The Role of Intuition in Moral Knowledge

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Abstract

Historically, philosophers have based much knowledge upon intuition, but this tradition found itself under increasing criticism. Claims of intuitive knowledge have been accused of being asserted dogmatically, and when pressed for justification, proponents of intuitive knowledge often fail to provide satisfactory replies. So it is no surprise that intuition as a base for knowledge has come to strike many modern thinkers as suspect. Proponents of intuition have been accused of treating intuition as a superpower able to peer into a Platonistic realm of facts. Not only is it highly dubious whether such a mental faculty could exist, but widespread disagreement on intuitive knowledge casts doubt on the ability of intuition to provide knowledge at all, superpowered or not. This has led some to abandon intuition entirely, and argue that philosophy relying upon intuition is misguided or hopeless. If intuition is epistemically suspect, then moral philosophy is in trouble since intuition is widely used and regarded as epistemically valuable.

In this thesis, I make two substantive claims in defence of intuition. Firstly, that intuition is epistemically valuable. I do this by providing several accounts of what kind of mental state intuition could be. I argue that two accounts fit with intuition's core characteristics particularly well; intuition as a conscious inclination to believe, and intuition as a sui generis seeming state. I then couple these mental states with different views of how intuitions provide knowledge. I argue that both understanding, and reliability accounts are tenable. What then emerges are unmysterious faculties of intuition that are epistemically respectable. In the final chapter, I return to critique intuition's epistemic value by considering debunking arguments hailing from

neuroscience and moral psychology. I find that, with some qualifications, intuition remains epistemically valuable.

My second substantive claim is that if there is moral knowledge to be had, then intuition is essential. I establish this by demonstrating the explicit role of intuition in two of the three major epistemological theory structures in ethics; intuitionism, and reflective equilibrium. I also argue that constructivism also employs intuition, despite the assertions of Christine Korsgaard, who claims that her Kantian constructivism is intuition-free. But first, I rebut Herman Cappelen's argument that intuition plays no significant role in philosophy. Once I rebut Cappelen, the materials required to show that Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism requires intuition become available. I then show, by way of *reductio*, that even for Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism, intuition is essential. With all three major epistemological theory structures in ethics relying upon intuition, intuition's essentiality to moral knowledge is cemented.

Statements of originality & consent

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Acknowledgements

Thesis Introduction

In this thesis I explore the role of intuition in moral philosophy. There are two substantive claims of this thesis. 1) A modest claim that intuition is epistemically valuable in moral philosophy. This claim is made by establishing what intuition is, and then demonstrating how intuition delivers knowledge. 2) More boldly, I claim that, if there is moral knowledge at all, then intuition is essential for that moral knowledge. I do this by assessing an intuition-free conception of moral philosophy, and argue, by way of *reductio*, that intuition is essential. I supplement both claims with a taxonomy of how intuition operates according to different accounts of intuition, and different ethical theory structures. This taxonomy functions to make the role of intuition clearer on each account considered, and on each ethical theory structure and thus support the substantive claims of the thesis. Finally, I defend intuition's epistemic credentials against prominent debunking arguments. I find that intuition remains epistemically valuable, some qualifications notwithstanding.

This thesis contains five chapters, including two challenges to intuition's epistemological value. Broadly, the thesis flows as follows: Chapter 1) establishes how intuition is used within the main epistemological theory structures in ethics. Chapter 2) provides accounts of what kind of mental state intuition is. Chapter 3) builds from the previous chapter and provides accounts of how intuition provides knowledge. This establishes intuition as epistemically valuable. Chapter 4) rebuts the accusation that intuition is philosophically insignificant. Doing this solidifies intuition's status as epistemologically essential in ethics. Chapter 5) assesses debunking arguments of intuition, and finds that intuition remains epistemically valuable.

I begin, in chapter 1, by setting out broad accounts of the three main theory structures in ethical epistemology; intuitionism, coherentism, and constructivism. This chapter's purpose is twofold: 1) provide a framework from which a taxonomy of intuition can be conducted. As such, I avoid in depth discussion of each theory structure, and give general outlines so that intuition's role in each structure is made salient. And 2) establish that there is a *prima facie* case that each ethical epistemology assigns an important role to intuition. I identify one possible holdout to this finding: Christine Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism. I leave this gap to be closed in section 4.2.3 where I argue that even in Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism intuition is essential.

In chapter 2, the nature of intuition as a mental state is considered. This includes core characteristics of intuition (as used by philosophers), and also accounts of what kind of mental state intuition could be. Prominent in the literature are; intuition as a doxastic state, and intuition as a sui generis experiential seeming state. The primary battleground between the different views is the balance of parsimony and a sufficient ontology. Both sides of this debate produce tenable accounts of intuition.

Chapter 3 gives three accounts of how intuition operates to provide knowledge: 1) intuitions are manifestations of understanding, 2) intuitions lead to reliably true beliefs, and 3) intuitions are the phenomenological awareness of a truth-maker for some proposition. This chapter fleshes out how doxastic and seemings accounts of intuition from chapter 2 function to be epistemically valuable, and why different epistemological theory structures have affinities for different kinds of intuition. I argue

that understanding and reliability accounts are superior accounts of how intuition provides knowledge.

Chapter 4 asks the critical question as to whether intuition really is used in philosophy at all. I focus on Herman Cappelen's *Philosophy without Intuitions* as one chief motivator of this view.[1] Cappelen argues that the term "intuition" in philosophy can, at best, function merely to indicate a premise which won't be argued for. I provide two arguments for why Cappelen is wrong. 1) the intuition-free interpretation of many seminal philosophical papers strains credulity. And 2) I take Korsgaard's "intuition-free" Kantian constructivism and argue, by way of *reductio*, that intuition is essential to Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism. This closes the door on the last possibility of "intuition-free" normative moral theory identified in chapter 1. Thus intuition's status as essential to epistemological structures in ethics is cemented.

Chapter 5 takes one last sceptical eye to intuition. I argue that intuition survives as epistemically valuable, but not all intuitions are equally valuable. I consider debunking arguments, arising from neuroscience, moral psychology, and evolutionary psychology. While some intuitions are cast into doubt, importantly, other intuitions are vindicated. This leaves us with three broad tiers of the kind of evidence that intuition provides: 1) essential intuitions that ground conceptual constraints on morality, 2) intuitions that provide *prima facie* evidence, and 3) intuitions whose evidential value is undermined.

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[1] H Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012

1. Theory Structures in Ethics

The primary purpose of this chapter is to give a brief survey of the three main theory structures in ethical epistemology; intuitionism, coherentism, and constructivism. I take each in turn, so to; assess the strengths and weaknesses of each, reveal the underlying motivations behind each view, and critically, explicate the role intuition plays in each view. The substantive finding of this chapter is that while intuition plays different roles in each ethical theory structure, there is a *prima facie* case that intuition is significant in each. This is supported by how these theory structures either explicitly or implicitly offer a significant role for intuition. The scene is then set for the remainder of this thesis to investigate intuition's role, and strengthen the case that intuition is essential for moral theory.

1.1 Intuitionism

Phillip Stratton-Lake suggests that there are two distinct characteristics of intuitionism; i) basic moral propositions are self-evident, and ii) moral properties are non-natural properties.[2] Intuitionism is also sometimes associated with ethical pluralism. However, this chapter will focus only on i) and ask, what is intuitionism's justificatory structure, and might basic moral propositions be?

Typically, intuitionists hold that basic moral propositions can be known without the need of any argument, for example that 'pain is bad'. As such, intuitionism has a foundationalist structure of justification: while many beliefs are inferentially justified

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[2] P Stratton-Lake, 'Intuitionism in Ethics', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2020), EN Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/intuitionism-ethics/>

because of their relation to other beliefs which are justified, ultimately, these justified beliefs derive their justification from their inferential relationship to foundational beliefs which do not require inferential justification from some other belief.

Historically, support for foundationalism was found in the Epistemic Regress Argument, here adapted from Ali Hasan & Richard Fumerton.[3] To set up the argument, note three things. Firstly, it appears that we cannot acquire justification for a belief by inferring it from an unjustified belief. My belief that it was 39 °C yesterday would be unjustified, if I inferred it from an unjustified belief, like a guess. Secondly, it also appears that I need to have some reason to believe that the justification confers probabilistic support. For example, I am unjustified in believing that it was 39 °C yesterday, if I inferred it from watching seven doves flying south. The requirement of needing to be justified in believing that probabilistic support obtains holds true, even if, unbeknownst to me, seven doves flying south did somehow probabilistically support the belief that 39 °C the day before. From these considerations, it appears that justification cannot be conferred by unjustified beliefs. Thirdly, it doesn't appear that one can rely upon a proposition, or even part of a proposition to justify itself - Circular inferences seem inappropriate to confer justification. It would be strange if my belief that it was 39 °C yesterday can be justified merely by my belief that it was 102.2 °F yesterday (with background knowledge that 102.2 °F is equal to 39 °C).

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[3] A Hasan & R Fumerton, 'Foundationalist Theories of Epistemic Justification', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Fall 2018), EN Zalta (ed.),

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2018/entries/justep-foundational/>

Foundationalists assert that this leaves us with two options: either all beliefs are justified inferentially from other beliefs, call this (BJB); or some beliefs are justified without inference from other beliefs, call this (FB). Foundationalists then argue that if (BJB), then the belief that *A* must be justified by inference from a belief that *B*. The belief that *B* must be inferentially justified by a belief in *C*, which must be inferentially justified by a belief in *D… ad infinitum*. The problem with this is that we cannot hope to exhaust the infinite sequence to ever obtain justification. So it cannot be that all justification is inferential. This could lead us to conclude that no justification is possible. Thus, if we think that justification is possible for us, then the correct answer must be (FB), and so foundationalism must be the correct epistemology.

This raises the question as to how a belief can be justified without inference from other beliefs. Dale Jamieson supposes that some special cases of self-referential beliefs justify themselves, for example, the belief that I have beliefs.[4] However, it is difficult to build a substantive moral theory from such meagre foundations. More promisingly, some beliefs might be self-evident. Logical truths like 'all ravens are ravens' are uncontroversially self-evident, but given the conservative nature of logical deduction such logically self-evident truths are also too meagre to produce a substantive moral theory. Jamieson concludes that Intuitionists will need to look beyond simple self-referential beliefs and logical truths in the search for self-evident moral truths.[5] Traditionally, intuitionists have done this by an appeal to moral

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[4] D Jamieson, 'Method and moral theory', in P Singer (ed.), *A Companion to Ethics*, Blackwell Companions to Philosophy, Blackwell Reference, Oxford, 1991, pp. 476-487

[5] Jamieson, 1991, pp. 480-481

intuition, which is thought of as direct apprehension via the understanding of self-evident moral propositions, for example, that 'pain is bad'.

An alternate view of what justifies basic moral propositions is that they are justified by experiences. Much like how perceptual experiences justify perceptual beliefs. Perceptual experiences typically present the world as being a certain kind of way, for example blue, and we take this to justify our belief that some object is blue. Likewise, the basic moral proposition 'it is good to be charitable' experientially presents to us as being true, and this might justify our intuitive moral belief (a belief formed upon a moral intuition). Such accounts of intuition George Bealer terms 'seemings'[6].

Just how seemings are epistemically alike perception attracts little consensus. Bealer proposes that perceptual experiences can lead to reliably true beliefs, and so seemings might lead to reliably true beliefs too.[7] Alternatively perceptual experiences might justify our belief in the content of those experiences because perceptual experiences put us in an awareness relation to what makes our belief true. Typically, the perceptual experience of a dog justifies the belief that a dog is there because we are made aware of that dog. Elijah Chudnoff suggests that in this manner, intuition is analogous to perception.[8] The intuition that 'charity is good' seems true, and justifies

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[6] See pg. 207 in, G Bealer, 'Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy', in MR DePaul & W Ramsey (eds.), Rethinking Intuition: the psychology of intuition and its role in philosophical inquiry, Studies in epistemological and cognitive theory, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 1998, pp. 201-240

[7] See pg. 13 in, G Bealer, "On the Possibility of Philosophical Knowledge", *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 10, 1996, pp. 1-34

[8] E Chudnoff, *Intuition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, pg. 209

the belief that charity is good, because we are made aware of the abstract moral truth that charity is good.

In the pursuit of objective moral truths (which don't depend on what any specific; person, group, or culture think), intuitionism has historically been accused of relying upon two controversial theses. 1) Moral intuitions are a product of a special mental faculty that gives us direct insight into a Platonistic realm of moral forms, call this (SMF). And, 2) moral intuitions are indubitable and infallible, call this (In). (SMF) strikes many contemporary thinkers as "spooky". To address this worry, intuitionists must provide an acceptable account of what kind of mental state intuitions are and how intuitions provide knowledge. From (In), the apparent indubitability strains credulity given the widespread disagreement amongst epistemic peers[9]. Even in the least controversial moral cases, agreement is not unanimous, and dissent is sincere. Infallibility also seems suspect, since it appears that we learn or hone our intuitions with training: philosophers tend to have different intuitions to the lay population. So it is likely that intuitions are not theory neutral, and philosophers tend to intuit in accordance with the theory in which they are steeped. This might be epistemically virtuous: perhaps philosophers are experts. Radiologists have the expertise to be able to intuitively identify broken bones from radiographs. These same radiographs are incomprehensible to a lay person. However, in the moral realm expertise is hard to assess, since the success conditions of moral judgement do not provide feedback to us, like a bad medical diagnosis does. It is also apparent that we often come to doubt and reject our moral intuitions. Often it becomes obvious that intuitions are

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[9] One who is, as far as one can tell, as rational and as thoughtful as one's self on some matter, has considered the same evidence, and with the same conscientiousness.

plain wrong: it is common to intuit that "in-group" persons deserve higher moral standing than those in the "out-group". However most take this intuition to be highly suspect, pointing to the evils grounded in it (such as racism), as well as how it conflicts with a conceptual constraint on morality as impartial. To bring intuitionism into acceptable contemporary thought, intuitionists must also supply a schema for defeasible intuitions.

Foundationalist conceptions of justification are no longer the received view in epistemology. There are two main reasons for this. Firstly, many of the beliefs we take to be justified are neither foundational beliefs nor strictly derived from foundational beliefs. So foundationalism cannot encompass all justification. And secondly, we can never be sure that we have uncovered a foundational belief. That proposed foundational beliefs never attract a general consensus amongst epistemic peers should humble foundationalists: there is always a chance that we are mistaken in our belief. This suggests that we need to confirm that belief before using it as a foundation. If this is the case, it is hard to see how foundationalism can ever get started without a leap of faith that wouldn't be justified under foundationalism's own lights.

1.2 Coherentism

The difficulties facing foundationalism have led to an alternate coherentist viewpoint which takes justification to be holistic. Coherentism, as described in broad strokes by Erik Olsson, posits that a belief is justified by sitting in coherence relations with a

system of beliefs.[10] That is, so long as each belief in the system is supported by inferential connections with other beliefs, and contradictions or other conflicts are sufficiently low, the belief, that forms part of that system, is justified. The bar for getting justification off the ground is much lower than it is for foundationalists. As such, coherentists can explain more of the beliefs we take to be justified.

Note, however, that as each belief has an inferential connection with other beliefs in that system, there is a symmetry of inferential support amongst beliefs, and inferential support can be derived from the belief that was in need of support in the first place. This does solve the infinite regress problem, however this might make coherentist justification appear viciously circular.

In response to charges of vicious circularity, Peter Murphy points out that circularity is not only of the form '*A* supports *A*'.[11] Coherentists employ extended chain of beliefs: *A* is supported by *B*, which is supported by *C*… which supports *A*. Which is more sophisticated and more interconnected, resembling a web more than a simple circle (see W. Quine & J Ullian[12]). However, opponents assert that despite it taking longer to come back around, justification is still ultimately circular.

