self-evident or a priori
- B. Non-inferentiality does not entail apriority or necessity
- C. The consequentiality of moral on "descriptive" properties might be argued to be empirical even if non-contingent
- D. Naturalizing moral properties is not required but would be more welcome on this approach than on the moderately rationalist view I favor.

Wojciech Jerzy Bober

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## Is Hare's Archangel a Descriptivist?

In his ethical theory, Richard M. Hare criticized both naturalism and intuitionism as leading to relativism. Moreover, intuitionism is presented by him as the “lower” level of moral thinking that is characteristic, in its pure form, to persons who are completely morally unreflective. Our moral intuitions are, according to Hare, either obtained from other persons or revealed from strokes of “critical thinking.” As critical thinking is possible for us only to a certain degree, human moral thinking is a mixture composed of both kinds, critical and intuitive. On the other hand, Hare describes moral judgments as prescriptive, universalizable and overriding. These three characteristics are to fulfill the most important features of judgments: prescriptivity standing for their normative character, universalizability for their applicability in similar situations whereas overridingness for their superiority over other kinds of judgments (e.g. aesthetic) or desires.

The goal of this paper is to show that both these views, concerning the nature of moral judgments and the nature of critical moral thinking, cannot be easily hold together since the analysis of what Hare thinks to be critical moral thinking reveals it to be incompatible with his characteristics of moral judgments. Hare's archangel would be hardly in any need of formulating prescriptive and universalizable judgments as the judgments would be applied to singular cases and formed separately for each of them. Similarly, there would be no problem of overridingness as archangelic judgments would be consequential on archangel's will on the basis of

their formulation rather than their choice as moral ones. Moreover, the ideal level of archangelic thinking makes more visible another problem inherent to Hare's position, i.e. the problem of forced uniformity of moral judgments in that theory (a feature that had been already criticized in literature by a few authors). So, to hold prescriptive theory, one has either to abandon the model of critical thinking in its archangelic form as a base for moral intuitions or to change account as regards main features of moral judgments.

Robert Cowan

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## Ethical Self-Evidence: Against Moderation

Many non-sceptical ethicists believe that there are some self-evident ethical propositions: propositions that are knowable on the basis of adequately understanding their content. The majority of those hold Minimal: only non-substantive ethical propositions are self-evident. Less popular, and defended by some contemporary intuitionists, is Moderate: in addition to non-substantive propositions, a special class of substantive ethical propositions are self-evident. In this talk I argue that Moderate is untenable. Once Moderates respond to a significant objection to their view - the Understanding Objection - it is *prima facie* plausible that they are committed to something approaching Extreme: every true non-contingent ethical proposition is self-evident. To avoid this, Moderates must identify some epistemologically-relevant distinguishing property(ies) of their special class of substantive propositions. I show that attempts to do so either lead to a collapse into Minimal or fail to block Extreme.

Richard Paul Hoffmann

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## New Intuitionism and Moral Anti-realism

I will explore the possibility of combining new intuitionism with moral anti-realism and claim that intuitionism as an epistemological thesis doesn't imply or presuppose moral realism. Intuitionism in its basic form states that moral judgments express beliefs which can be true or false (cognitivism), and that we are non-inferentially justified in holding some of these beliefs (weak foundationalism). In comparison to classical intuitionism (c.f. Sidgwick, Moore, Ross et. al.), new intuitionism employs lower standards for intuitions: they need not be self-evident and self-evidence does not confer certainty. Intuitionism is often combined with moral realism, the view that there exist some moral facts (existence condition) and that these facts are stance-independent (independence condition) in a nontrivial way (c.f. Shafer-Landau 2003, ch.1). Non-cognitivists deny that moral judgments express beliefs which are truth apt, nihilism (error theory) agrees on cognitivism but denies the existence of moral values: since no truth-makers exist, none of our moral beliefs are true. Anti-realists in comparison agree on cognitivism, but deny the independence of values from some perspective, be it that of an ideal observer, a certain group or the individual itself.

First I will criticize recent accounts of new intuitionism for presupposing a strong connection between intuitionism and realism. This connection is often established by relying on a correspondence theory of truth (c.f. Kulp 2011). But the correspondence theory of truth just states that a proposition P is true iff P corresponds to some fact. Since these facts could be stance-dependent, a corre-

spondence theory of truth on its own doesn't imply realism. Second I will claim that some version of moral anti-realism may equally well rely on moral intuitions as justificatory basic elements. The principle of phenomenal conservatism (Huemer 2007) states that seemings justify beliefs in the absence of contrary evidence. As such, this principle has no apparent connection to a realist interpretation of moral values. It works equally well if moral values do exist but are stance-dependent in a non-trivial way on e.g. the cultural group the moral agent happens to live in. In the absence of contrary evidence or other defeaters the agent will be justified in forming or holding a moral belief based on the seemings he has. Intuitionism, despite of being originally devised to give moral realism a plausible epistemology, may be of equal use in anti-realist theories of moral value.

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## Virtuous Intuition

In the decades following publication of Moore's *Principia Ethica* many metaethical theorists pursued analyses that led away from naturalism, intuitionism, and realism. Later in the twentieth century the critique of prescriptivism, in conjunction with developments concerning moral psychology, motivated a retrieval and reconstruction of virtue-centered ethical thought. Some of the conceptions of virtue did without Aristotle's commitments to a teleological perfectionism though there was still a crucial role for practical wisdom, understood as reflecting naturalistic, realist commitments. Work by Foot, McDowell, Hursthouse, and others shaped this direction of development. Here I defend an intuitionist epistemology of practical wisdom. The epistemic capacity depends upon fluency with a repertoire of relevant concepts, and it involves cognition and sensibility. Nonetheless, the most plausible account of the genuineness of practical wisdom involves intuitionist, realist elements and I argue that there is a crucial role for virtue in explicating the soundness of moral judgments. Making the case for this view involves drawing attention to inadequacies of projectivist and other antirealist accounts of moral judgment.