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[10] E Olsson, 'Coherentist Theories of Epistemic Justification', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2021 Edition), E Zalta (ed.),

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2021/entries/justep-coherence/>

[11] P Murphy, 'Coherentism in Epistemology', *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ISSN 2161-0002, <https://iep.utm.edu/coherent/#H1>, 3 March 2022

[12] W. V. Quine & J. S. Ullian, *The Web of Belief*, McGraw-Hill, inc. New York, 1978

Laurence BonJour replies to this by asking why it is assumed that justification must be local and linear.[13] Coherentism emphasises a holistic approach to justification: no single belief is the support for some other belief, all support in the system is mutual. Justification is not truly circular, but rather if any single belief is challenged, its justification is found by locating that belief as inferentially connected to other beliefs which form an overall coherent system. So the overall system coherence itself is the ultimate source of justification for each belief which are members of that system.

However, as justification's only source is coherence amongst the entire belief set, there are no stipulations on; which beliefs are admitted, how many beliefs are required, nor that these beliefs reflect facts about the world. This gives rise to two prominent and related objections: i) isolation objection: if coherence is the only thing that brings justification, and coherence is just a measure of internal consistency, then how can this ever provide guidance to the real state of affairs? That is to say, the real state of affairs exists externally to, and independently from, any internally coherent belief set. So without an additional criterion that admits only beliefs that have some connection to the true state of affairs, there is no guarantee that coherentism tethers to reality. ii) The alternative systems objection: there are an indeterminate number of belief sets that can sit in coherence, and this implies an indeterminate number of beliefs can be justified. Two equally coherent belief sets can contradict one another, and there is apparently no way to decide between them. It is entirely possible for a Nazi to have a coherent moral theory, replete with justified persecution, and genocide. Yet this is a moral theory that is paradigmatically wrong - How could

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[13] See pp. 89-93 in, L BonJour, *The Structure of Empirical Knowledge*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1985

genocide possibly be "justified"? To be able to resolve this, one must be able to adjudicate which system of beliefs is better. As with the isolation objection, a criterion to determine which beliefs connect to the true state of affairs promises a resolution.

Olsson notes that a popular response amongst coherentists, is to prioritise some beliefs that have a modicum of warrant in themselves.[14] Such beliefs are given a special role that constrains the set of admissible beliefs. This has led to such theories being called 'weak foundationalism'. Proponents assert that while coherence alone cannot justify beliefs from scratch, it does provide justification for beliefs that already have some modicum of warrant, for example, observational beliefs. In this schema, justification from coherence operates like weak witness testimony that stacks up when it is corroborated with many other witness testimonies. While no single testimony is strong enough to justify some belief, once in coherence together they provide the justification for belief required. In the moral sphere, the beliefs that are taken to have some warrant in themselves are intuitive moral beliefs rather than observational beliefs. This requires that intuitions have some kind of epistemic value in themselves.

1.2.1 Reflective Equilibrium

Because of the isolation and alternative systems objections, pure coherence is not typically used in ethical epistemology. Instead what has become the dominant view in ethical epistemology is reflective equilibrium as made famous by John Rawls.[15] Reflective equilibrium is something of a hybrid view stressing coherence, but giving a

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[14] Olsson, 2021

[15] J Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1971

role to beliefs with prior warrant. While Rawls was at pains to avoid using intuition, Norman Daniels identifies that invoking beliefs with prior warrant, avails itself to the same criticisms as intuitions suffer, and is plausibly one of the same beast.[16] Thus, it is common to find intuition discussed as part of reflective equilibrium. It is contested as to how to properly categorise reflective equilibrium, from; coherentism, weak foundationalism, and constructivism (discussed later). I prefer seeing it as a version of coherentism, though nothing I will argue turns on this. My taxonomy does, however, provide a nice contrast class for this chapter.

Michael DePaul suggests that reflective equilibrium is best understood as a method of distinct steps (a)-(d):[17] (a) begin with the totality of one's intuitive moral beliefs. These will include: moral beliefs about concrete cases like 'that I lied to my aunty was bad', and 'killing 1 to save 5 can be permissible'; as well as intuitively plausible moral principles like 'all people deserve respect', and 'murder is wrong'. (b) Sort through the myriad of intuitive moral beliefs and discard ones that are likely to be in error. For example, moral beliefs that are formed under conditions of ignorance, or when bias is likely, etc. The surviving set are the inquirer's Considered Moral Judgements, or CMJs. (c) From the set of CMJs, build a moral theory that accounts for them. This is done through a procedure of mutual adjustment. In early stages, CMJs might be held constant while moral principles are formulated and tested for fit, formulating different principles as required. For example, one could hold the CMJs that 'my sister has moral worth', and that 'my neighbour has moral worth', then one

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[16] N Daniels, 'Reflective Equilibrium', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, (Summer 2020), EN Zalta (ed.), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/reflective-equilibrium/>

[17] See pp. 599-600 in, M DePaul, 'Intuitions in Moral inquiry', in D Copp (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ethical Theory*, Oxford Handbooks, Oxford University Press, 2007, pp. 595-623

could form the moral principle 'all persons have moral worth'. Where a principle is held more intuitively plausible in itself than some other considered moral judgement, the former may survive at the expense of the latter. Suppose one finds themself to hold a tacitly racist CMJ (somehow surviving step (b)) this might be discarded at the expense of the more intuitively plausible principle that 'all people deserve respect'. During this step, the inquirer's intuitions are important in deciding between which principles of considered moral judgements survive the process. (d) repeat step (c) until one's considered moral judgements and moral principles sit in equilibrium.

However, note that we cannot expect to ever reach the end point of equilibrium: the task is just too large and complicated. Furthermore, we also find ourselves beginning at some midpoint of the process. The hypothetical end point of steps (a)-(d) above is sometimes called a narrow reflective equilibrium because of how equilibrium is only sought between one's starting set of intuitive moral beliefs, whatever this starting set may be. As such, narrow reflective equilibrium is still vulnerable to the alternate systems objection. Two inquirers, with different initial sets of intuitive moral beliefs, may reach narrow reflective equilibrium, and both come to be justified in conflicting moral judgements. Daniels argues that to help address this problem, inquirers should attempt to bring their beliefs into wide reflective equilibrium.[18] Wide reflective equilibrium requires that one also considers how antecedently held background theories have influenced one's intuitive moral beliefs. For example, discovering that some innocent people have been put to death, and that the evidence that the death

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[18] N Daniels, 'Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics', *The Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 76, no. 5, 1979, pp. 256-282

penalty is a detterent is less than conclusive[19], might give one reason to revisit step (c) and discount their moral beliefs in support of the death penalty. This then might lead to slight adjustments to one's wide reflective equilibrium, or even wholesale changes. DePaul suggests that such wholesale consideration should also occur when one is presented with a moral theory that rests in reflective equilibrium but differs from one's own (that is, an alternate system).[20] The inquirer ought to seek out these alternate moral theories as they may be intuitively plausible in their own right (perhaps they are more parsimonious, or action guiding). Such moral theories may shine new light on CMJs that were earlier discounted, and perhaps encourage a revisiting of the whole process of reflective equilibrium.

Though wide reflective equilibrium goes some way to address the isolation and alternate systems objection, it cannot provide any guarantees. Small differences in intuitive choices between CMJs and principles can lead to significant ripple effects. If a principle is not chosen early, it may never re-emerge, even if the principle would be a member of the correct moral theory. Thus divergent reflective equilibria arise, even with the same starting points. For a demonstration, see Gilbert Harman and Sanjeev Kulkarni.[21] Because the alternate systems objection has not been banished, coherence views of moral justification, like reflective equilibrium, tend to be associated with some level of relativism. That is, moral beliefs are only justified

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[19] National Research Council, *Committee on Deterrence and the Death Penalty*, D Nagin & J Pepper (eds.), Committee on Law and Justice,Division of Behavioural and Social Sciences and Education, The National Academies Press, Washington, 2012

[20] DePaul, 2007, pp. 602-605

[21] G Harman & S Kulkarni, 'The Problem of Induction', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 72, no. 3, 2006, pp. 559-575

relative to some; specific reflective equilibria, person, group, culture, etc. Likewise, the likelihood of distinct and conflicting reflective equilibria make claims of a resolution to the isolation objection questionable. Despite these problems, reflective equilibrium is in the ascendant. Such are the problems faced by foundationalists in establishing objective moral truth.

1.3 Constructivism

The third, and final, theory structure I will consider is closely related to coherentism. Constructivists observe that i) while foundationalism is theoretically well suited for establishing objective moral truths, foundationalism struggles to show how we could actually come to moral justification. And ii) coherentism easily establishes moral justification, but at the expense of rendering moral justification as relativistic. Constructivism promises a third-way, a way to establish objective moral truths, and explain how we come to justify them.

Constructivism can be characterised as emphasising the procedure by which the moral theory is created, that is, how it is constructed. One well known characterisation comes from Stephen Darwall, Alan Gibbard & Peter Railton, who postit that constructivism consists of some hypothetical procedure. This procedure is endorsed for the purposes of determining which principles will be a valid standard of morality. And furthermore, there are no moral truths independent of the finding that the hypothetical procedure would have some moral upshot.[22] Implicit in the thought that we construct moral truths, is the Protagorean stance: 'man is the measurer of all

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[22] See pg. 140 in, S Darwall, A Gibbard & P Railton, 'Toward Fin de siècle Ethics: Some Trends', *Philosophy in Review: essays on Contemporary Philosophy*, vol. 101, no. 1, 1992, pp. 115-189

things'. That is, because we take ourselves to know moral truths, we can assume we have moral knowledge.

The Protagorean stance means that constructivists are committed to these two theses: 1) common moral knowledge is respected, thus moral scepticism is untenable. And 2) the constructivist's substantive normative claims cannot be radically esoteric, after careful reasoning they should be clear and understandable. Note that if our intuitions shaped our common moral knowledge, then 2) implies that our intuitions constrain the set of acceptable constructivist theories.

Melissa Barry identifies two major branches of constructivism *local*, and *global*.[23] Local constructivism is limited to some domain like; political justice, or moral rights and wrongs, and thus the construction of normative truth within this local domain. For example, Rawls adopts the moral ideal of free and equal persons as the basic material of construction and constructs principles about justice.[24] As foreshadowed, reflective equilibrium is sometimes considered a kind of (local) constructivism. As such, local constructivism, in a broad sense, mirrors the strengths and weaknesses of reflective equilibrium. As such I won't repeat this discussion, instead I will focus on global constructivism.

Global constructivists (hereafter, just constructivists) don't limit themselves to a restricted domain, but instead attempt to construct all values, and normative truth.

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[23] M Barry, 'Constructivism', in T McPherson & D Plunkett (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Metaethics*, Routledge, New York, 2018, pp. 385-401

[24] Rawls, 1971

Given the aim to construct all normative truth, constructivists cannot help themselves to normative principles as basic materials of construction, nor in defence of its hypothetical procedure. Constructivist's follow a general strategy of deriving Normative Form (NF) from an analysis of the Norm Targeted Activity (NTA). They can then derive Substantive Normative Claims (SNC) from that normative form (NF). I will explicate this, by way of example.

To illustrate, I will use Christine Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism. Korsgaard looks to the nature of the rational will as the norm targeted activity (NTA). The rational will can be analysed as willing an end (NF). Willing an end entails constitutive standards that one must commit to, if one is to be considered willing an end at all. That is, if one does not commit to those standards, then one cannot be truly said to be engaging in that activity. For example, willing an end entails that one wills the means required for that end (SNC), otherwise one is not really willing at all. By analogy, someone building a house is committed to making it a shelter from the weather, if being weatherproof is a constitutive standard of being a house.[25] That person cannot knowingly build a house that leaks like a sieve, on pain of incoherence. So, just as one has reason to build a house that is weatherproof, one has reason to will the means to their ends.

Note that, since anyone who deliberates and acts must will an end, the constitutive standards of willing an end applies to all agents, and is inescapable. It is because human beings are agents, that agents must act, and that agents must act from

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[25] C Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution Agency, Identity, and Integrity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009, pg. 29

reasons, that the norms Korsgaard derives from agency apply globally. It follows from this that we human beings legislate the standards of agency upon ourselves whenever we act: this is why it is inescapable, and why those standards of agency are normative. This is how constructivism delivers objective morality.

Other substantive normative claims can be reached after extended chains of reasoning. For example, Korsgaard argues that when we make a choice, we must regard the object of that choice as good - We must endorse our impulses before we act upon them. Noting that no object is valuable in itself, but recognising that we judge some objects as valuable, it follows that there must be some source of that object's value. We recognise that those objects are only valuable *for us* as rational agents, the value of rational agency is implicit in every act of willing, and the ultimate source of value is rational agency.[26]

The basic materials of construction are also typically taken to be phenomenologically irreducible, for example, normative experiences. These are not analysed as reasons, in themselves, but are taken to have a distinct normative phenomenology. Barry argues that this functions to keep separate the inputs of construction, from the outputs of substantive normative truths on pain of circularity (and a possible collapse of constructivism into something resembling reflective equilibrium).[27] Korsgaard considers that we are pre-set to conceive of the world in practical terms, that is, what is in our interests.[28] Without calculation or conscious interpretation, we see the world

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[26] C Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity*, O O'Neill (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 120-5

[27] Barry, 2018, pp. 388-9 & 391

[28] Korsgaard, 2009, pg. 110

as consisting of things that are; to-be-avoided, to-be-eaten, to-be-cared-for, etc. Note that language like "normative experiences" and "seeing things as "to-be-..." is suggestive that intuitions are the inputs required (and will become clearer in chapter 2).

However, note that there are a plurality of ways in which the constitutive standards of agency can be cashed out.[29] So it is not clear that constructivism has steered clear of the relativism it promised to deliver us from. Barry points out that since there are no reference points external to each point of view, it is not clear what would make one set of standards correct.[30] This can be seen as a re-emergence of the alternate systems objection. It is tempting for global constructivists to resolve this by appealing to the structure of agency. But since there are multiple interpretations of the structure of agency, what makes one better than an alternative? That is, Barry asks, is one structure of agency intrinsically normative?[31] And how can this be if normative truth is just an upshot of construction? If there is an objectively correct structure of agency, surely this must be discovered rather than constructed, and how could we come to discover it, if not an intuition from outside the constructive process? If this is the case, then what advantage does constructivism really have over intuitionism? This stands against Korsgaard's conception of constructivism as not requiring intuition in

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29 Compare, S Street, 'Constructivism about Reasons', in Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 3, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 207-245

30 M Barry, 2018, pg. 398

31 M Barry, 2018, pp. 398-9

the slightest.[32] However I don't believe constructivists escape the use of intuition entirely, however, I leave this matter to be resolved in chapter 4.

Another interesting implication on global constructivism is the kind of normative intuitions upon which it relies. Global constructivism attempted to escape circular reasoning by constructing normativity wholesale. However, Barry worries that because substantive normativity is supposed to be born from the concept of normativity itself it is not clear that this is actually achieved: since the concept of normativity itself has normative implications.[33] So it is not clear that global constructivists can create normativity *ex nihilo* and will instead be using normative intuitions and intuitive normative judgments somewhat circularly. Nonetheless, global constructivism might still be distinct from coherentism and foundationalism because it only relies upon a distinct set of conceptual normative intuitions about reasoning itself, rather than intuitions about specific moral cases. There are a number of proposals about which intuitions about reasoning are required. Intuitions about what counts as coherent are standard[34], but Aaron James suggests that we need normative intuitions about; what should be considered in regards to some case, what counts as relevant to the case at hand, what counts in favour of some case, and how cases should be balanced.[35]

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[32] C Korsgaard, *Normativity, Necessity, and the Synthetic a priori: A Response to Derek Parfit.*, unpublished manuscript, n.d, <http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~korsgaar/Korsgaard.on.Parfit.pdf>

[33] M Barry, 2018, pp. 398-9

[34] M Barry, 2018, pp. 398-9

[35] See pp. 316-7 in, A James, 'Constructivism about Practical Reasons', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 74, no. 2, 2007, pp. 302-325

1.4 Conclusion

Intuitionism has sought objective moral truths through a direct and heavy reliance on intuitions. Intuitions are hoped to provide foundations on which normative theory can be built. The objections that intuition requires a special mental faculty (SMF), and that intuition is indubitable and infallible (In) are addressed over two chapters. Chapter 2 looks at the nature of intuition and what kind of mental state intuition is, and Chapter 3 looks at different views on how intuition produces knowledge. Because the different views of what mental state intuition is naturally push towards different views of how intuition produces knowledge, complete answers come in several distinct forms. Intuitionists who take intuitions to be the direct understanding of self-evident moral propositions typically answer that intuition is a doxastic state arising from our ordinary reasoning and understanding faculties. Such answers usually provide entirely ordinary mental faculties, but struggle to explain intuition's fallibility and dubitability. Intuitionists who take intuitions to be an experiential seeming state typically provide a less ordinary mental faculty, but accommodate the fallibility and dubitability of intuition easily. Chapters 2 & 3 will serve to bring out these strengths and weaknesses.