Maciej Juzaszek

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## Do Psychologists Really Have Nothing Interesting to Say about Moral Intuitions?

Many adherents of ethical intuitionism claim that moral intuitions are non-inferentially justified beliefs. Robert Audi argues that to be so, they have to meet four conditions: 1) they must be non-inferential, so “the intuited proposition is not—at the time it is intuitively held—held on a basis of a premise”<sup>1</sup>; 2) they must be the result of “moderately firm cognition”<sup>2</sup>, i.e. beliefs should be hard to overcome by doubts or counter-evidence; 3) their holder should have at least a minimal understanding of their content; and 4) they should be independent of any former theories and cannot be theoretical hypotheses themselves<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, Audi’s moral intuitions are beliefs that are noninferentially justified simply by their self-evidence. New versions of self-evident intuitionism need to neither appeal to special intuitive cognition nor claim that intuitions must be self-evident for everyone. The most important aspect is that they are justified by mere understanding and not everyone has to understand them to the same extent.

Some psychologists and philosophers (especially these working in Jonathan Haidt’s social intuitionist paradigm<sup>4</sup>) claim that moral intuitions are results of the processes in our minds and have emo-

<sup>1</sup> Audi, Robert. *The good in the right: A theory of intuition and intrinsic value*. Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 34

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, 33-36

tional nature. This way of understanding moral intuitions is completely different from the way in which most of ethical intuitionists understand them. As noted by Antti Kauppinen<sup>5</sup>, philosophers and psychologists actually talk about two different things and that is why the arguments of both groups miss the target. However, my aim is to show that there are some arguments formulated from psychological point of view which have to be taken account by ethical intuitionists or even undermine their positions.

It seems uncontroversial that “firm cognition” or understanding are some phenomena which are strongly associated with the psychological and cognitive processes occurring in human brain. Therefore, to be better understood, they should be the subjects of psychological research. Philosophers cannot ignore the results of the research, since they allow for a better understanding of ability to deliver intuitive beliefs and indirectly content of results of these processes. Recently, many philosophers, psychologists and cognitive scientists have provided arguments undermining the credibility of moral intuitions<sup>6</sup>, but not by simply equating them

<sup>4</sup> Haidt, Jonathan. “The emotional dog and its rational tail: a social intuitionist approach to moral judgment.” *Psychological review* 108.4 (2001); Prinz, Jesse. *The emotional construction of morals*. Oxford University Press, 2007; Cushman, F. A., and Joshua D. Greene. “The philosopher in the theater.” *The Social Psychology of Morality: The Origins of Good and Evil*, APA Press, 2011; Schwitzgebel, Eric, and Cushman, Fiery. “Expertise in Moral Reasoning? Order Effects on Moral Judgment in Professional Philosophers and NonPhilosophers.” *Mind & Language* 27.2 (2012).

<sup>5</sup> Kauppinen, Antti (forthcoming). *Moral Intuition in Philosophy and Psychology*. [in:] *Handbook of Neuroethics*. Levy, Neil & Clausen, Jens (eds.). Springer.

<sup>6</sup> Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter. *Moral skepticisms*. Oxford University Press, 2006; Sinnott-Armstrong, Walter. *The new intuitionism* [in:] *The new intuitionism*. Hernandez, Jill (ed.). Continuum, 2011; Greene, Joshua. *Moral tribes*. The Penguin Press, 2013

with unconscious gut feelings. I will argue that ethical intuitionists will not be able to accurately refute these concerns, as long as they do not accept the fact that psychologists have their say in the field of moral intuitions and it is high time to reconcile the results of (some) philosophical analysis and (some) psychological research.

Christopher B. Kulp

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## Disagreement and the Defensibility of Moral Intuitionism

Although the fortunes of moral intuitionism are certainly on the rise, problems remain. Michael Huemer, one of intuitionism's staunchest contemporary defenders, has observed that "Most experts take the existence of moral disagreement and error as the main reason for rejecting intuitionism.... (*Ethical Intuitionism* [New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005]: 128). This paper takes up what I call the "Disagreement Objection to Moral Intuitionism." It is roughly this: If moral intuitions conflict, there must be falsehood somewhere—genuinely conflicting intuitions cannot simultaneously be true. However, there is no epistemically respectable way to resolve such conflict, because there is no epistemically respectable way to choose between intuitions. We are left with a standoff. But then moral intuitions cannot serve their intended role of providing foundationally justified moral belief and knowledge. Moral intuitionism is therefore otiose. This paper rebuts the Disagreement Objection. It begins with a defense of a doxastic interpretation of intuitions, in particular regarding first-order moral intuitions, which have of been especially important for moral intuitionists; the doxastic interpretation has the added advantage of giving the Disagreement Objection more traction. The paper then argues that, *contra* the Disagreement Objection, we have many effective resources to adjudicate intuitional conflict. Analogies between intuitional and non-intuitional disagreement are exploited, and the concept of an "intuitional background"—in both moral and non-moral contexts—is developed to show how intuitional disa-

greement may be resolved. The paper concludes with a diagnosis of the genesis of the Disagreement Objection: It is largely based on a lurking Fallacy of Perspectival Infallibility, and an instance of the Fallacy of Justificational Isolation. The Disagreement Objection fails to refute moral intuitionism.

Katarzyna de Lazari-Radek

University of Łódź

## **Which Intuitions Should We Trust? The Failure of Using the Experience Machine Example as an Argument against Hedonism**

One way of arguing against ethical premises is to create an imaginary example that would check our intuitions and lead us to a judgment that contradicts the ethical premise that is the target of the argument. Most analytical philosophers are ready to build their arguments on such examples. Should we trust our responses? Should we trust all of them? How are we to check if they are mistaken or not?

Sidgwick, an intuitionist and utilitarian, did not believe that the origins of our intuitions can tell us anything about their validity. He firmly defended ethics from a general skeptical attack grounded on any theory of the origins of our moral intuitions. He did acknowledge however that a more limited claim could be successful. He wrote: “It may, however, be possible to prove that some ethical beliefs have been caused in such a way as to make it probable that they are wholly or partially erroneous.”

One of the best-known argument against hedonism, as well as all other mental state theories, was presented by Nozick in the shape of an imaginary “Experience machine”. His example plays on our intuitions that we would not like to plug into a machine that would give us all the sensations that we want. A hedonist, it seems, would have to say that this is what we should do. But, the argument goes, who would like to have fake experiences instead of living in reality?

Current research on the experiment shows that our intuition that we would not want to plug in may be not exactly the result of our reluctance of living in a fake world, but rather something that economists call “status quo bias”. If so, it seems that first it cannot be used as an argument against mental state theories, and second, it arises a question how to differentiate an intuition that is reliable from the one that is not. I will try to answer this question.

Chrys Margaritidis

University of Reading

## Understanding and the Moral Intuitions of Psychopaths

Ethical intuitionists hold that some ethical propositions are known to us non-inferentially. David Ross claims that we recognize the truth of specific prima facie duties,<sup>1</sup> reasons counting in favor of a course of action, non-inferentially: my making the promise to help a friend prepare for an exam presents itself as a reason to help my friend. The process of recognition is non-inferential similarly to recognizing the truth of a mathematical axiom: when I consider the situation at hand, it becomes self-evident that making that promise is a reason to keep it given my ability to understand moral concepts and circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

There is nothing controversial about arriving at moral knowledge inferentially.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the intuitionist's commitment to knowing moral principles non-inferentially limits his options. Often, intuitionists use the concept of understanding to establish the non-inferentiality of basic moral knowledge. For Audi, certain moral propositions are self-evidently true: we come to believe

<sup>1</sup> This is my preferred interpretation of Ross's prima facie duties conceived as moral reasons we weigh before we act. This view is defended by Stratton-Lake in various articles, most notably in his "Eliminativism about Derivative Prima Facie Duties" in Hurka (2011).

<sup>2</sup> Ross (1930), *The Right and the Good*, pp. 32-3

<sup>3</sup> For instance, a rule utilitarian considering a trolley case can calculate the utilities of different outcomes, compare them and then infer that the best course of action, one she finds morally permissible, is to change the course of the train and kill the man standing alone on the tracks.



them when we adequately understand them, and we know them if we believe them based on that understanding.<sup>4</sup> Bealer uses the idea of determinately possessing a concept, analyzed as fully understanding a concept under specific restrictions, to support the claim that intuitions are basic sources of evidence.<sup>5</sup>

Most ethical intuitionists then claim that: (a) understanding a moral proposition to a high degree justifies us in believing it and (b) some moral propositions can be known to us non-inferentially when understood completely. Bedke<sup>6</sup> criticizes the first position by insisting that while understanding could be sufficient for recognizing the truth of analytical propositions,<sup>7</sup> the same cannot be said for substantive moral propositions. Simple empirical propositions like “all crows are black” seem to pose problems: how can merely understanding that proposition justify one in believing it? And how could merely understanding “one should keep her promises” justify one in believing it? Ethical intuitionists need an account of how understanding leads to justification, especially for moral propositions.<sup>8</sup>

I respond to this challenge by examining how psychopaths fail to adequately appreciate moral circumstances while exhibiting the ability to recognize right from wrong. I demonstrate that moral understanding entails more than flawless conceptual competence,

<sup>4</sup> Audi (1999), “Self-Evidence”, pp. 207-10

<sup>5</sup> Bealer (1999), “A Theory of the A Priori”, pp. 37-47

<sup>6</sup> In addition to Bedke (2008), “Ethical Intuitions: What They Are, What They Are Not, and How They Justify”, Chudnoff (2012), “Is Intuition Based on Understanding?” and Stratton-Lake (2014), “Intuitionism in Ethics” (unpublished manuscript) have raised similar concerns.

<sup>7</sup> An analytical proposition is one whose truth become apparent when one recognizes the meaning of the words involved in it, for example ‘all vixens are female foxes’.

<sup>8</sup> Bedke (2008), pp.254-5

expanding Pritchard's<sup>9</sup> account of understanding as a cognitive achievement. I argue that, in addition to conceptual competence, moral understanding involves also the sense of reciprocity and pattern recognition. I show how this tri-partite conception of moral understanding can be used to justify basic moral principles non-inferentially.

The case of the psychopath also demonstrates that the role of moral understanding should not be confined to the definitions of moral terms. Following Ross, I argue that moral understanding forms the basis for our moral reasons and deliberations before acting. This practical aspect of morality and the deliberative nature of humans<sup>10</sup> are indispensable. For this reason, we are warranted to use our moral understanding to ground our moral reasons and to justify our actions. In these circumstances, that one may fail to attain moral knowledge by reaching an adequate level of conceptual competence is largely irrelevant.