Coherentism, in its purest 'coherence only' form, has no special reliance on intuition. While intuitions may be responsible for some of the beliefs in one's belief set, it doesn't matter what their epistemic credentials are: all that matters is if the beliefs form part of a coherent set. Moral theory completely bereft of intuition is more fully assessed in chapter 4. But, in short, the pure coherence approach is vulnerable to the isolation and alternate systems objections, and is thus untenable. Addressing these objections suggests that only beliefs with prior warrant are admitted. As a

result, most coherentists adopt a reflective equilibrium approach to ethics. Reflective equilibrium suggests a role for intuitions, if intuitions provide prior warrant, and means that in the search for a wide reflective equilibrium, the epistemic credentials of intuition is important. However, if intuition is required, reflective equilibrium imports the worries of intuitionism; what kind of mental faculty is intuition? How does intuition provide knowledge? It is important to note, however, that since coherence, rather than foundations are emphasised, these problems don't hurt to the same degree.

Constructivism is committed to a Protagorean stance, and thus intuition might explain why we have many of the beliefs that we do. However, this in itself, is a mere aetiological curiosity, and suggests no special epistemic role for intuition. Insofar as constructivists attempt to escape circularity by invoking intuitions as the basic material for construction, constructivists will find phenomenologically distinct intuitions useful. This is addressed over chapters 2 & 3 as constructivism's affinities with intuition become clearer. When constructivism comes to deal with alternative constructions (systems) of what the constitutive standards of agency are, it becomes tempting to invoke intuitions on the matter to try and decide which construction is better. This suggests a special epistemic role for intuition in deciding between constructions, and imports the problems of intuitionism along with it. To reiterate; what is this intuition? How does it provide this knowledge? However, Korsgaard suggests that constructivism promises a truly distinct "third way", without invoking any special reliance on intuition. This is a possibility that I rebut in chapter 4.

2 The Nature of Intuition

In this chapter I set out the three core characteristics of intuition as: direct, strong, and stable. I then consider two general accounts of what kind of mental state intuition could be: doxastic, and sui generis. Much of the debate between doxastic and sui generis views hinges upon a tension between adequately capturing all that we take to be 'intuition' while avoiding an inappropriately exotic ontology. I demonstrate why the two simpler doxastic accounts cannot account for what we take to be intuition. This fleshes out what an adequate account of intuition must capture. I find that two plausible candidates emerge: intuition as a conscious inclination to believe, and intuition as an experiential seeming state. This chapter provides a partial answer as to what kind of mental faculty intuition is, and sets up a full answer when coupled with accounts of how intuition provides knowledge, given in chapter 3.

2.1 Intuition's Core Characteristics

Consider the following propositions:

1. It cannot be the case that both P and ¬P.
2. A square cannot have five sides.
3. Torturing a cat is wrong.
4. Rendering aid to someone in need, when the cost is minimal to ourselves, is obligatory.

Typically, we assent to each as true, and so common and so naturally do such 'truth-assents' occur in our mental life, that the fact they are rarely objects of our

attention is entirely unsurprising. However, if we were asked as to why we assent to these propositions we might not be able to say anything interesting at all, or perhaps merely that we have the intuition that each is true. It might be because of how fundamental intuitions are, that their nature is mysterious. Or perhaps intuitions are too banal to be worthy objects of our attention. This chapter will discuss the characteristics of intuition, and what intuitions are.

A canonical example of an intuition at work within moral philosophy is Philippa Foot's trolley problem:[36]

> A runaway trolley is hurtling down the tracks towards five workers. If nothing is done, it will kill all five. A bystander realises that they cannot stop the trolley physically, nor can they call out a warning that will avert disaster. They do, however, happen to stand by a switch which will divert the trolley down a fork in the tracks where only one worker will be killed. What should the bystander do?

Most of us intuit that the bystander should flip the switch in this case, saving the five at the expense of the one. Firstly, note that this intuition is not a product of the senses, such as perceiving a chair inclines one to assent to the truth of the proposition 'a chair is there', nor is it just a product of memory, or introspection. As such, we will be concerned with *intellectual* intuitions. Insofar as there is agreement on what intuitions are like, most agree that intuitions have three distinguishing

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[36] Adapted from, P Foot, "The Problem of Abortion and the Doctrine of the Double Effect", *Oxford Review 5*, 1967, pp. 5-15

characteristics: directness, strength, and stability. Phenomenologically, intuition is 1) direct from a case at hand: elicited straight from our consideration of the trolley case without any (conscious) intermediary steps. Intuitions are not a product of conscious reasoning, and though they may sometimes present after reasoning, intuitions are distinct from it. Intuitions are 2) strong: they resist some evidence to the contrary and we tend to find our intuitions at least somewhat attractive despite reasons to the contrary. Suppose that we were told that every other participant given the trolley problem, answered differently to how we did. This might give us reason to think that we are in error, yet our original intuition typically remains, and we are inclined to stick with it regardless. Intuitions are also 3) stable: they are persisting and not merely whims. Typically, if we flip the switch today, we choose likewise tomorrow. Insofar as an intuition might be fleeting, it is due to some new information inducing a new intuition, and the other falls away with the change in case, rather than the intuition itself being whimsical. When intuitions do change over time, it is usually over a lengthy period and with considerable training by the intuiter.

To focus our discussion, note that the term "intuition" does see varied usage, only some of which is properly relevant to our inquiry. I use the following cases to help distinguish the usage of interest.

(i)   A student, who does not know the answer to a multiple choice question, quickly marks option e, and moves on.

This choice is not concerned with the content of the multiple choice question. The indifference between the options indicates a lack of strength and stability. It is more properly understood as a mere guess.

(ii)   A gambler may have a good feeling about some lottery numbers.

The gambler may feel a kind of assent towards a proposition: 'These are the winning numbers'. Despite potentially meeting the three characteristic features of intuition, whether such a case is an intuition, is subject to debate. Ernest Sosa takes (ii) as a kind of intuition:[37] while gambling may often be conducted through mere guesses, gamblers also have intuitions (though their intuitions may be no more successful than mere chance). George Bealer, however, considers (ii) a mere hunch: a species of "merely caused, ungrounded convictions or noninferential beliefs[38]". N.B. the assent towards the proposition in (ii) distinguishes it from (i). Contrast this to:

(iii)   From a glance at a chess board, Garry Kasparov sees that a certain move is good.

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[37] E Sosa, 'Minimal Intuition', in MR DePaul & W Ramsey (eds.), *Rethinking Intuition: the psychology of intuition and its role in philosophical inquiry*, Studies in epistemological and cognitive theory, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 1998, pp. 257-269 (258)

[38] See pg. 210 in, G Bealer, 'Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy', in MR DePaul & W Ramsey (eds.), *Rethinking Intuition: the psychology of intuition and its role in philosophical inquiry*, Studies in epistemological and cognitive theory, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 1998, pp. 201-240

Though knowing that a move is good could be the result of explicit reasoning, and for Kasparov it undoubtedly once was, the assent to the proposition such as 'that makes a strong position' has become automatic. Such expert intuitions are grounded by significant experience and training directly relevant to the truth of that proposition, accordingly we expect (iii) to be more reliably true than (i) & (ii). So intuition is not guaranteed to be reliable or unreliable, each requires critique. With these key characteristics set out, what mental state are intuitions?

2.2 Doxastic Views of Intuition

2.2.1 Intuitions as Beliefs

It is common for us to report intuitions on hypothetical cases with a clear implication that we also believe in accordance with our intuition. Intuitions are like beliefs in that they have propositional content and a mind-to-world direction of fit. So tight is the correlation between intuition and belief, that some philosophers claim to not be aware of intuitions neither over and above, nor distinct from, conscious: judgments, opinions, or beliefs. As David Lewis, puts it:

> "Our "intuitions" are simply opinions; our philosophical theories are the same. Some are commonsensical, some are sophisticated; some are particular, some general; some are more firmly held, some less. But they are all opinions…"[39]

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[39] See pg. x in, D Lewis, *Philosophical Papers: Volume 1*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1983, <doi:10.1093/0195032047.001.0001>

So intuition might be reduced to belief. However, if intuition is just belief, this includes beliefs from reasoning and flies in the face of intuition's core characteristic of directness. So, only direct beliefs should count. We then need to rule out unstable, and weak beliefs too. Then a restriction in aetiology is required so that only beliefs arising from the intellectual entertainment of some proposition are captured (excluding; perception, memory, etc.). Call this the "belief view" of intuition, or (B):

> (B) One has an intuition that *P* if and only if, when one considers *P* one has the belief that *P*, and that belief is i) direct, ii) strong, iii) stable, iv) and had just from intellectually entertaining *P*.

(B) has its attractions. It explains why we typically believe what we intuit because intuitions just are a kind of belief. Furthermore, by reducing intuitions to beliefs we avoid the need to postulate a new psychological state, so greater ontological parsimony is maintained. However, this then opens the question as to what it is for something to be entirely intellectual. With this in mind, such specification problems are perhaps the motivation for the introduction of an understanding condition for intuitions as beliefs. Kirk Ludwig suggests that intuition is just a belief one has, in virtue of understanding some proposition (where understanding the proposition *P* just consists in grasping the concepts that make up *P*).[40] The 'understanding *P*' condition constrains the overly broad categorisation of intuition from including just any belief from perception, introspection and memory, etc. On this view, intuitions are just those beliefs that are formed solely on the basis of directly applying concepts

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[40] See pp. 135-9 in, K Ludwig, "The Epistemology of Thought Experiments: First Person versus Third Person Approaches", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy,* vol. 31, no. 1, 2007, pp. 128-159

that the agent is already competent with, in order to understand some proposition.

So, intuition is a kind of expression of antecedent knowledge and it is easy to see

how intuition is; direct, strong and stable. Ludwig here, tidily avoids the specification

baggage of (B). However, depending on how 'grasping concepts' is cashed out here,

the invocation of understanding might struggle to make sense of cases where two

epistemic peers[41] understand the same proposition yet have contrary intuitions. This

is sometimes called the dogmatism objection and will be dealt with more fully in

section 3.1.2.

However, the biggest problem for (B) is that it appears as though intuitions and

beliefs can be shown to be independent. The case of paradox bears this out: on one

plausible construal, a paradox is a set of propositions which, in isolation to each

other, are intuitively true, but which cannot all be true altogether. In the course of

reasoning through a paradox, we intuitively accept each premise, but are led to the

belief that at least one of them must be false. Even if we come to resolve a paradox

by firmly rejecting a premise, that premise will still appear to us as intuitively true.

Consider the *sorites* paradox. If we have a heap of sand and take away one grain of

sand, what remains is still a heap. For removing just one grain of sand cannot

reduce a heap to a non-heap. More generally, if two collections of grains of sand

differ in the number of grains by just one, then both or neither are heaps. But if we

allow that heap-hood identity is transitive with the removal of a single grain, this

entails, if the step of removing one grain at a time is repeated enough, that

something containing no grains of sand is a heap. However, one is sure that a sand

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[41] One who is, as far as one can tell, as rational and as thoughtful as one's self on some matter, has
considered the same evidence, and with the same conscientiousness.

dune will survive the removal of one grain of sand, and one can be sure that a place devoid of sand contains no dune. Yet if we were convinced by the *sorites reductio* to reject either belief, the intuitive appeal of each remains, despite our belief to the contrary. The same occurs when we consider the Naive Comprehension Axiom:

(NCA) For any condition *x* there is a set containing all and only objects that satisfy condition *x*.

However intuitive this axiom may be, it cannot be true, as Russell's paradox shows. Suppose that *x* is the condition of not being a member of itself, and suppose that *A* is the collection of things that meet condition *x*. If *A* is a set, then it either belongs to *A* (itself) or it doesn't. If it doesn't belong to *A* then it satisfies condition *x*, and so, belongs to itself. If A does belong to itself, then it doesn't satisfy condition *x*, so it doesn't belong to itself. So *A* is not a set, and NCA cannot be true. Despite believing that NCA is false, NCA still strikes us as intuitively true. So unlike beliefs, intuitions persist even if, upon reflection, when we reject the belief of the content that those intuitions lead us to. It doesn't make sense to say that I believe that *P* but I also disbelieve *P* upon reflection. However I can say that I intuit that *P* even though I disbelieve *P* on reflection. The problem for belief accounts of intuition is that beliefs and intuitions appear to be independent of each other. Because of this, we have good reasons to look elsewhere. But given that there is a strong connection between intuition and belief in its content, perhaps we need not look too far afield.

2.2.2 Intuitions as Propensities to Believe

Perhaps intuitions can be identified with a state closely linked to belief. With an eye on preserving ontological parsimony but providing an account of intuition that can account for belief and intuition coming apart, I consider two versions of intuitions as propensities to believe. Sosa suggests a *dispositional* account of intuitiveness.[42] Here I present an adapted version, call it (D):

> (D) One has the intuition that *P* if and only if, if one understood *P* fully enough, then one would believe that *P*. And one does understand *P* fully enough.[43]

(D) allows us to believe that NCA is false yet be able to explain why, under certain circumstances of understanding, it is that we find NCA intuitively true. 'Intuition' here is just what we would be disposed to believe, but without entailing belief itself. Thus intuitiveness is identified by introspection of what would be the case in certain circumstances of understanding.

However, two objections immediately arise. Firstly, what exactly it is to understand something 'fully enough' is a slippery notion. One might believe NCA if they understood just the terms contained in NCA. But if our understanding of NCA is more thorough, don't we also understand that NCA implies Russel's paradox? If this is the case, then we would *not* believe NCA. A resolution to this might require a floor and

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[42] Adapted from, Sosa, 1998, pg. 259

[43] Here I omit Sosa's requirement of abstractness of the proposition in question, as well as a specification that 'and at time t one does understand *P* fully enough'. So the account being considered is not exactly Sosa's view, but shortened to be instructively useful.

ceiling as to what it is to 'understand fully enough', which may be hard to non-arbitrarily provide. With this duty to explicate exactly what understanding 'fully enough' undischarged, it is unclear if (D) can account for the separation of intuition and belief.