<sup>9</sup> Pritchard (2009), "Knowledge, Understanding and Epistemic Value"

<sup>10</sup> Parts of my discussion here are inspired by Enoch (2011), *Taking Morality Seriously*

Voin Milevski

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## In Defence of Perceptual Intuitionism

Epistemological intuitionists maintain that we can know directly (i.e., intuitively) that certain things are good or right on their own account. According to some epistemological intuitionists, we can know these things directly because the propositions which state that these things are good or right are self-evident. On the other hand, a number of epistemological intuitionists have insisted that it is quite possible to have moral knowledge in a very straightforward way—by perception. In other words, perceptual intuitionists claim that making a correct moral judgment can be the upshot of something like sense-perception. However, there are a number of significant and very serious objections to the possibility of moral perception.

Now, as philosophers often point out, there are many evident similarities between our judgments about pain and our moral judgments (e.g., the existence of a very close connection between these judgments and the motivation to act in accordance with what these judgments prescribe). The main intention of my paper is to use this similarity in order to defend a version of the perceptual intuitionism. Namely, although pain appears to be a simple, homogenous experience, it is actually a complex experience comprising sensory-discriminative, emotional-cognitive, and behavioral components (Grahek, 2007). These components are normally linked together, but they can become disconnected and, therefore, they can exist separately. That is how two radical dissociation syndromes in human pain experience (i.e., pain without

painfulness and painlessness (and painlessness without pain) are both possible and explicable. The first syndrome is characterized by the complete dissociation of the sensory dimension of pain from its affective, cognitive, and behavioral components. This radical dissociation syndrome of human pain experience may reveal the truly complex nature of pain, its major constitutional elements, and the proper role these elements play in overall pain experience.

It is my belief that the same kind of account that Grahek proposed for human pain experience could be equally successful when it is applied to moral intuitions. Hence, in my paper I will attempt to defend a new meta-ethical position; a position according to which moral intuitions are complex and have essentially the same structure as human pain experience. Moreover, I will present arguments in order to show how this new version of intuitionism can successfully deal with some of the most serious arguments that seek to refute this ethical position.

Keywords: epistemological intuitionism, perception, human pain experience, amorality.

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Wiktor Piotrowski

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## Inductive Intuitionism of Marian Przełęcki

Marian Przełęcki presented his version of intuitionism called “inductive intuitionism” in his book “Sense and Truth in Ethics” from 2005. The main idea of his paper is to treat moral intuition as a prominent source of information in analogy to the empirical knowledge. The basis of this thesis is concept of Kazimierz Ajdukiewicz from his article: “Postępowanie człowieka” in which he understood moral intuition as grounded in some sort of emotional experience. Because of that, we can be more specific about what moral intuition is and treat it more like *a posteriori* rather than *a priori* knowledge, which is connected to emotional values held in objects. Marian Przełęcki claims that inductive intuitionism can successfully deal with classical problems of intuitionism, which is due to more exact explanation of the nature of moral intuition. In my presentation, I would like to show some of the solutions which are provided by inductive intuitionism on the basis of Brandt’s objections to intuitionistic standpoint. Moreover, I would like to point out these aspects of inductive intuitionism that differentiate it from other versions of intuitionism. The main point here will be the rejection of indefinability of moral terms. It seems that Marian Przełęcki’s theory has some very interesting points and gives a fresh look on the foundations of the whole intuitionism. Due to its empiric-like character, it can provide some helpful solutions without creating additional assumptions. Moreover, it has potential to incorporate additional data from contemporary psychological theories and research. After this brief presentation of induc-

tive intuitionism, pointing out its advantages and disadvantages, I would like to place it on the general map of metaethics. Besides, I would like to compare it shortly to a few most recent theories and identify particular differences and similarities. Finally, I will demonstrate why it is a new and interesting point of view, how it can be coherently incorporated into contemporary metaethical theories and what chances and treats it has in the future.

Scott Robbins

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## The Good Intuitor: Trained Emotions, Good Habits, and Practical Wisdom

Recent empirical work in the field of moral and evolutionary psychology has cast doubt on the epistemic status of our moral intuitions. Robert Audi (2013) suggests that moral psychologists fail to distinguish between self-evidence and obviousness. This failure fosters premature conclusions about the value of our intuitions – conclusions that render them epistemically impotent (see e.g. Sinnott-Armstrong 2010). Recognizing that *reflection* can be necessary to ‘see’ the self-evident truth of a proposition allows that some will ‘see’ the truth while others will not. This overcomes the problem of moral disagreement so often cited by moral psychologists arguing against intuitionism.

This conception of self-evidence can be illustrated by the example of an autostereogram. Autostereograms are pictures that create the illusion of a 3D image from a 2D image. You do not necessarily see the 3D image right away (it looks like a randomly generated mess of colors); however if you stare at it from in the right way you will see the 3D image (hopefully!). In this way, the only thing necessary to see the 3D image is the picture itself – hence, its self-evidence. Intuitions can be said to deliver truths in the same way. We must look at the proposition in the ‘right way’. This implies that some people will be better intuitors than others.

Audi hints at the idea that there are people good at intuiting – implying that there are people who are not so good at intuiting. He speaks of “conscientious intuitionists” and the idea that “practical



wisdom” can come to our aid when there is a conflict among intuited moral truths. But how are we to become good at intuiting?

Looking at intuitionism in this light allows us to see the empirical work done in this area from a different angle. Instead of showing that intuitionism is wrong, it may simply show that many people are bad intuitors. Acknowledging this will allow us to use this empirical data to understand how people can become better intuitors.

First, the data which suggests that our ethical judgments are driven by irrational emotions (e.g. Haidt 2001) – which are both innate and encultured – calls on us to train our emotions to ‘see’ what has been prescribed by reason. This casts intuition as the “autopilot or autofocus culmination of the process of rational deliberation that trained and experienced agents have already gone through” (Krstiansson 2014). Second, in order to become a “trained and experienced” agent, we should habituate ourselves in an Aristotelian sense in order that we can become better at ‘seeing’ the relevant truths in similar situations without inference (intuiting).

In this way, intuitionists need not be threatened by empirical data collected by moral psychologists and should instead simply ignore their drastic conclusions. This allows us to not throw the baby out with the bathwater and develop a moral epistemology which is reinforced by moral psychology rather than undermined by it.

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## Ethical Intuitions and Emotions as Doxastic States

Ethical intuitions and emotions are currently hotly debated in metaethics and empirical psychology. Empirical psychologists claim to debunk confidence in our ability to make moral judgments, as these are supposedly based on irrational, unconscious emotions, intuitions and gut reactions. They interpret ethical intuitions and emotions in a non-doxastic way. Several contemporary philosophers also argue for non-doxastic accounts of ethical intuitions and emotions (so-called ‘seemings’). Ethical intuitionists on the other hand have understood intuitions as doxastic and cognitive but non-emotional.

In this presentation I argue that ethical intuitionism can be combined with a cognitive theory of emotions. This provides for a new understanding of ethical intuitions and emotions, namely as doxastic states. I will argue that moral emotions are necessary for moral knowledge, because they provide us with moral understanding. Moral emotions contain moral judgments, they are affective and cognitive at the same time. The affective phenomenology of emotions provides for a richness of experience that cannot be substituted by a purely cognitive state. Moral intuitions (basic moral beliefs) are paradigmatically moral emotions. Moral emotions are not typically deductive, inferential or strictly argumentative. Rather, through emotions we judge the moral value of a situation in a direct, experiential way. Moral emotions such as sympathy, compassion, shame and guilt provide us with access to the moral value of a situation, action or person. Moral emotions are fundamental moral

experiences on which we can base further moral reasoning. This is what Pritchard tried to capture with the expression ‘an act of moral thinking’ in order to elucidate moral intuitions. However, the idea that moral intuitions are emotions can give us a much richer understanding of moral intuitions: moral intuitions are paradigmatically ‘felt value judgments’. This doxastic interpretation of ethical intuitions and emotions combines the Humean idea that emotions are crucial for our moral experience with the intuitionist idea that moral judgments are direct, non-inferential, basic beliefs concerning objective, non-reductive moral truths.

Said Saillant

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## The Demise of Moral Philosophy?

Moral beliefs have come under evolutionary fire – and rightly so. In fact, those leading the charge have not made the case against our justification for moral belief as forceful as actual evolutionary considerations allow. I aim to show that an adaptationist explanation of our moral psychology (and thus moral beliefs and intuitions) defeats our *ultima facie* justification for moral belief irrespective of one's meta-ethical views. Indeed, if the argument works, it causes trouble for the whole of ethical inquiry – let alone views on the nature or objectivity or epistemology of morality.

More precisely, evolutionary considerations concerning the evolution of our *capacity* for moral belief defeats our epistemic justification for holding moral beliefs. I argue that it is biologically unrealistic to suppose that the genetic underpinnings needed for reliable moral belief formation would ever be naturally selected. In brief, since moral beliefs help produce behavior that is adaptive independently of their truth-value, the evolution of the moral belief-forming mechanism, from inception to present form, would have proceeded exactly as it actually did in the absence of moral reality and thus, I argue, its current operation in us is epistemically bankrupt.

The argument under consideration differs from other evolutionary debunking arguments in that it does not rely on the assumption of moral realism and because it concludes that our epistemic justification for holding moral beliefs is *permanently* defeated. I then consider and respond to various objections, many of which cause

trouble for previous attempts to debunk morality (including the non-evolutionary ones). Importantly, I entertain a Moorean objection on which the extent of our pre-existing justification for moral beliefs is such that evolutionary considerations cannot justifiably cause us to doubt them. I argue in reply that, on the evolutionary explanation, it follows that we never had any epistemic justification for moral belief to begin with, which, if I'm right, means that no form of moral intuitionism is true.

I end with a discussion of the epistemic predicament in which moral philosophers – both normative ethicists and meta-ethicists – find themselves if the argument is successful. In light of the argument against our justification for pre-theoretic moral beliefs, I cast doubt on the status of moral philosophy as the epistemically reputable field of inquiry it purports to be. Unless the moral evolutionary debunking argument is somehow rebutted, whether the work of moral philosophers has anything of epistemic merit, includes anything of genuine cogency, is an open question. I conclude that evolutionary considerations do not only lead to moral skepticism, they can also lead to skepticism about moral philosophy's epistemic worth.