Secondly, it is unexplained as to how we can come to know our intuitions, which we mysteriously only become aware of when occurrent. Intuitions, however, are direct: elicited from the consideration of some case. Directness entails that intuitions are a conscious state readily open to introspection and awareness. Introspectively, we are aware of our intuitions, but dispositions are not always introspectively available to us. Sosa points out that we are sometimes introspectively aware of our dispositions to believe: "while suffering a braggart, one may know directly that 'if he had boasted one more time, I would have been annoyed'".[44] However, there are many intuitions that we have no introspective access to, especially those which are not being primed like in the braggart case. Prior to the presentation of some novel case, we don't introspectively know that we have the associated intuition: that my chair can hold my weight is something I only now intuit as true, yet I was disposed to, all along. If intuitions were just dispositions then we would be swimming in intuitions at every conscious moment. Phenomenologically intuitions appear to only occur in present consciousness when I assess a certain kind of case before me.[45] I may intuit that flipping the switch in the standard trolley case is permissible, but I don't intuit the same when I am doing the dishes (despite it being true of me that if I understood and

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[44] Sosa, 1998, pg. 259

[45] Sosa recognises this worry, but does not necessarily agree. Regardless, I leave the flaw in for instructive purposes.

considered the proposition, then I would believe it). For these reasons, many take intuition's core characteristic of directness to imply that intuitions are occurrent conscious states. As such, they are readily available for introspection. So (D) fails on these two objections.

Timothy Williamson proposes an alternative account of intuition as a propensity to believe. Williamson considers the intellectual intuition in the Gettier case, the intuition that one can have justified true belief yet lack knowledge:

> "Although mathematical intuition can have a rich phenomenology, even a quasi-perceptual one, for instance in geometry, the intellectual appearance of the Gettier proposition is not like that. Any accompanying imagery is irrelevant. For myself, I am aware of no intellectual seeming beyond my conscious inclination to believe the Gettier proposition."[46]

This suggests an account of intuition as a conscious inclination to believe some proposition. This account successfully provides for an occurrently conscious aspect of intuition, so there is no mystery for how we come to know our intuitions. However, without some aetiological discrimination, this account will fail to exclude many non-intuition beliefs. For I am occurrently conscious of my inclination to believe a cat is in the next room when told by a friend. However this is clearly not an intuition. Intuitions are instead entirely a product of one's intellect, and are not anchored in just any hypothetical. As earlier, it might pay to include an aetiological restriction clause

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[46] T Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy*, Blackwell Publishing, Malden, Massachusetts, 2007, pg. 217

of 'intellectual entertainment of *P*'. This *conscious inclination* view (CI) can be put as follows:

(CI) One has an intuition that *P*, if and only if, if one intellectually entertains *P*, then one is inclined to believe that *P*, and one is occurrently conscious of this inclination.

The duty to explain what is meant by 'intellectual entertainment' is, is still undischarged in (CI). If this is cashed out in terms of understanding, then because intuitions are taken to be 'what we are *inclined* to believe' rather than the stronger 'what we *would* believe' (which implies belief is entailed with understanding), less of a mess in explaining how inclinations can be bested by knowing better, and thus how intuitions and belief come apart.

Two final brief notes: 1) With the invocation of understanding comes the dogmatism objection (see chapter 3.1.2.). And, 2) The attractive parsimony of (CI) might be under pressure as there is a temptation to give the (distinct) inclination itself a name and add it to our ontology. Though this could form an objection in its own right, I will not develop this thought.

2.3 Intuition as Seeming

If intuitions cannot be reduced to mere beliefs nor mere dispositions to believe, then perhaps intuitions are their own, sui generis mental states. Perhaps the reason that beliefs and intuitions tend to line up is that intuitions ground dispositions to believe one way or another about a case: intuitions make some proposition *seem* true or

false. As Bealer puts it, this seeming is not in a cautious 'I think that this is the case, but I may be wrong' sense, but instead appearing before us in a distinct conscious episode.[47] Call this the seemings view, which may be formulated as (S):

> (S) One has an intuition that *P* if and only if, upon intellectually entertaining *P*, it *seems* to one that *P*.

To ensure that the seeming account of intuitions is not too broad, (S) specifies that only seemings which are direct from the intellectual entertainment of some proposition count as intuitions (this excludes seemings from; memory, and perception, etc.). Accordingly, intuitions as seemings are sometimes considered a product of their own distinct faculty, but may also be accounted for by our capability of understanding and reason (chapter 3 will flesh these options out). The view that intuitions are sui generis states provides answers for why intuitions and beliefs usually line up: if something seems true, then this grounds our belief in it. To show that (S) avoids collapse into a propensity to a believe account, note that we can have inclinations to believe without a seeming: I may be inclined to believe *P* (perhaps a shadow on an X-ray indicates a broken bone) based on a doctor's testimony, but given that *P* is beyond my ken, it does not seem that *P* to me. Likewise, Bealer suggests that if he is holding a coin, we might be inclined to believe that the coin is in his left hand (for any reason. E.G. we think Bealer is left handed). But if Bealer reveals an empty right hand, it now *seems* to us that it is in his left.[48] As a distinct state, there is no problem with seemigns being overridden by knowing better:

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[47] Bealer, 1998, pg. 207

[48] Bealer, 1998, pg. 210

knowing Russel's paradox provides good reason to disbelieve NCA despite how intuitively compelling NCA seems. However, all this comes at the cost of parsimony in ontology, especially if a special faculty is required. Whether this is worth the cost will depend on whether a unique state is necessary to explain intuition, and the extent of the ontological expansion that it entails.

2.3.1 The Absent Phenomenology Challenge

The first objection to (S) can be derived from Williamson's above quote: many philosophers are sincerely unaware of any special phenomenology supposed to distinguish seemings over and above doxastic phenomenology. This is then a challenge to proponents of (S) to locate, describe, and show how this phenomenology cannot be attributed to doxastic states, and is worthy of a unique mental state. One response to this comes from Elijah Chudnoff, who responds by arguing that seemings are co-located with, and constituted by, our ordinary cognitive and imaginative experiences which we term 'reflections'.[49] What makes these reflections sui generis, is just their unique arrangement in our conscious experience. Chudnoff's response requires a constitution view of material composition, implying that two material objects can be constituted by exactly the same things yet not be identical to one another. This is controversial and a discussion of Chudnoff's view expounds this more fully in chapter 3.3. However, a resolution of this debate lies outside of the purview of this thesis, so I will just note it here as a controversial commitment to have.

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[49] Chudnoff, E, *Intuition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, pg. 221

2.3.2 Promiscuity in Philosophical Usage

The second objection to (S) comes from the assertions of critics that the term 'intuition' is promiscuous in philosophical usage, and its usage is too broad to be confined to just some sort of experience like in (S). Williamson suggests (invoking Peter van Inwagen[50]), that the temptation to use the term 'intuition' instead of 'belief' harks back to a historical conception of intuition in which intuition was held as more authoritative than beliefs.[51] Williamson asks us to consider "counterintuitive" propositions, that is, propositions that run against our intuitions otherwise. The metaphysical claim that 'there are no mountains, only atoms arranged *just so'*, is surely counterintuitive. However if this runs *counter*-intuition, do we ever have the corresponding intuition that the proposition 'mountains exist' is true? It doesn't appear that we ever have that intuition experience just in virtue of entertaining the proposition. When the term "intuition" is restricted to only apply to conscious episodes, it then fails to explain the role that the term "intuition" plays more generally in philosophical practice. So, usage of the term "intuition" is too broad for what (S) can account for. The term intuition in use here might be more appropriately accounted for by common-sense beliefs, or perhaps intuition may be applied to the inferential belief that there are mountains (based on the experience of mountains in Switzerland). If by 'intuition' we properly mean 'belief' in the senses Williamson provides, then this pushes towards a doxastic view of intuitions.[52]

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[50] See pg. 309 in, P van Inwagen, "Materialism and the psychological-continuity account of personal identity", *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 11: *Mind, Causation World*, 1997, pp. 305-319

[51] Williamson, 2007, pg. 215

[52] Williamson, 2007, pp. 217-219

Chudnoff begins to answer this challenge by explaining away 'intuition' that lacks special phenomenology.[53] Someone successfully processing 1+1=2 will experience 1+1=2 as seeming true. Based on the intuition, they naturally form the intuitive belief that 1+1=2. In everyday usage, we might call this intuitive belief an 'intuition'. This person might later recall their 'intuition' (intuitive belief) that 1+1=2 and if that person were now asked if they experience any special phenomenology in their 'intuition', they will report nothing over and above the phenomenology of belief. However, strictly speaking, they are just recalling their intuitive belief that was based on their intuition. Only the intuition experience has special phenomenology. It might be that reports that intuition lacks special phenomenology stem from this false equivocation. The term 'intuition' is used in two distinct ways: 1) to pick out the belief that resulted from an intuition, and 2) to pick out the intuition experience itself. An analogy to perception may elucidate this: suppose one perceives the sky is blue, and so form the perceptual belief that the sky is blue. Later one may recall upon this perception, and though not re-perceiving the sky as blue one may say that 'I have the perception that the sky is blue' even though we don't currently experience blueness of the sky, and are instead just recalling the perceptual belief. This is just a quick sketch of how to respond and more is needed for a full treatment, but I hope to have indicated a plausible route for doing so.

2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have laid out the core characteristics of (intellectual) intuition as; direct, strong and stable, and swept away some use of the term 'intuition' not

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[53] See pg. 642 of, E Chudnoff, "What Intuitions Are Like", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2011, pp. 625-654

relevant to philosophical use. I presented doxastic and sui generis accounts of intuition as candidates that fit core characteristics. While (B) is attractive in its parsimony, that intuition and belief are independent phenomena makes (B) untenable. (D) goes some of the way to improving upon (B), however, (D) fails in two ways: articulating how the understanding condition operates appears problematic, and it runs afoul intuition's core characteristic of directness. (CI) succeeds where the other doxastic accounts fail: struggling less with the understanding condition, and directly accounting for intuition's occurrently conscious, that is direct, nature.

(S) is tailor made for intuition's core characteristics, so it is hardly surprising that it captures what we take to be intuition. However this comes with a cost to parsimony: (S) comes with a phenomenology that not every philosopher can locate (or, in sceptic friendly terms, that only some philosophers have convinced themselves of). It is also subject to some debate whether the usage of the term 'intuition' in philosophy can be appropriately restricted just to kinds of 'seeming' experiences. These objections put pressure on whether the cost of ontology is worth it, but there are plausible avenues for response.

All in all, the distance between (CI) and (S) accounts appears slim to me, and I take both to be tenable. Accordingly, I will go forth in this thesis with both in mind as I explore different accounts of intuition, so as to provide a taxonomy. From here on in this thesis, references to doxastic accounts of intuition indicate (CI) while seemings accounts indicate (S).

Already there are hints of connections between two varieties of intuitionism and what kind of mental state intuition might be. (CI) that invokes an understanding condition appears to fit better with the self-evidence view of foundational beliefs. This will be further fleshed out in section 3.1 where understanding itself is explored. (S) fits better with intuitionists who prefer the perceptual experience model. Note, however, since the special phenomenology of seemings is not recognised by all, it is easy to see how accusations of a "spooky" mental faculty persist. Discussions of these accusations are further explored in sections 3.2 & 3.3.

The affinities between intuition, reflective equilibrium, and constructivism is not clear at this stage. Perhaps a *prima facie* affinity between constructivism and (S) might suggest itself, insofar as constructivists wish to keep the basic material for construction (normative experiences) separate from the outputs of construction (substantive normative claims). However, since constructivists aim to construct normativity, by self-legislation, then insofar as constructivists think the inputs of construction are experiences of normativity, they can only be illusions of normativity. This would mean that constructivists expect agents to construct substantive normative judgements from material that is illusory on their own account. As such, constructivism can give no real role to (S), which must be based in illusion. Instead, constructivists actually utilise (CI). However, the full story as to why this is so cannot be appreciated until the mechanism by which intuition provides knowledge is made clear in chapter 3.

So far, we have a partial answer to what kind of mental faculty intuition is: the mental state of intuition has two tenable candidates: (CI) and (S). (CI) and (S) potentially

form parts of mental faculties that are entirely distinct, and a full answer requires an explication of how each mental state provides knowledge. Doing so establishes the entire mental faculty, and is the subject of chapter 3. At the end of chapter 3 we will have: 1) a clearer picture of the affinities between the different theory structures in ethics and candidate mental faculties of intuition, and 2) accounts of how intuition can be epistemically valuable.

3 How Intuitions Provide Knowledge

Intuition naturally appears to be some kind of building block for coming to knowledge. George Bealer suggests that intuition forms part of our 'standard justificatory procedure' which also includes; experiences, observations, and testimony.[54] Intuitions are taken to count towards subsequent judgments. As Alvin Goldman said:

> "It wasn't the mere publication of Gettier's two examples, or what he said about them. It was the fact that almost everybody who read Gettier's examples shared the intuition that these were not instances of knowing. Had their intuitions been different, there would have been no discovery."[55]

In the Gettier cases, the intuition that the subject of each example had justified true belief (JTB), yet failed to have knowledge, was taken as decisive evidence that the JTB account of knowledge was deficient. But just how intuition does this is mysterious. How intuition provides knowledge is acute in ethics, as moral facts have a normative dimension: they concern not just how things are, but how they should be. The easiest answers are ruled out by how moral facts appear objective and mind-independent: what is of interest is not merely what we think moral facts are, but what they really are. J. L. Mackie supposes that this means that we cannot come to

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[54] See pp. 3-4 in, G Bealer, "On the Possibility of Philosophical Knowledge", *Philosophical Perspectives*, vol. 10, 1996, pp. 1-34

[55] See pg. 2, A Goldman, 'Philosophical Intuitions: Their target, their source, and their epistemic Status', *Grazer Philosophische Studien*, vol. 74, no. 1, 2007, pp. 1-26

know normative moral facts; sensorily, introspectively, nor by conceptual analysis.[56] Intuitions are traditionally invoked as being able to deliver us knowledge, where our other sources of justification fall short. Without further explanation, this appears to imply a special intuition faculty that can directly grasp such truths. Historically, the mechanism by which intuition provides knowledge has been either undescribed, or as a quasi-perceptual model that strikes many modern thinkers as akin to crystal-ball gazing.

Recent times have seen many attempts to formulate sober accounts of intuition's epistemic efficacy. In this chapter I discuss three such accounts. Understanding accounts prioritise ontological parsimony. This strength can be a weakness, as scarce resources must be made up for by ingenuity in their application. Reliability accounts posit that intuitions are reliable enough to support knowledge. This requires that the process by which intuitions are reliable be established, and that this process be genuine. As such, the process must be defended against the generality problem. The final account is one of phenomenological awareness, which hails from a long history of treating intuition on a quasi-perceptual model. This account, while the most ontologically exotic, attempts to bring the perceptual model into acceptable present day thought.

This chapter serves to flesh out how doxastic and seemings accounts of intuition operate to provide knowledge. The aim of this is threefold: 1) replace any reliance on a "spooky" mental faculty that can directly grasp truth, with one less spooky. 2)

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[56] See the argument from queerness, pp. 38-39 in, J.L. Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin, London, 1990

accommodate the fact that intuitions are dubitable and fallible. And 3) answer the question of this thesis as to how intuitions can play an epistemically valuable role in ethics. I finish by arguing that the understanding and reliability accounts are stronger than the phenomenological awareness account.

3.1 Understanding

Understanding based views of intuition trace their lineage back to logicism about mathematics. For logicists, propositions about mathematics "are true (or false)", as Paul Benacerraf puts it, "merely "in virtue of" the meanings of the terms in which they are cast.[57]" This view is attractive because knowledge for mathematical truths (or abstract truths generally) requires only the cognitive resources we have for language, and so we need postulate no exotic cognitive mechanism. In the post logical positivist era, the focus of understanding based views has evolved from the knowing of meanings, to the grasping of concepts, while maintaining that our standard abilities of thinking and understanding are sufficient. Thus, Christopher Peacocke proposes that what makes possible intuitive ways of knowing is just understanding and reason.[58] When one grasps a concept, this entails that certain ways of coming to know propositions to which that concept pertains will be rational ways and yield knowledge. For example, grasping the concept of the (classical) logical conjunction '&' involves understanding its elimination rule. One who understands '&' will reason that if $A\&B$ is true, then A, by itself, is true.