Krzysztof Saja

University of Szczecin

## Judgements about Proper Functions of Morality as the Basic Metaethical Intuitions

Most theories of ethics rest on some kind of intuitions. There are different types of such basic beliefs. For example, early Aristotelian philosophers start from metaphysical presuppositions about teleology of the world; Kantians ground their theories on intuitions about reasons; consequentialists built them on the concept of “rational choice”; many analytic philosophers ground them on linguistic platitudes and “the language of morals” while others directly on moral rules and judgements that are known by apt emotional responses or some kind of rational procedures. The history of ethics shows us different approaches that are based on different types of intuitions. In the paper I propose similar route for justifying an ethical theory but I want to focus on some special kind of intuitions. They are beliefs about proper functions of morality. There are many such functions that are well recognized in history of ethics and they should be treated as different, plural and fundamental metaethical beliefs. For example, Kantians are certain that morality should be all about reasonable agreement, utilitarians that it should be all about making world a better place and contemporary virtue moral philosophers that it should be all about making individual person happy or perfecting her human nature. However, most ethical theories presuppose that there is only one main role of morality and that the best ethical theory should be based on it. Nevertheless, all single-role theories will always be criticized by those who believe in other answer to the question

“What should be morality for?”. Therefore the best ethical theory should accommodate all these different metaethical intuitions in one unifying account that I call the Hybrid Function Consequentialism. In the paper I will investigate these fundamental intuitions and try to justify that they are the right beliefs to start from.



Russ Shafer-Landau

University of Wisconsin-Madison

## Intuitions and Moral Disagreement

In this talk I first present my understanding of what an intuition is, and then explain how I think that intuitions can justify beliefs. I then turn to three skeptical challenges. (1) Intuitions cannot serve as evidence; that it seems to me that p is no evidence that p is true. But a belief is justified only if it is supported by good evidence. So intuitions cannot justify our moral beliefs. (2) The breadth of moral disagreement undermines intuition's ability to serve as a source of epistemic justification. Disagreement reveals intuition to be unreliable, and it is therefore disqualified from serving as a basic source of epistemic justification. (3) Certain facts about moral disagreement undermine any plausible intuitionist theory of doxastic justification. In the face of moral disagreement, the final, non-presumptive doxastic justification of all intuition-based moral beliefs must be inferential. I try to diagnose the appeal of each of these skeptical challenges and then try to show why they are unsound.

Sean Sinclair

Leeds University

## **An Intuitionist / Non-naturalist Explanation of Problems with Forming Moral Judgments Based on Testimony or Moral Theory**

I will argue that good moral judgment is essentially a response to reasons of the right kind, not just a getting of the right answer. I aim to show that normative moral theories such as utilitarianism and Kantianism should not be taken as decision procedures.

I give examples of attempts to apply normative theories in ordinary moral decision making to show that it's a bad idea to take the generalisation given in a normative theory and try and apply it to specific cases.

However, unlike other anti-theorists, my aim is not to show that moral theories are false. I do not deny that a moral theory might reliably tell us the right thing to do. However it is unlikely to adequately characterise our reasons for doing it. Grand generalising theorists should see their role as being to explain our moral practices, not to be part of them.

Admittedly this seems paradoxical. If a moral theory is true, how can it be anything but an improvement over ordinary reasoning to appeal to that theory as a reason for acting as the theory prescribes in a given case?

I draw an analogy with moral testimony. Moral testimony is widely suspected of giving suboptimal reasons for acting as recommended, even if the agent has good reason to believe that the source of testimony is highly reliable. I offer cases to show that intuitively, reliance on moral theory as a decision procedure suffers a similar defect to testimony, ie a problem that it bypasses

the kind of considerations we ordinarily find compelling when reaching our moral judgments.

I contend that the moral non-naturalist is better placed than other metaethical theorists to vindicate our intuitive suspicions of deriving moral judgments from testimony and normative theory, by giving a convincing explanation of why they are not an ideal way to reach moral judgments.

To give the non-naturalist account, I contrast judgments formed intuitively with inferred judgments. My account of intuitive judgments relies on Audi's account of the self-evidence of the propositions which form their content.

I argue that the self-evidence of, say, the duty to keep a promise is revealing. Specifically, it reveals the real value of keeping that promise, where that real value is conceived in non-naturalist terms. The reality of the value is the best explanation of the self-evidence of the proposition.

But this picture raises a puzzle. If the considerations which influence us in ordinary reflection are the best considerations to attend to, how can a normative theory which does not mention those considerations be true? I offer a response in terms of the structure of values. Taking ordinary, self-interested considerations as a comparison, what's valuable is not, say, utility, but, for example, the cool tangy mouth feel of Scanlon's coffee ice cream. As Sayre-McCord points out, the fact that the ice cream will maximise the agent's expected utility is not an extra reason for them to choose it. Perhaps the same applies to moral values. When a utilitarian says that an action maximises utility, perhaps they merely show that there are reasons for doing it - not what those reasons are.

I offer various hypothetical cases with a similar structure, in which agents can endorse true claims, with justification, and yet lack significant information about the facts in virtue of which those claims are true.

I conclude that the fact that we find certain moral propositions self-evident can be taken as a marker of the reality of the values we attribute. We have an epistemic duty to know about these values, but testimony and normative theories will not reveal them. Thus normative theories do not tell us everything there is to know about moral reasons. (And for similar reasons, nor does moral testimony).

Philip Stratton-Lake

University of Reading

## Self-evidence, Intuition, and Justification

Contemporary intuitionists, such as Audi and Shafer-Landau, define a self-evident proposition partly as a proposition or truth of which an adequate understanding is sufficient justification for believing it. I think this definition cannot be correct, as I deny that our understanding of a proposition could provide justification for believing it. I deny this because I think that  $p$  must be able to provide a reason to believe  $q$  if  $p$  justifies us in believing  $q$ , and I argue that our understanding of  $p$  gives us no reason to believe  $p$ . But if our understanding of a self-evident proposition does not justify us in believing it, what does? I think intuition, appropriately understood, provides this justification, and we should revise our definition of a self-evident proposition accordingly. I finish by drawing out the implications of this revised account of self-evidence.