[57] Pg. 18 in, P Benacerraf, "Frege: The Last Logicist", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 17-36

[58] See pp. 256 & 260, C Peacocke, 'Explaining the A Priori: The Programme of Moderate Rationalism', in P Boghossian & C Peacocke (eds.), *New Essays on the a Priori*, Oxford University Press , Oxford, 2001, pp. 255-285

Intuition's epistemic fruitfulness in the understanding account is demonstrated as follows. Consider the principle of accepting that 'from *A&B* we can infer that *A*'. The way in which we accept this inference is that we find it non-inferentially compelling, that is intuitive, by merely applying the concepts we must grasp in order to understand the principle 'from *A&B* we can infer that *A*'. If this inference was not accepted, then a concept is not grasped: it is part of the concept of '&' that the inference from the truth of a pair linked by the conjunction to a single member of that pair is truth preserving. Intuition is evidence that a proposition is true on this account in virtue of understanding the proposition - This is to say that some propositions, when properly understood, are self-evident.

3.1.1 New Intuitive Knowledge and Implicit Conceptions

On the understanding account, intuition is able to furnish us with ways of coming to know things that are already within our ken - So long as we possess a concept, we can know what follows from it. But how do we ever come to new intuitive knowledge? If intuition is bounded by what we already understand, in virtue of possessing concepts, then this appears impossible. Yet we often come to new intuitive knowledge beyond what we can explicate. For example, we understand the axioms of natural numbers:

(N1) 0 is a natural number.

(N2) The successor of a natural number is a natural number.

(N3) Only that which can be determined through N1 and N2 is a natural number.

From (N1)-(N3), it appears that we can also intuitively know that any natural number has only finitely many predecessors. However, from the concepts that must be grasped to understand axioms (N1)-(N3), it isn't self-evident that any natural number has only finitely many predecessors. Thus, on Peacocke's account, we cannot account for the intuition that 'any natural number has only finitely many predecessors'. This is not to mention that we also appear able to discover new axioms in addition to those we can write down. So it appears that our intuitive knowledge extends beyond what we explicitly understand, and such knowledge then seems mysterious on the understanding account.

Peacocke suggests *implicit conceptions* to accommodate the discovery of new knowledge.[59] An implicit conception is held by the thinker, but not consciously so, and that thinker need not be able to express it. For one to possess a concept is for that thinker to have the right implicit conception of that concept. It can be hard to articulate the conception that underlies one's practical application of a concept, and articulation may involve hard work, reflection on cases, and thought experiments. However, once articulated, it may illuminate new principles that would not have otherwise occurred to the thinker. In the case at hand, the implicit concept of natural numbers should meet the standard recursive definition given by (N1)-(N3) and once grasped, the (implicit) conception can be 'unfolded', or 'mapped out' over the application space of the concept. This unfolding/mapping can then reveal interesting regions, connections and interactions. And so as one unfolds the concept of natural numbers, one can discover the truth that any one natural number has only finitely

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[59] C Peacocke, 2001, pp. 275-277

many predecessors, and state this explicitly. All this is achieved within the bounds of concept possession and understanding.

The unfolding of implicit conceptions explains why it phenomenologically feels rational to accept new knowledge. Consider a thinker, new to logic, who is given the statement $A \rightarrow (A$ or $B)$. After sufficient reflection, the thinker comes to accept this as true. What Peacocke suggests occurs during reflection is that:[60] because the principle is primitive and not a derivation from other rules, the thinker draws upon their understanding of the meaning of the constituent expressions, for example "or", for which any language user will already be competent. The thinker then uses their imagination to simulate/'map out' scenarios in which A and B have different combinations of truth values. This unearths the thinker's understanding of their implicit conception of $A \rightarrow (A$ or $B)$. Once all scenarios are exhausted, the thinker will have reflected on all cases in a standard truth-table and will be able to check that $A \rightarrow (A$ or $B)$ is correct, and rationally accept it as a tautology. Note that the same procedure is involved when the thinker is provided the same truth-table for assessment. In order to rationally accept the truth-table as correct, the thinker must assess each line with the same simulation exercise. The feeling of rational acceptance is easily explained by the thinker in understanding their implicit conceptions, as opposed by a thinker accepting it *holus-bolus*, in which the feeling of rational acceptance must be a kind of illusion.[61]

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[60] C Peacocke, *Truly Understood*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 114-116

[61] Peacocke, 2008, pp. 114-116

3.1.2 Disagreement & Dogmatism

The understanding account does however, suffer from a number of objections. I present two of these here. The first objection stems from the thought that if understanding explains how we come to intuitive knowledge, then it can become difficult to make sense of disagreement between two epistemic peers[62]. If intuitions arise from competency with the relevant concepts, then when peers fail to share an intuition, at least one of the peers must be incompetent in their use of the relevant concepts. However, despite deontologists insisting that 'lying is intrinsically wrong' is intuitively true, it doesn't appear that consequentialists are incompetent with the concepts that make up 'lying is intrinsically wrong' when they do not share that intuition. But on the understanding account, one can only dogmatically assert that at least one of the disputants fails to properly understand the concepts involved. An unwelcome consequence of this is that appeals to intuition are often conversation stoppers, stymying the potential for rational debate. The disagreement between epistemic peers also casts doubt on whether intuitions really arise from understanding. On the face of it, the understanding account implies that once a proposition is properly understood, intuition should be indubitable and infallible. This is implausible as intuition is clearly dubitabile and fallible.

In response, note that it is often difficult to work out whether epistemic peers actually share all the same evidence, have considered it as thoroughly, etc. It may be that once all evidence is shared and assessed disagreements dissolve. Peacocke suggests that epistemic peers are fallible, they may; fail to simulate all possible

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[62] One who is, as far as one can tell, as rational and as thoughtful as one's self on some matter, has considered the same evidence, and with the same conscientiousness.

scenarios, fail to enact the same procedure explicitly as they do implicitly, and they may misremember earlier simulations.[63] Thinkers may also only partially understand their implicit conceptions, or mischaracterise their implicit conceptions in the process of making them explicit. To illustrate this, Peacocke points to Leibniz's and Newton's struggles to explicate what their concept of 'the limit of a series' was. Leibniz talked of 'values infinitely close to one another', while Newton gestured to 'ultimate ratios', while both were unable to say exactly what it was.[64]

Robert Audi, develops this response by showing that understanding often falls short of entailing intuition.[65] Some propositions can be understood, appear intuitively false, while actually being true: understanding the proposition 'a child can be borne by its grandmother', appears intuitively false until we see how it is true (the tale of Oedipus Rex is instructive here[66]). Other propositions can be understood without entailing the intuition that they're true: 'p entails q, q entails r, r entails s, $\neg s$. Therefore $\neg p$' might be intuitively true to a seasoned logician, but is it intuitively true to a competent, but new, logic student? Perhaps only after seeing the proof, or making the further inferences: that p entails s, and that if $\neg s$, then $\neg p$. So, in some cases, many inferences must be made before some proposition is adequately understood. This means that one's own understanding is not introspectively obvious to the thinker. Proponents of the understanding account can meet the dogmatism objection by

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[63] Peacocke, 2008, pp. 117-118

[64] Peacocke, 2008, pp. 119-120

[65] R Audi, "Intuition and Its Place in Ethics", *Journal of the American Philosophical Association*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2015, pp. 57-77 (65-69)

[66] Oedipus (unknowingly) married his mother. They had children whose mother was also their grandmother.

showing how adequacy of understanding goes beyond semantic comprehension.

Adequate understanding may require; proofs, further inferences, and reflection on

the relations between the relevant concepts, before intuitions manifest. Hence,

intuitions are dubitable and fallible, and epistemic peers should not jump to

assertions of incompetence when intuitions on some proposition aren't shared: a

deeper collaborative discussion is required.

3.2 Reliability

An alternative account of how intuitions provide knowledge focuses on intuition as a

kind of evidence. Bealer posits that the beliefs that are formed on the basis of

intuitions are epistemically justified because this is a reliable process of belief

formation.[67] This is because intuitions are reliably tied to the truth about the objects

to which they refer. So, how strongly are intuitions tied to the truth of their content?

As is demonstrated by our intuitions concerning paradoxes like the *sorites,* intuitions

aren't infallibly tied to the truth. Bealer suggests that the nature of the tie between

intuitions and the truth is found as holistic in nature, and holding "for-the-most-part".

This tie to the truth holds so long as thinkers are in suitably high cognitive conditions

and thinkers develop a rigorous theory from the deliverances of their intuitions. The

pronouncements of this theory will then be mostly true, and this is reliability enough.

The cognitive conditions that the thinker needs are many and varied, including

sufficient; intelligence, conscientiousness, time endowment for deliberation, and

critical feedback from intellectual peers.[68] Though this is a high standard, which we

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[67] Bealer, 1996, pg. 13

[68] Bealer, 1996, pp. 7 &17

may rarely meet, Bealer is optimistic that we may at least come to approximate these conditions sufficiently, especially when considering elementary propositions.

The method Bealer provides for constructing a theory and thus developing theoretical beliefs is an adaptation of reflective equilibrium (though Bealer focuses narrowly on intuition). Theoretical beliefs will be justified at the end of this idealised method:

(a) Collect all one's intuitions.

(b) Dialectically critique those intuitions.

(c) Construct theories that systematise those intuitions.

(d) Reflect between the theories, the intuitions, and intuitions about those theories with the aim of remedying any conflicts.

(e) Repeat (a)-(d) until there are no more conflicts such that one's intuitions and theoretical beliefs sit in equilibrium.[69]

This theory building method then allows one to vet and refine the intuitions relied upon for coming to theoretical beliefs. Note that, on Bealer's account, intuitions themselves don't need to be reliably true (intuitions are dubitable and fallible). But it does need to be the case that, in good cognitive conditions, our theoretical beliefs derived from the deliverances of our intuitions, would give correct truth assessments of those deliverances, for-the-most-part. This is compatible with many intuitions giving false deliverances but being corrected for through other intuitions, or other

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[69] Bealer, 1996, pg. 4

theoretical development (for example, the earlier discussion of NCA bears this out). This entire process constitutes the reliable tie between intuitions and the truth.[70]

3.2.1 The Generality Problem

With Bealer's use of reliability, comes the baggage of reliabilist accounts of justification as a class, and the *generality problem* is chief among them. The central tenet of reliabilist accounts of justification, call this (RJ), is the following:

> (RJ) A belief is justified if and only if it is produced by a process that reliably leads to true beliefs.[71]

The problem is that for any true belief, that belief is a member of an unlimited number of processes. The processes of: generating true beliefs; generating true beliefs or generating belief in P_1; generating true beliefs or generating belief in P_2; and so on … P_n. Note that, so long as the process generates P_n less frequently than true beliefs, the process is reliable: this makes (RJ) vacuous. So what Reliabilists owe us is an account of the relevant process which generates belief.

Using Bealer's approach to intuition, suppose I consider the proposition 'torturing a cat is wrong'. I intuit it as true, and assuming I am in good cognitive conditions and theoretically develop my beliefs, then my belief that it is true is produced by a reliable process and is thus justified. However, this account of the process is highly

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[70] Bealer, 1996, pg. 18; Bealer, 1998, pp. 219-221

[71] See pg. 1, E Conee & R Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism", *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 89, 1998, pp. 1-29

generalised and no better than answering the question 'what is the suitable type of racehorse' with 'the type that wins races'. The process needs to be described in enough detail to be a substantive answer. Getting down to the details, suppose I consider the proposition 'torturing a cat is wrong' and intuit it as true, at 2:43 pm, 20th of January, 2021. What is the process that leads me to believe it is true? After I comprehend the sentence, the concepts of torture, pain, what a cat is, etc. are then intuited upon. Pain is bad, that pain is deliberately brought about by torture is a wrong, there are no possible justifications (or only fantastical edge cases) for tortuing a cat. I consider these intuitions: theoretically developing the thoughts by steps a-e; 'pain is bad' does not conflict with other intuitions, it fits with other moral principles like 'it is wrong to harm sentient beings', etc. All the while, I am in good cognitive conditions; I have had a good education, I am fresh and rested, I am free from distraction, etc. As a result, I come to the belief that it is true that 'torturing a cat is wrong'. This process is a one-off concrete case, a kind of causal chain which lands on true belief. However, it seems strange to call a specific concrete event *reliable*. Reliability is a tendency, which doesn't apply to specific concrete cases, those are, in a sense, determinate. The problem with specific concrete cases, is that providing *ad hoc* selections of cases of the 'suitable-making properties' of intuition, chosen just because those intuitions came out true, fails to provide definite content. This makes them unsuitable for building a general theory. Reliability more properly applies to enduring mechanisms and repeatable processes. Appropriately, Reliabilists have directed their focus to types of processes.

Bealer's problem is that the intuition that 'torturing a cat is wrong' is true (at 2:43 pm, 20th of January, 2021), is a member of an unlimited number of different process

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types. To illustrate, using just three, there are intuition types for: propositions containing concrete moral cases; propositions containing concrete moral cases formed on Wednesdays; propositions in general. Each has its own level of reliability, so which one is the correct type to use? Intuitions on concrete moral cases appear reliable, as agreement amongst peers tends to show (with some argument, this could be taken as indicative of reliability). On the other end of the spectrum, our truth assessment of propositions in general may be unreliable, as this type might include gambler intuitions (from chapter 2) and Bealer's theory building method and cognitive conditions may not be able to pronounce correctly on truth, if the intuitions it draws from are sufficiently bad. Bealer needs to identify which process type is relevant, before he can claim that any specific case in question is justified on the basis of reliable belief formation. Earl Conee & Richard Feldman argue that answering the generality problem requires a principled answer that gives a general basis for identifying the reliable process itself.[72]

3.2.2 Intuition as a Natural Kind

Bealer makes for a principled answer to the generality problem by leveraging intuition as a *natural kind* of psychological state. A natural kind reflects the nature of the world, rather than some interest of human beings. The first step is to isolate what intuition really is. For Bealer, intuitions are seemings, which are identifiable by their sui generis phenomenology, sometimes described as a "glow" (though Bealer eschews "glow" descriptions). The thought is that what counts as a reliable process of belief formation, when it comes to intuitive belief, is forming a belief on the basis of a seeming with that sui generis phenomenology.

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[72] Conee & Feldman, 1998, pp. 1-5

Applying Bealer's resolution to the generality problem, Bealer has a principled reason to rule out processes that include the less reliable doxastic states: such as the gambler's intuitions because they lack the phenomenology of seemings. However, what principled reason can Bealer give to rule out processes formed on irrelevant factors, like Wednesdays, while ruling in relevant factors like suitably high cognitive conditions without being accused of cherry-picking? Here, I think Bealer can be interpreted in terms given by Jack Lyons, such that natural kinds of psychological processes are delineated by the parameters that play a causal role in that psychological process.[73] Accordingly, beliefs formed from intuitions are not causally affected by parameters like Wednesdays, so these can be excluded. While beliefs formed from intuition are causally affected by our cognitive conditions, and theory development, so these are included.

Note, however, that it is subject to debate as to whether only seemings can resolve the generality problem. Ernest Sosa questions what it is about the "glow" of seemings that allows us to identify reliable beliefs[74]: how is this "glow" superior to knowing the content of the belief that makes it reliably true? If we can introspectively know what it is about a certain belief that makes it reliable (which Bealer seems to allow for, since one can know via the reflective process one has used to develop one's theoretical beliefs), then what epistemic efficacy is added by the "glow"? If we can determine what makes certain beliefs reliable, it would seem that it is at least

[73] J Lyons, "Algorithm and Parameters: Solving the Generality Problem for Reliabilism", *Philosophical Review*, vol. 128, no. 4, 2019, pp. 463-509

[74] E Sosa, "Rational Intuition: Bealer on Its Nature and Epistemic Status", *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 81, no. 2/3, 1996, pp. 151-162

plausible that intuitions as doxastic states, with the parameter we have identified that affects their reliability, could also operate to resolve the generality problem.