Artur Szutta

University of Gdańsk

## Do Ethical Seemings Justify our Ethical Beliefs?

The presentation concerns the issue of ethical seemings and the question whether they are able at all to justify our ethical beliefs. Michael Huemer claims that all seemings have some degree of justificatory power. According to phenomenal conservatism (PC), advocated by Huemer, “if it seems to (a subject) *S* that *p*, then in the absence of defeaters, *S* thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that *p*.” Ethical seemings, as seemings, have therefore justificatory power. This idea however, especially PC itself, has met a wide criticism from various authors (ex. L. Bonjour, M. DePaul, J. DePoe, C. Littlejohn, P. Markie, or R. Cowan).

Especially interesting is Robert Cowan’s rejection of the claim that we could argue on the basis of PC that ethical seemings, as seemings, justify our ethical beliefs. Cowan offers a number of reasons why we should not rely on PC in order to defend epistemic value of ethical seemings. One of the objections is that the defense of ethical seemings is based on so called self-defeat argument, i.e. that denying any justificatory power of ethical seemings, entails denying justificatory power of seemings in general; and as such argument to be conclusive needs to be based on some seemings, it deprives itself of its necessary seeming basis. Cowan argues that if we accept a restricted version of PC (RPC) rejecting ethical seemings need not lead to self-defeat. He also claims that one can point at relevant differences between ethical seemings and those categories of seemings that are able to render justification. Ethical seemings seem then unable to justify.

The goal of this presentation is thus to critically analyze Cowan's arguments, the hypothesis being that this criticism is insufficient to conclude that ethical seemings do not justify, and that PC still seems to efficiently support the claim that ethical seemings justify to some extent. I put emphasis on the distinction between actual justification and justification *prima facie*. A neat analysis of what it means to justify *prima facie* allows one to have less reasons to reject PC. I also want to show that it is difficult to offer such a version of RPC that would avoid self-defeat, and show that ethical seemings have such features (ex. emotionality, wishful thinking, or some phenomenal differences between ethical seemings and other seemings - pointed by Cowan) which would impede their ability to *prima facie*, at least to some extent, justify ethical beliefs.

Natasza Szutta

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## Moral Intuitions of *Phronimos* and their Empirical Adequacy

Contemporary virtue ethics, after gaining its strong position in ethics during the last decades of the twentieth century, has lately become an object of radical criticism. Situationists (J. Doris, G. Harman, M. Merritt) inspired by the results of the research in social and cognitive psychology, question empirical adequacy of moral psychology on which virtue ethics was based. In their view, not dispositions and character, but situational factors decisively determine human behavior and thinking. At first this criticism was focused on questioning the existence of ethical virtues, which would explain stable, consistent and morally integrated actions; then, the critics moved on to questioning the ideal of practical wisdom (*phronesis*).

*Phronesis* plays a very important role in Aristotelian virtue ethics. Without *phronesis*, virtues would be merely automatic habits resulting in stiffly defined behavior. In the light of Aristotelian ethics however, virtuous is acting “*at the right time, about the right things, towards the right people, for the right end, and in the right way, is the mean and best; and this is the business of virtue*” [EN1106b16-17]. The measure of „what is right” is defined by agent’s *phronetic* grasp of what is relevant, fine, noble, and necessary in given circumstances. Aristotle seems to distinguish two kinds of *phronetic* cognition - one deliberative (working out what to do in defined circumstances), and the other, intuitive (understood as a kind of perception – “seeing” what is „here and now” required).



In my presentation I consider the question of how to understand intuition of *phronimoi* – morally wise persons; and the question of the relations between deliberative and intuitive function of phronesis. I will also try to respond to situationistic criticism of practical wisdom. Situationists notice that majority of our cognitive and motivational processes are automatic and unconscious, often incongruent with declared moral values of agents. In the light of this, the model of practical wisdom seems to be problematic. Responding to this criticism, I will analyze a number of experiments, to which it refers, and ask to what extent these experiments allow situationists for their radical conclusions. I will also present contemporary dual – process theories of cognition and show how they fit with the Aristotelian idea of practical wisdom.

Daniel Wodak

Princeton University

## An Open Question about Intuitionism

In *Principia Ethica* (1903), G.E. Moore advanced and defended a version of moral intuitionism. Intuitionism was subsequently dismissed, and even derided, in the face of seemingly devastating objections. In *Moral Realism: A Defense* (2003), Russ Shafer-Landau joined the ranks of the new moral intuitionists who have sought to refine and defend Moore's view. Shafer-Landau's responses to the most well-known objections to Moore's metaethics are compelling. Yet Shafer-Landau and other intuitionists who follow in Moore's footsteps have inherited an unstable package of views, which threatens to undermine their project.

The instability in the package of views that Shafer-Landau et al inherit from Moore arises out of the conjunction of their employment of the open-question argument to reject moral naturalism and their appeal to self-evidence in moral epistemology. Moral naturalists claim that moral properties like *goodness* reduce to natural properties like *desire*. According to the open-question argument, if goodness reduces to natural properties like desire, then questions such as "I know I desire *x*, but is *x* good?" should be closed, but all such questions seem open, so goodness not reducible in terms of natural properties like desire. Shafer-Landau claims that despite objections, the open-question argument creates "a substantial burden of proof against reductive naturalism", because "there has been ample time to consider and reflect, to become acquainted with the best that reductionists have to offer", and yet such questions still seem open.

Now consider the appeal to self-evidence: according to Shafer-Landau, “beliefs are self-evident if they have as their content self-evident propositions”, and a “proposition  $p$  is self-evident” if and only if “adequately understanding and attentively considering just  $p$  is sufficient to justify believing that  $p$ .”

Why is this package of views unstable? For any purportedly self-evident proposition such as “If I desire  $x$ ,  $x$  is good”, Shafer-Landau et al must explain why plenty of philosophers who adequately understand and attentively consider that proposition, with “ample time to consider and reflect”, do not believe it. Shafer-Landau, and other intuitionists, offer a number of explanations for why this is so. But all such explanations are also open to the naturalist who needs to explain why “I know I desire  $x$ , but is  $x$  good?” seems to be an open question. If after all such explanations are exhausted the open-question argument still creates a substantive burden of proof against reductive naturalism, why does it not also create a substantive burden of proof against non-naturalist moral intuitionism? After considering responses, I conclude that new intuitionists must either give up on the open-question argument against naturalism or give up on self-evidence (and appeal to *seemings* instead).

Bill Wringle

Bilkent University

## Moral Phenomenology and Moral Intuitions

In *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy*, Bernard Williams evoked the possibility of ‘a way of doing moral philosophy that started from the ways in which we experience our ethical life. Such a philosophy would reflect on what we believe; feel; take for granted; the ways in which we confront obligations and recognize guilt and responsibility; the sentiments of guilt and shame. It would involve a phenomenology of ethical life.’<sup>1</sup>

Williams observes that such a philosophy ‘could be a good philosophy’; and mentions, as examples of experiences on which his ‘phenomenology of ethical life’ might take as material for reflection, certain kinds of moral emotion – in particular, ‘the sentiments of guilt and shame.’ The subjunctive mood governing Williams’ remark suggests that he regards this possibility. However, some moral philosophy within the analytic tradition – particularly work which has dealt with topics such as responsibility, blame, and moral agency has taken its cue from precisely these experiences. In particular, Bill Wringle has recently argued that considerations drawn from moral phenomenology support the view that there can be collective obligation without collective agents (Wringle 2013).

Here, I shall consider whether appeals to moral phenomenology of the sort Williams suggests rely on an intuitionist moral epistemology. One argument which suggests they are relies on an

<sup>1</sup> Williams 1985 p93

apparent analogy between the emotional deliverances with which moral phenomenology deals and the deliverances of perception. (Cowan 2014, de Sousa 1987, Tappolet 2000) I argue that although the analogy between emotions and perceptual states is illuminating, this line of argument misrepresents the role that emotional responses play in appeals to moral phenomenology. Within that context, those responses are best treated as ones which stand in need of vindicatory explanation, rather than ones which afford us a direct insight into moral realities (Wiggins 1987).

A second line of argument on which phenomenological deliverances are a non-perceptual source of a priori insight into the moral domain may seem more attractive, insofar as it explains why we should treat phenomenological considerations as having particular epistemic authority. However, it is ultimately untenable: it fails to satisfy an important explanatory constraint required for a realist construal of the subject matter of such a source of insight (Wright 1992). Instead, appeals to phenomenology can be best accommodated within a reflective equilibrium-based epistemology. In this context such appeals may be referred to as ‘intuitions’ (Daniels 1996.)

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## Wittgenstein on Moral Intuitionism

Ludwig Wittgenstein was one of a number of early XX-century philosophers who adhered to moral intuitionism. His “Lecture on Ethics”, as well as part of his private correspondence (with Norman Malcolm) support this claim. In “Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus” Wittgenstein is trying to show (literally) that meaning of our actions lies outside of factual world – what is an idealistic and non-natural approach to ethical matters. This view was presented as the only reasonable solution. Surprisingly, arguments in a contrary vein, against intuitionistic theory may be reconstructed on the basis of thorough analysis of his writings. Thus Wittgenstein was an anti-theoretical intuitionist. Generally, those arguments against intuitionistic theory may be divided into two types.

The first type argument shows problems for internalistic intuitionism (and other internalistic theories) with possibility and necessity. Big Book thought experiment’s output does not consist in that there are no “ethical” sentences but that in language no necessity other than logical is binding. Paradox is as follows: ethics should deliver a criterion of choices (every determination/choice is negation of possibilities), yet all choices must be possible. The content of this argument corresponds with David Hume’s Guillotine and John Mackie’s Argument From Queerness. The main problem is the impossibility to distinguish on language (and thought) basis what is necessary from what is possible. This argument weakens the source of ethical intuitionism as a theory of explaining moral

action. Internalism was suggested as strengthening of William David Ross's intuitionism (as Johnathan Dancy did), but in the light of this argument internalistic theory of intuitionism would be even more paradoxical than its externalistic version.

The second type argument is based on the rule-following problem. Wittgenstein's argument (developed by Saul Kripke) may be applied to moral intuitionism. Intuitionists' answer to this problem reveals that reference to intuition is insufficient without an appeal to "surrounding". Thus intuitionism is not self-reliant. Such reflections correspond to the problem of relativism to which intuitionism was vulnerable from the beginning. An example of the solution to this problem might be the philosophy of John Rawls. In order to avoid relativism, intuitions are only to be considered in the "surrounding" of reflective equilibrium.