3.3 Phenomenology: Awareness of Truth-makers

The final account I present of how intuitions provide knowledge utilises a perception-like model. On face value, having the sensory perceptual experience of a mouse justifies the belief that a mouse is there. The same is true for intuition: having the intuition that 'torturing a cat is wrong' is true, is often taken at face value to justify the belief with the same content. Sensory perceptual experiences and intuitions, while far from identical, might have similarities which can be leveraged to explain how intuitions furnish us with knowledge.

Elijah Chudnoff suggests that sensory perceptions and intuitions are broadly similar, because they are both *presentational* experiences.[75] In the case of the perceptual belief that 'there is a mouse in front of me', the sensory experience that 'there is a mouse in front of me' does two things. i) Makes it seem to me as though there is a mouse in front of me. And ii) makes it seem as though I am aware of the truth-maker for this belief: the mouse itself. Chudnoff characterises awareness as playing a role in the anchoring of *de re* mental states to their objects. The role is: if one is aware of an object, one can form a *de re* mental state about that object, or demonstratively refer to that object just by exercising the apparatus required for *de re* mental states or demonstrative reference.[76] To be aware of a truth-maker for a belief, is to be aware of the object which is pertinent to the truth of that belief.

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[75] E Chudnoff, *Intuition*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, pp. 83-113

[76] Paraphrased from, Chudnoff, 2013, pg. 209

For an experience to have *presentational phenomenology* is for it to meet two conditions, call this (PP):

> (PP) 1. For it to seem that *P* is true, and, 2. For it to seem as though you are aware of the truth-maker for the proposition that *P*.[77]

Presentational phenomenology by itself typically justifies belief in *P*. Furthermore, if this presentational phenomenology is veridical, then it will amount to knowledge that *P*. The conditions that would make (PP) amount to knowledge are when both; that *P* is true, and that the experience really does make you aware of the truth-maker for the belief that *P*. Chudnoff terms presentational phenomenology that obtains knowledge as *Veridical Presentationalism*, call this (VP):

> (VP) 1. The experience representing that *P* puts you in a position to know that *P*, and, 2. The reason that 1 obtains is because the experience of (PP) is determined by its relation to *P*.[78]

What is key to perception's ability to put us in a position to gain knowledge is that the sensory perception of *P* requires that we stand in a certain kind of relationship to *P*: The awareness of the truth-maker for the belief that *P*. Awareness of this truth-maker then grounds perception's epistemic fruitfulness. Chudnoff suggests that intuition's epistemic fruitfulness is explained analogously.

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[77] Chudnoff, 2013, pp. 37-8

[78] Chudnoff, 2013, pg. 207

However, how can intuition ever make us aware of the truth-makers for abstract propositions in; mathematics, metaphysics, and morality? The truth-makers for these would be; universals, and functions, etc. It is unclear as to how exactly we can be made aware of such abstracta. Awareness is key, and in the paradigm case of visual awareness, awareness is taken to consist of some kind of causal relation, straightforwardly taken to be a relation of *causal dependence*, call this (CD):

> (CD) If one is aware of some object by having a visual experience, then that
> visual experience causally depends on that object.

If causal dependence is how visual experience makes us aware of objects, and thus puts us in a position to have knowledge about them, then this tells against intuition's ability to produce knowledge. Since the intuitions we are interested in are about abstracta, it is hard to see how intuitions can causally depend on abstracta, since abstracta do not enter into causal relationships. However, Chudnoff argues that as abstracta are acausal, it is misguided to look for a causal account of awareness in intuition, so we should reject intuitive awareness as explained by (CD).

Chudnoff leverages naive realist accounts of perception to provide a non-causal framework for awareness. Naive realism supposes that the objects of sensory perception; chairs, trees, and rainbows, etc. and the properties they manifest in sense perception don't cause one's experiences, rather, they partly constitute one's experience. As constituents of the experiences, they partly determine the character of the experience - The mental states that arise are essentially constituted by those perceived objects, and have their phenomenological character partly determined by

those perceived objects.[79] Analogously, Chuddnoff suggests that intuitions make us aware of their objects, not in a causal manner, but in a constitutive manner. So how do abstracta constitute and determine an intuition experience?

To explain how abstracta constitutes experience, Chudnoff uses the notion of 'formal part', or, a 'principle of unity'.[80] Consider a bicycle: it is composed of many different material parts, and these parts must be in a specific arrangement with the other parts in order for it to locomote by peddling. If the parts were otherwise arranged, perhaps with the wheels at the ends of the handle bars, it wouldn't be a bike, but maybe a joke. A specific arrangement - a principle of unity - is demanded of the parts in order for them to constitute a bicycle. As such, the principle of unity also determines certain features of those parts and their arrangement to one another.

To see the principle of unity at work in intuition, I will explicate an intuition experience in order to: (1) locate the abstracta, (2) locate the other constituent parts, and (3) isolate the principle of unity.

Consider the proposition that 'all circles are symmetrical about their diameters'. In order to ascertain whether it is true, one needs to understand both; which chords on a circle are diameters, and which chords on a circle are axes of symmetry. To do this, one imagines an arbitrary circle, as well as some of its diameters. One reflects that; circles are 'shapes of this kind', diameters are 'those chords that span the circle while passing through its midpoint'. Lines of symmetry are 'those chords, such that, a

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79 Chudnoff, 2013, pg. 211

80 Chudnoff, 2013, pp. 213-218

fold along that chord makes the halves coincide'. One then imagines folding the circle over a selection of different chords: some folds just make the circle have a flat and cornered edge with a length less than the diameter of the original circle, while others see the flat and cornered edge at exactly the full diameter of the original circle. After some simulation of this, suddenly things fall into place - one has the intuition - it becomes obvious that those chords which do result in equal halves are its diameters. One becomes aware that all diameters must be lines of symmetry. In this example, what one becomes aware of is (1) the abstract object - <u>The property of being a diameter</u>.
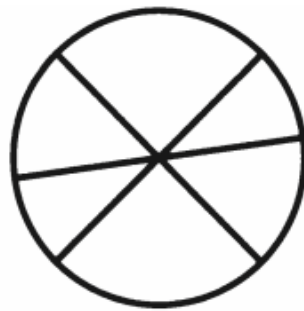
Image from Chudnoff.[81]

For Chudnoff, intuitions are complex states constituted of (2) not only seemings, but other parts that we typically term as reflections; conscious thoughts, the focus of inquiry, imaginings, etc.[82] When we reflect on the proposition 'circles are symmetrical about their diameters' we imagine many parts; arbitrary circles, chords, and diameters, etc. The abstract object - the property of being a diameter - as the focus of our inquiry, is (3) the principle of unity that demands that the other parts of the

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[81] See pg. 636 in, E Chudnoff, "What Intuitions Are Like", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, vol. 82, no. 3, 2011, pp. 625-654

[82] Chudnoff, 2013, pg. 221

experience arrange such that the phenomenological experience presents the abstract object as standing in relief from the other parts of our conscious experience. The only points at which a line of symmetry can be drawn on a circle is between the two maximally distant points on its circumference. It is because this essential property of a circle's diameter coincides with the line of symmetry, that our focusing on the properties of a diameter makes the other parts of our experience arrange just so, and the property of a diameter itself presents to us.

If the parts of the experience couldn't arrange such that a principle of unity relevant to the proposition could be established, then we would come to intuit the proposition as false. Suppose we were to reflect on the proposition that 'All squares are symmetrical about a chord drawn through their centre point'. We find that the parts of our reflective experience of some properties of a square (a folding along a line such as that below, for instance) cannot fit into a principle of unity for the abstract object: properties of symmetry in the case at hand. Resultanly we intuit the proposition as false. Much like a "bicycle" with square wheels would fail the principle of unity for a bicycle.
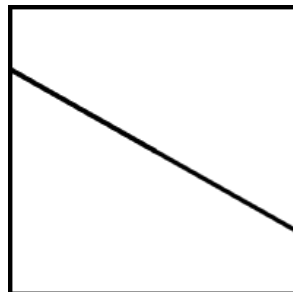
This leads Chudnoff to a *Formal Naive Realism* account of awareness in intuition:

(Formal Naive Realism) If one is intuitively aware of some abstracta by having an intuition experience, then that experience depends on that abstracta, in the following ways:

> i) It is part of the essence of that experience that the abstracta is part of the principle of unity that the parts of the experience instantiate. And,
>
> ii) The abstracta (via the principle of unity) determines the character of the experience.[83]

Having established Chudnoff's account, I will now consider two objections.

3.3.1 Veridical Hallucination

A general problem for Chudnoff's account, is that constitutive dependence accounts of awareness make some incorrect pronouncements regarding awareness. Consider a case of veridical perceptual hallucination: the hallucination of a car in the presence of a car. Even though the experience matches reality, this is not enough to establish awareness of *that* car. At best, one is merely aware that one is having some kind of car-ish experience. What we naturally grasp for to explain awareness in the perceptual case, is that we are put in contact with the truth-maker for the content of that perception. Typically, the contact condition is explained by some causal story, perhaps; light bounces off some object onto our retinas, this proximal stimulus is then processed by the brain to form the belief that that object has certain properties. This causal contact story correctly shows why we are not aware of the car, it does this by providing conditions we need to meet in order to be aware of some object: some kind of causal contact.

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[83] Chudnoff, 2013, pp. 213-216

Now consider an intellectual hallucination. In the case of intuition about abstract facts, it is possible that I might have brain lesions such that I intuit some complicated mathematical claim as true. Even if a specific complicated mathematical proposition that intuitively appears true to me (because of brain lesions), is in fact true, it appears wrong to say that I am aware of the truth-maker for it. However, using Chudnoff's constitutive dependence account there is no apparent difference in the experiences of a case of intellectual hallucination and a genuine case of awareness. As such, constitutive dependence accounts appear inadequate to rule out awareness by intuition in a case of veridical hallucination.

This alleged failure is premature, and why this is so comes from John Bengson (in a different, albeit related context). Bengson considers a case of intellectual hallucination[84]: one day Trip hallucinates, and three shapes appear in his consciousness.
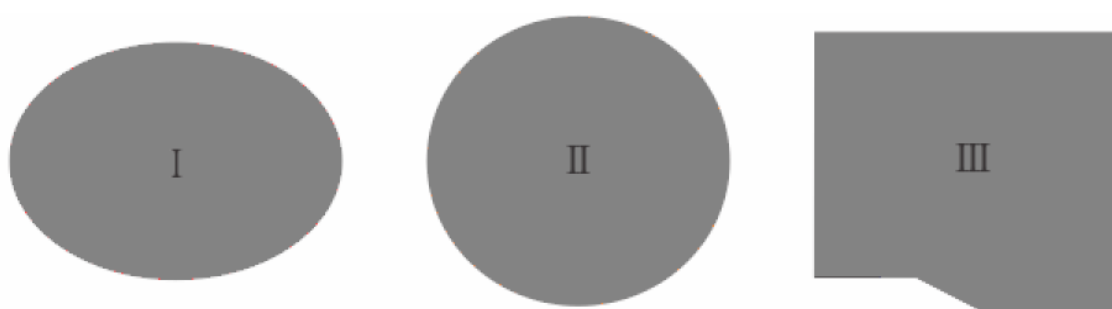

Image from Bengson[85]

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[84] See pg. 13 in, J Bengson, 'Grasping the Third Realm', in T Szabó & J Hawthorne (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology Volume 5*, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 1-38

[85] Bengson, 2015, pg. 13

Trip comes to intuit that the shape of I resembles the shape of II more than it does the shape of III. Furthermore, it appears as though Trip is aware of the truth-makers for this intuition, as Trip's hallucinatory experience was constituted by the relevant shapes. That is, part of what it is for Trip's hallucination to exist is for the shapes to exist, replete with the (abstract) resemblance relations between them. Part of the experience of a shape is the shape itself, and because the shapes themselves are part of the experience, the constitution of the experience ensures that we are aware of the truth-makers for our intuitions about resemblance relations. Nothing external to the mind caused this hallucination, and even if something external did, this would be beside the point: awareness of the truth-makers for abstracta has no requirement for external tethering, all the needed information is encapsulated in the experience itself, no matter how it came about. Abstracta are not spatiotemporally located, so they cannot ever be in the wrong 'location' in relation to us. Thus there is never a problem with why a veridical hallucination and a normal case appear so phenomenologically similar - We are intuiting upon an abstract fact, not something external, like a car. Hence, Trip's hallucination is as sufficient for awareness of truth-makers, just as much as when one reads this paper, sees the above example, and has an intuition about resemblance relations between the shapes.

However, does this reply trade on an ambiguity between a proposition being 'intuited as true' and 'appearing intuitively true'? Bengson argues that it doesn't. Consider a case of mathematical intuition, illustrated by this anecdote of G. H. Hardy, about Srinivasa Ramanujan:

I remember once going to see [Ramanujan] when he was ill at Putney. I had ridden in taxi cab number 1729 and remarked that the number seemed to me rather a dull one, and that I hoped it was not an unfavourable omen. "No," he replied, "it is a very interesting number; it is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two cubes in two different ways."[86]

So, if some brain lesions lead me to intuit that: '1729 is the smallest number expressible as the sum of two (positive) cubes, in two different ways' (hereafter called '1729') is true, what is the constitution of my intuition? If my intuition about '1729' because the brain lesions are so complex as to also "encode" all the mathematical relations that make '1729' true, then I am aware of the truth-makers for '1729', and there is no difference between Ramanujan's intuition and mine. Just as in the Trip case, this intuition makes me aware of the truth-makers and so provides knowledge. The abstract object constitutes part of the experience and demands (via principle of unity) that the experience be 'just so', and the experience cannot *actually be* without the abstract object standing in relief. This experience grounds my intuitive awareness of the abstract object.

However, I may intuit '1729' as true in a different manner. The brain lesions may cause an intuition that is just bare truth-assent to 1729, without the sufficient mathematical relations to be truth-makers for '1729'. This latter kind of intuition is differently constituted to Ramanujan's, even though I may subjectively feel that I am aware of the truth-makers. So, despite being subjectively indistinguishable, strictly speaking my intuition and Ramanujan's are not the same. The admission that they

[86] G. H. Hardy, *Ramanujan*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1940, p. 12

are actually different experiences might appear to unfaithfully break the thought experiment, since surely different experiences should feel distinct. However, because intuitions are a kind of truth-assent they lend themselves to glossing over details, and we rarely have no cause to introspectively dissect why it is that some proposition appears true to us. However, the dissection of the experiences of both Ramanujan and myself opens up the possibility for adjudicating intuition disputes between disagreeing parties. Which segues to the next objection.

3.3.2 Morality & Disagreement

Intuition plays an important role in moral judgements, but I argue that the application of Chudnoff's account to moral cases is not straightforward, and this makes salient problems of disagreement and justification.

Consider the proposition 'torturing a cat is wrong'. The abstract object must be 1) the property of being wrong. The constituent parts of the experiences are the familiar: reflections, imaginings, and the focus of inquiry, etc. So, 2) when we reflect on 'torturing a cat is wrong', we think about; cats we know, cats in general, the experience of pain, causing pain for no good reason, a cat in pain, etc. 3) focusing on the properties of wrongness is the principle of unity to which the constituent parts must align, such that the property of wrongness stands in relief from the rest of our conscious experience. Given what Chudnoff says elsewhere[87], the truth-maker we are aware of is an abstract general mapping scheme between 'wrongness' and 'torture'. But now consider disagreement in ethics.

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[87] For example in regards to concave and convex figures. Chudnoff, 2013, pp. 48-9

When epistemic peers hold contrary intuitions on the trolley case, for example, this implies that they are seemingly aware of different truth-makers, perhaps: abstract general mappings between 'rightness' and 'saving the most lives', versus the entirely different, abstract general mappings between 'wrongness' and 'directly bringing about someone's death'. If these peers then described the truth-makers they were seemingly aware of to each other, they might be surprised by what the other reports, given that the truth-makers are so radically different. But what can explain this level of disagreement?

In cases of disagreement in sensory perceptual awareness, the reported truth-makers aren't typically radically different. Suppose one evening we both glance towards a rustling sound. If I report seeing a fluffy orange dog, and you report seeing an orange fox. This level of disagreement is unsurprising and avails of the usual explanations; low light, quick glances, or that I am unfamiliar with foxes, etc. However, suppose we looked towards a rustling, you reported being aware of the orange fur, and bushy tail of a fox, but I report awareness of the metal bands and clockwork hands of a wristwatch. Now the reported truth-makers are radically different (like it is in the ethical case about the trolley dilemma above). The explanations to which we would grasp are more extreme: I must be hallucinating, or perhaps I have brain lesions. Note however that the explanation on offer hails from the biology of vision, and the extreme nature of this explanation appears appropriate. But what could we say about disagreeing epistemic peers in the ethical case? It is hard to say.

This indicates two related problems. Firstly, while sensory perception can avail itself to physical biological explanations, Chudnoff's account of intuitions, which are partly constituted by the abstracta they are about, cannot invoke easy physical explanations like the biology of vision. Disagreements in ethics are then left unexplained. Chudnoff needs to explain how it is possible for two epistemic peers, who are considering the same case, can report awareness of entirely distinct and contradicting abstracta. Without such an explanation, it is questionable whether Chudnoff's account can accommodate disagreement between epistemic peers and thus, the dubitability and fallibility of intuition.

Furthermore, in the trolley case, two epistemic peers may intuit differently, but both cannot be right. Both parties feel the truth-assent in their intuition, and the feeling of awareness and apparent awareness may be indistinguishable. Because the duty to explain disagreement between epistemic peers is undischarged, we cannot easily say that one party is hallucinating their moral intuition: though their experiences differ, they both contain plausible truth-makers of the case before them. If despite one's best efforts one cannot know whether one is aware of the real truth-maker, or just an apparent one, it is not clear that awareness is strong enough to ever amount to knowledge. So the epistemic potential of Chudnoff's account is questionable.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have introduced three distinct and living accounts of how intuition could provide knowledge. The understanding account pairs nicely with intuitions as conscious inclination to believe (section 2.2) in that it preserves ontological parsimony: using only mental faculties that are uncontroversial. Furthermore, it does

so in a way that doxastic views desperately needed: understanding appropriately constrains intuition's aetiology to the intellectual domain (rather than perceptual, or memorial, etc.), and, as an expression of antecedent knowledge, understanding secures the core characteristics of intuition as; strong, stable, and direct. While disagreement and dogmatism pose significant hurdles, there are promising routes to resolution. The constructivist project emerges seamlessly from the understanding account. Understanding what the rational will is, is easily parsed as being able to analyse the rational will as willing an end. And the notion of 'mapping out' implicit concepts, closely resembles the derivation of substantive normative claims like 'willing an end entails willing the means to that end' from the analysis of that normative form. The constructivist use of intuition as the input of construction, in accordance with the understanding account, is most naturally understood as the agent's conscious inclinations to believe. Specifically, how the agent is consciously inclined to; analyse, derive, and ultimately self-legislate (i.e. the construction of normativity). This reflects the constructivist commitment to Protagoreanism, which captures 'man as the measurer of all things' as 'man is consciously inclined to measure things thusly…'. Importantly, note that there is no requirement that an agent self-legislate in accordance with just any of their conscious inclinations. The agent may self-legislate otherwise, when they take themselves to have sufficient reasons to, for example, the denial of the Naive Comprehension Axiom (NCA). Denying NCA, amounts to the agent having conscious inclination that leads all the way to belief, and self-legislation that requires the denial of NCA.

The reliability account is flexible in that it takes intuitions, doxastic or sui generis, so long as they are good enough (with some qualifications), such that good cognitive

conditions, and theoretical processing, can deliver us beliefs that are reliably true. Given that intuitions are already responsible for many beliefs, the thought that intuitions are good enough to furnish knowledge gains credibility by appealing to how intuitive beliefs become knowledge: note the successes we see in fields like; astrophysics, mathematics, etc. Whether or not intuitions lead to deliverances that are reliable in the moral sphere is vexed, and will be discussed more in chapter 5. Bealer explicitly leverages seemings to resolve the generality problem. However, Sosa points out that if we know what it is about certain beliefs that make them reliable, then this could work to resolve the generality problem too. For this reason, the reliability account accommodates both doxastic and seemings accounts of intuitions. Since Bealer already invokes a version of reflective equilibrium to ensure reliability, it should be clear that reflective equilibrium fits snugly with the reliability account. Intuitions are taken as data points with some prior warrant, but require theoretical development in good cognitive conditions in order to provide reliably true theoretical beliefs.

Chudnoff's phenomenological account requires a seemings view of intuitions (section 2.3), as doxastic states lack the requisite presentational phenomenology which drives the analogy between sense perception (which justifies perceptual beliefs) and intuitions (which justify beliefs about abstracta). Chuddnoff's account draws from a long and rich history in philosophy, René Descartes brought such views into the early modern era with language like "I perceive that I now exist".[88] Bringing this tradition into the present day, Chudnoff constructs a sophisticated

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[88] R Descartes, *Meditations on First Philosophy*, J Cottingham (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pg. 30

apparatus to demonstrate intuition's phenomenological deliverance of justification. However, the apparatus is committed to many controversial parts; presentational phenomenology, constitutive dependence, abstracta as truth-makers, etc. Resultantly, Chudnoff's account appears to hold together precariously. This is to say that Chudnoff's view is the least parsimonious of the three, but also that the components themselves also appear unsturdy. Overall, moral disagreement on Chudnoff's account reveals two shortcomings; 1) it is hard to make sense of how moral intuition is dubitable and fallible, and 2) that it is questionable whether intuition, through bestowing awareness of abstracta, is strong enough to amount to knowledge.

Intuitionism, as was already becoming clear in chapter 2, lends itself to two pairings: a) understanding, if the intuitionist prefers the self-evident conception of foundational beliefs; or with b) Chudnoff's phenomenology of awareness, if intuitions are thought of as seeming experiences that ground foundational beliefs. As intuitionism's application of intuition is direct, the strengths and weaknesses of intuitionism then mirror the account of intuition how intuition provides knowledge upon which it relies, chiefly: disagreement and dogmatism with the understanding account, and the controversial ontology, and an undischarged duty to explain how phenomenological awareness can provide dubitable and fallibile intuitions on Chudnoff's phenomenological account.

This chapter has established several accounts of how intuition can be epistemically valuable. In assessing the strengths and weaknesses of each, I find that the understanding and reliability accounts are the better candidates with substantially

less in the ways of controversial commitments, and in regards to potential objections, there are clearer paths forward for both. Neither account relies on spooky mental faculties. The understanding account uses only our abilities to understand and reason. And the reliability account, while it does take intuitions as intellectual "pre-sets" (no matter how intuitions became "pre-set"), only needs intuitions to be good enough to ensure reliability in intellectually amenable circumstances. Both accounts can explain the dubitability and fallibility of intuitions: the understanding account allows dubitability and fallibility via the intellectual failings of epistemic peers, and the reliability account expects that a large swath of intuitions will flat out be wrong.

I will now proceed to two chapters that consider objections to the use of intuition in philosophy. Firstly a broad objection that states that intuition is not really used in philosophy, and further, intuition cannot provide anything of epistemic value. And secondly, objections to the epistemic value of intuition in moral philosophy by way of debunking arguments. This last chapter serves to explore the dubitability and fallibility of intuitions.

4 Intuition's Significance and Usage

In this chapter I will discuss whether intuition really is central to philosophical practice. I have been assuming that philosophers rely upon intuitions as evidence, or a source of evidence, for philosophical theories (call this view *Centrality*). This discussion will revolve around a challenge from Herman Cappelen's *Philosophy without Intuitions* where Cappelen demotes intuition to the role of mere common-ground belief, or as a premise which will not be argued for.[89] If Cappelen is right, this entails that intuitions are epistemically inert, intuitions are hardly central to philosophy, and the prior chapters of this thesis were misguided. Hence Cappelen's claim is worthy of exploration.

I argue that Cappelen's conclusion is premature and that intuition is essential evidence in philosophy. I do this by demonstrating that Cappelen's intuition-free interpretation of significant philosophical works strains credulity. I then apply Cappelen's thesis to moral philosophy. This entails using the "intuition-free" ethical theory structures of (pure) coherentism and global constructivism. I argue that the outcome is so absurd as to; prove the negation of Cappelen's thesis, and establish that intuition is essential evidence for philosophy. I end by diagnosing that Cappelen made this radical argument because he employs a characterisation of the evidence that intuition provides which is far too strong. I offer a better characterisation of the evidence that intuition provides, and set up a platform for chapter 5 to explore the limits of the evidence provided by intuitions.

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[89] H Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pg. 3

4.1 The Argument from 'Intuition'-talk

Cappelen posits that there are two main arguments which support Centrality, firstly *The Argument from 'Intuition'-Talk*:

> (AIT) 'Intuition' and its cognate terms: 'intuitive', 'intuit', etc. as well as other locutions such as 'it seems that…' and 'inclines us to…' etc.[90] are used so regularly in conjunction with being put forth as evidence in philosophical circles, that intuitions must be essential philosophical evidence.[91]

For example, when utilitarianism is taught in moral philosophy classes, the lecturer typically demonstrates how utilitarianism accounts for our intuitions in regards to; pleasure being morally good, animals having moral value, the impartiality of morality, etc. Then it is demonstrated that utilitarianism also implies acts that are intuitively wrong: a sheriff ought to execute an innocent prisoner to placate a violent mob, if overall pleasure will be maximised; buying a coffee with friends is morally impermissible, since the the price of a coffee will only bring a small amount of pleasure to you, but the same money would alleviate significant suffering if spent on famine relief.

Cappelen critiques (AIT) in a manner which can be seen as a continuation of Timothy Williamson's charges that the term 'intuition' is used promiscuously in

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[90] This could also be expanded to include, as Cappelen suggests, 'what we would say' if there is good reason to think that an intuition is implied, but also to 'we see that', 'perceive that…', and 'acquaint with…' when context supports it.

[91] Cappelen, 2012, pp. 4-5

philosophy.[92] Cappelen argues that 'intuition' is often used to hedge a claim, or to present some premise as common ground prior to theorising. Cappelen would construe the lecturer (above) as demonstrating which common ground beliefs utilitarianism encompasses and does not encompass. Cappelen even suggests that 'intuition', and its cognate terms, are semantically defective: having no semantic anchor, 'intuition' means nothing, but is rather a kind of "verbal tic" that has spread like a verbal virus amongst philosophers.[93] Cappelen's thesis is put succinctly by Cian Dorr:

"I doubt anything of cognitive significance would be lost if everything were written without reference to intuitions, e.g., by replacing 'intuition supports P more strongly than it supports Q' with a [bold] assertion of 'if either P or Q, then P'.)"[94]

This assertion should shock the philosophical orthodoxy who have been acting like 'intuition' is meaningful, and worthy of investigation. However, I won't focus on (AIT), as demonstrating that Cappelen's second critique (4.2) fails, negates the need.

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[92] Williamson, 2007, Pg. 215-9

[93] Cappelen, 2012, pp. 4-5 & 22

[94] C Dorr, Review of Every Thing Must Go: Metaphysics Naturalized, Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews, Notre Dame, 2010, viewed 13 July 2021, <https://ndpr.nd.edu/reviews/every-thing-must-go-metaphysics-naturalized/>

4.2 The Argument from Philosophical Practice

If Cappelen's critique of (AIT) succeeds, then this is used to bolster his critique of the second major argument which supports Centrality, the *Argument from Philosophical Practice*:

> (APP) Intuitions are relied upon extensively in philosophical practice. So intuitions must be essential to philosophy.[95]

The two arguments are complementary, in that, intuition talk is part of philosophical practice, but also, if (AIT) was the reason people believe (APP) is true, this serves to undermine (APP). However, (APP) does not solely rely on what philosophers say they are doing, philosophers may use intuition without explicitly stating so. Cappelen puts forward four philosophical practices which supposedly rely upon intuition[96]:

> (MC) The method of cases: a theory of something is only good if it correctly predicts our intuitions about cases relevant to that theory.
>
> (AA) Armchairs and *apriority*: philosophers don't typically conduct empirical research, and often operate solely from the armchair in an *a priori* manner. What else, other than intuitions, could be the starting point for such theorising?
>
> (CA) Conceptual analysis: philosophy is primarily engaged in conceptual analysis, and the right way to conduct conceptual analysis is by appeal to intuition.

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[95] Cappelen, 2012, pp. 5-7

[96] Cappelen, 2012, pp. 6-7

(RB) Rock-bottom starting points: intuitions have foundational epistemic

status - Intuitions provide evidence without themselves requiring evidence.

How should we assess the claims of (APP)? Cappelen looks for three supposed features of intuition, to see if they are actually present and efficacious in prominent examples of intuition in philosophy. These features are[97]:

(F1) Seeming: a characteristic special phenomenology of intuition, a "glow".

(F2) Rock: a special epistemic status of 'default' justification. Evidence for this can be found from:

i) Intellectual directness[98]: if some proposition P is held to be justified without reasoning or experience.

ii) Evidence recalcitrance: suppose one is inclined to believe that P. One also has arguments for P. If the arguments for P turn out to be bad, but one is still inclined to endorse P, then P is evidence recalcitrant.

(F3) Based on conceptual competence: a correct judgement that P is an intuitive judgement only if it is justified solely by one's conceptual competence.

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[97] Cappelen, 2012, pp. 112-113

[98] Here I part with Cappelen's terminology to fit in with terminology already established, which serves much the same purpose as Cappelen's "Non-inferential and Non-experiential" where 'experiential' is taken to be via appeals to memory or perception, rather than just any experiential state. As such, Cappelen captures proponents of seeming states where they are episodic experiences.

For Cappelen, if these features are absent from philosophical practice, then intuition has no epistemic importance over and above common ground. I put forth Cappelen's case before arguing against it. My argument hinges on (F2), its close relationship to (RB), and (RB)'s interplay with (MC).

4.2.1 Cappelen's Analysis

Cappelen looks to paradigm cases of the use of intuition in philosophy to assess whether it is truly Centrality friendly. One such case is Judith Jarvis Thomson's *A Defense of Abortion*. Thomson starts by considering a prominent Argument Against Abortion:

> (AAA) Every person has a right to life. If we assume that a foetus is a person, then every foetus has a right to life. While a mother has a right to bodily autonomy, in the case where this conflicts with a person's right to life, the right to life outweighs the right to bodily autonomy. So a foetus may not be killed.[99]

Granting the controversial assumption that a foetus is a person, Thomson then presents the violinist case:

> One morning you wake up to find yourself in a hospital bed with your circulatory system surgically connected to a famous and unconscious violinist. Around you stand members of the Society of Music Lovers. They explain that they are sorry for kidnapping you, but it was necessary to save the life of this

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[99] Adapted from, J.J. Thomson, 'A Defense of Abortion', *Philosophy & Public Affairs*, (Autumn), vol. 1, no. 1, 1971, pp. 47-66 (48)

famous violinist. You were the only medically compatible person to whom the violinist could be connected in order to give their (otherwise terminal) kidney condition time to recover. The hospital director is very sorry for this having happened, does not approve of the methods of the Society of Music Lovers, and wouldn't have permitted it if they had known. However, they remind you that now that you are connected to the violinist, unplugging would kill him. While you do have a right to bodily autonomy, a person's right to life outweighs this, and you must remain plugged in long enough for the violinist to recover: about 9 months.[100]

Thomson concludes that we find the argument given by the hospital director "outrageous": the proposition that 'we are morally obligated to remain plugged in' is false, so the argument must be flawed. Because the structure of (AAA) is reflected in the violinist case, Thomson suggests that we are now in a position where (AAA) might also appear dubious. As surely whatever error is at play in the violinist case is at play in (AAA).

Proponents of Centrality would typically interpret "outrage" as the intuition that 'we are morally obligated to remain plugged in' is false, as having Rock-like[101] epistemic weight. They then reason in line with (MC) that any moral theory that implies (AAA) will need to be modified to: accommodate the violinist intuition (in such a case, (AAA)

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[100] Adapted from, Thomson, 1971, pp. 48-9

[101] I will later argue that Cappelen's Rock is far too strong a characterisation of intuition to be reasonable: see section 4.2.4.

might be abandoned); explain the intuition away (a relevant disanalogy between (AAA) and the violinist might be leveraged to achieve this); or both.

In contrast, Cappelen interprets "outrage" at the thought that 'we are morally obligated to remain plugged in', as just indicating that the argument contains some error, and proponents of (AAA) might share this thought as common ground. Despite being presented without justificatory reasoning (F2i), whether or not the intuition about this case is a Rock, is not at play here. Since we agree on that common ground already, any special epistemic weight is not looked for and is not required to motivate the argument. Because of this, we should prefer the common ground interpretation, as it is more parsimonious and less controversial than Rock status.

Cappelen notes that Thomson's writing is gentle in nature. Thomson writes that if the hospital director's argument is bad, then we might be suspicious of the strength of (AAA). Cappelen interprets the gentle tone as hedging, which would be strange if the intuition is supposed to be epistemically privileged Rock (F2). Cappelen also suggests that if someone asks why we think the hospital director's argument is outrageous, we are unlikely to react with puzzlement or surprise. Nor are we likely to respond with "I don't really need to justify that" which is what we would expect if "outrage" indicated a defaultly justified Rock (F2). We can easily justify our outrage at being obligated to remain connected: being surgically connected to someone would be uncomfortable, our freedom is restricted, etc. Since justification comes easily (perhaps underwriting the outrage), this further suggests against the efficacy of any purported Rock status (F2e) as well as evidence recalcitrance (F2ii).[102]

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[102] Cappelen, 2012, pp. 155-6

Thomson's paper, on Cappelen's interpretation, argues towards the rejection of (AAA), by drawing out the important features in both arguments to identify similarities - But Rock is neither invoked nor required to do this. Cappelen concludes that it looks as though all the supposed hallmarks of intuition are actually absent from what many would hold up as a paradigm of intuition centric philosophical work.

4.2.2 Critique of Cappelen's Analysis

I disagree with Cappelen's analysis. Firstly, I think that if we described the violinist case to someone, and then that person sincerely asked why the hospital director's argument is outrageous, we would probably respond with some surprise and puzzlement. This surprise indicates that there is something odd about the person who feels the need to ask and this is not a strike against intuition's Rock-like status (F2).

I agree that upon a request for justification, we would be able to start providing justifying conditions for our outrage; the confinement, displeasure, the lack of freedom, and listening to violin practice all day. However, it is not easy to provide the actual justification that underwrites the "outrage". To explain: the problem with Cappelen's appeal to the easy justifications we give in support of that judgement, is that there is often good reason to suspect that these are just *post hoc* rationalisations. Jonathan Haidt invokes Hume when he suggests that reason is a slave to intuition:[103] our reasoning ability is most naturally engaged to justify our prior

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[103] See pg. 818 in, J Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgement", *Psychological Review*, vol. 108, no. 4, 2001, pp. 814-834

intuition on the case. To argue this, Haidt provides a battery of psychological studies that suggest reason is more naturally engaged like a defence lawyer, primarily interested in justifying our (intuitively held) position and trying to convince others to conform. This is typically done by providing culturally accepted reasons (such as restricted freedom). This stands opposed to how we like to think of reason as a scientist seeking to uncover moral truths.[104] Haidt's work should make us sceptical of the common thought that reason underwrites our moral judgments. This is not to say that reason cannot uncover truths, clearly our abilities to; cure diseases, predict the course of heavenly bodies, and land on the moon indicate otherwise. However, reasoning must proceed carefully, critically, and with an eye on objectivity.[105]

There are also sections of Thomson's paper that are hard to interpret in Cappelen's terms. For example, Thomson indicates Rock-like status (F2) when qualifying her opposition to a *strict* right to life (a right without exception), Thomson states that she is actually for a right to life:

> "... it seems to me that the primary control we must place on the acceptability of an account of rights is that it should turn out in that account to be a truth that all persons have a right to life."[106]

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[104] Haidt, 2001, pp. 822-3

[105] Compare with, Cordelia Fine, "Is the emotional dog wagging its rational tail, or chasing it?", *Philosophical Explorations*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2006, pp. 83-98

[106] Thomson, 1971, pg. 56

Here, Thomson suggests that no theory of rights without a right to life would be adequate. Since it is beyond question whether 'persons have a right to life' is true, this is suggestive of evidence recalcitrance (F2ii). Thomson also suggests that any theory of rights must fit this, which indicates abductive reasoning through (MC): since we take 'persons have a right to life' as true, and attempt to build an accommodating theory of rights around it, intuition is taking centre stage. Furthermore, as intuition is the motivator for constructing compatible theories, it must be efficacious (F2e). This is just the role for intuition that Centrality dictates.

Note that reasoning abductively from the intuition to the theoretical framework, treats the intuition as something in need of theoretical explanation, and assumes a good theory ought to encompass the intuition. This mode of reasoning only makes sense when the intuition c carries epistemic weight. To see why, consider if c was just an unargued for premise, or common ground. Then why should T be proposed that makes common ground more likely? Or why would an assumed premise which conflicts with T, prompt the introduction of T' which accounts for the assumed premise? Is the choice between accepting c or T based on whim? (MC) is only a sensible practice when c has Rock-like status: (MC) supposes that the thinker is inferring to the best explanation of c. This is similar to the manner seen in the sciences when new data is acquired and candidate theories are assessed for fit.

Further evidence of (MC) comes when Thomson suggests that to be deprived of a right is to be treated unjustly, so one's right to life can only be violated if one is killed unjustly. Thomson suggests this modification to the theory of rights to:

"enable us to square the fact that the violinist has a right to life with the fact that you do not act unjustly toward him in unplugging yourself, thereby killing him.[107]"

It is difficult to render this passage in Cappelen's terms as Thomson argues that her theory of rights accommodates that 'it is not unjust to unplug' is true. This should be interpreted as Thomson employing (MC): proposing theories that help encompass Rock-like intuitions, rather than Cappelen's suggestion that some theory is used to support some common ground.

There are also many cases where Cappelen's interpretation further strains credulity. Consider Cappelen's interpretation of Keith Lehrer's Truetemp thought experiment:

> Mr. Truetemp has a brain implant which accurately and very reliably measures the ambient temperature. This same device also causes Mr. Truetemp to have correct thoughts about the temperature and unreflectively accept those thoughts. Mr. Truetemp has no idea that he has this implant, never considers why it is that he has obsessive thoughts about the temperature, and never verifies his temperature thoughts by consulting thermometers. If Mr. Truetemp thinks and accepts that the temperature is 40° Celsius (which it is). Does he *know* that it is?[108]

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[107] Thomson, 1971, pg. 57

[108] Adapted from, K Lehrer, *Theory of Knowledge*, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 1990, pp. 163-4

Lehrer answers "surely not", despite externalist[109] conditions for knowledge obtaining Mr. Truetemp lacks knowledge. On Cappelen's characterisation, Lehrer supports this answer by pointing out that "[Mr. Truetemp] has no idea why the thought occurred to him or that such thoughts are almost always correct… consequently [he does not have knowledge.[110]]" That is, it is not enough that one just possesses correct information: it is an important condition of knowledge that one could have some way of knowing that the information one has is correct. However, it is difficult to understand what goal Lehrer has when he uses Truetemp as "a general objection to externalist theories of knowledge[111]" if he is not leveraging intuition with Rock-like status. If Truetemp is meant to be a general objection, then it must give those who are tempted by externalism some reason to think again. But if Cappelen is right and Lehrer does not argue abductively from the intuition that Mr. Truetemp lacks knowledge, to his theory, then once we see that Lehrer's argument against externalism is just a rehashing of the internalist mantra that 'reliable true beliefs don't suffice for knowledge, one must know why they are justified', then Lehrer is merely saying externalism is wrong because internalism is right. By Cappelen's lights, Lehrer must be begging the question.

The major problem with Cappelen's rendering of Lehrer (and *mutatis mutandis* Thomson) is that since Cappelen characterises the function of intuition as 'common

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[109] Externalism, in brief, is the view that justification does not have to be internal to the agent, justification can obtain external to the agent, and the agent may lack awareness of how they are justified. The opposing view is internalism, the view that justification must be internal to the agent: the agent does, or can have access/awareness to how they are justified.

[110] Lehrer, 1990, pp. 163-4

[111] Lehrer, 1990, pp. 162

ground' or 'assumed premises', we need to render Lehrer as strangely arguing from "common ground" that the targets of his argument (externalists) cannot possibly be holding in common. For Lehrer's argument to be sane, and rationally persuasive, it must be anchored by something shared between internalists and externalists: this rules out the truth of internalism. Surely it must be an intuition that all parties take as evidence towards discovering the objective truth about what the correct account of justification is. In this case it is the intuition that 'Mr. Truetemp satisfies the externalist conditions for knowledge, but lacks knowledge' is true. Jonathan Weinberg points out that Cappelen realises that it is an implication of his thesis that philosophers like Lehrer (and Thomson) are making poor arguments.[112]

With this now in mind, the development of externalist responses such as 'it is impossible for internalism to meet its own demands', and 'the operationalism of knowledge is an impossible ideal' seem like natural Centrality friendly ways to both; acknowledge the evidence generated by the Truetemp intuition, but also explain away a need to accommodate it. Weinberg suggests that, if it takes an assumption that Lehrer is actually making a lousy argument, in order to show that Lehrer is not leveraging intuitions, isn't it more likely that Cappelen has really shown that Lehrer's arguments were meant to leverage intuition?

The upshot of the discussion here is that the Centrality friendly interpretation makes better sense of philosophical works like Lehrer's & Thomson's. However, it does appear that some are inclined to read philosophy as Cappelen does. So rather than

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[112] See pg. 500 in, J Weinberg, "Cappelen between rock and a hard place", *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 171, no. 3, 2014, pp. 545–553

leaving this unresolved, it is good to explore what Cappelen's intuition-free analysis entails.

4.2.3 Implications of Intuition-free Philosophy

Intuition-free philosophy, I argue, is a radical departure from the project most moral philosophers find themselves engaged in. The argument I put forth in this section is a *reductio* of intuition-free moral philosophy (though I borrow examples from epistemology already discussed). What is at stake here is not just intuition, but the rational pursuit of objective[113] moral truth itself. Exploring what intuition-free philosophy entails requires analysing the intuition-free ethical theory structures of coherentism, and constructivism.

Cappelen's thesis implies that a vast swath of philosophy has been radically in error. Philosophers might think intuitions provide evidence that leads towards objective truth, but as intuitions are just mere assumed premises, philosophers are really just adopting assumptions and demonstrating what follows (note that these assumptions are not required to be connected with objective truth).

On Cappelen's rendering, what reason can be given to a disagreeing party to adopt some argument? At best, philosophical opponents are given two options of assumptions to hold: i) retain their current assumptions, or ii) abandon some of their current assumptions and adopt some new assumptions. But in the hope of coming to

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[113] As a working understanding of "objective truth", just take objective truth as opposed to paradigm examples of subjective truth. Objective truths are the sorts of things that; can be true or false, and are independent of any particular person's preference, etc.

the objective truth of the matter, what reason could they have for choosing one option over the other? Maybe one has reason to adopt the assumptions of someone else, if doing so would; allow collaboration, make you employable, make you fashionable. However, these reasons have no relation with the objective truths of; morality, metaphysics, etc.

In Cappelen's view, philosophers explore what a set of assumptions commit us to. For example, externalists about justification are committed to Mr. Truetemp obtaining knowledge. This project has some value; it explores what a set of assumptions can explain, and how widely applicable they are. But this exploration is not an inquiry into whether externalism is the true account of justification.

From within Cappelen's view, is there any way to criticise other assumption sets? Since unargued assumptions are non-evidential, it is hard to see what might be criticised. It might appear that the coherence of those assumptions within a more encompassing belief set might be criticisable, but, it is entirely possible that some assumptions may be closer to the truth of some matter, despite some incoherence with other beliefs. So, if there is no reason to suspect that some set of assumptions are closer to the truth than another, then how is coherence going to help? As Richard Brandt quips:

> "The fact that a person has a firm normative conviction gives that belief a status no better than fiction. Is one coherent set of fictions supposed to be better than another?"[114]

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[114] R Brandt, *A Theory of the Good and Right*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1979, pg. 20

This marks a resurrection of the isolation objection that beset (pure) coherentism, and is untenable (recall that I assume moral scepticism is false). However, as global constructivists construct all normativity and objective truth, it appears that they might be able to demonstrate that coherence leads to objective normative truth. I take this as the most promising route to this conclusion, but find it to be ultimately unsuccessful. Hereafter, 'constructivist' refers to 'global constructivist'. N.B. I have Korsgaard's constructivism in mind, but nothing I say hereafter hinges upon this.

Firstly, let us establish coherence as normative for all agents. Constructivists analyse the rational will as willing an end, and then derive constitutive standards of willing an end. Since one can't simultaneously will ends that disagree with one another and be considered willing an end at all, coherence must be a constitutive standard of willing an end. This is normative for the deliberating agent because in the act of willing an end, the agent legislates for themself that they ought to be coherent in their ends willed. It is objective because we are all essentially rational agents, and we cannot at the same time be a rational agent, and not legislate that we be coherent in our ends willed. It is a true substantive normative claim that we must be coherent in the ends we will, because it is an upshot of the construction process.

However, agent's often fall short of the ideal set of normative beliefs: Perhaps they have just not considered the possible incoherence between two beliefs, or a system of beliefs and some other belief, etc. Problematically, on the face of it, this implies that many (if not all) of us aren't really agents at all. However, Korsgaard provides a

solution: agency comes in degrees. Agents can fail to meet every standard of ideal agency but still be an agent, just defective to some degree.[115]

This implies that one's actual normative commitments may not coincide with the standards of ideal agency. The ideal, or real, normative commitments, are the normative commitments an agent would arrive at, after they subject their actual normative commitments to rational reflection. Rational reflection works to eliminate incorrect normative commitments (such as incoherent commitments) and bring the agent to legislate for themselves normative commitments that are true, or when rational reflection is incomplete, at least, closer to the truth.

R. Jay Wallace identifies two levels of commitment at work in constructivism:[116] i) the motivating attitudes of the agent themselves. And ii) a commitment to the procedure of rational reflection. It is the latter that pulls an agent's actual normative commitments towards the true normative commitments. And it is the gap between these two levels of commitment that give rise to the possibility of defective agents on constructivist accounts. Wallace then asks why it is that the procedure of rational reflection is supposed to be authoritative over the agent?[117] They are the correct standards of reflection, for sure, but what makes those ideal standards normative for the agent? The constructivist aims to construct all normative truth, so they cannot

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[115] C Korsgaard, *Self-Constitution Agency, Identity, and Integrity*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2009, pg. 25

[116] See pg. 33 in, R J Wallace, 'Constructivism about Normativity: Some Pitfalls', in J Lenman & Y Shemmer (eds.), *Constructivism in Practical Philosophy*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2012, pp. 18-39

[117] Wallace, 2012, pp. 33-34

take these standards as being normative outside of the procedure of construction: by hypothesis, the agent has not legislated those standards for themself. The procedure of rational reflection also cannot be understood in non-normative terms. Suppose an agent is told that some of their normative views are incorrect, and if they rationally reflected, they would have a different set of normative commitments instead. That agent, Wallace supposes, when considering the proposed (non-normative) procedure, would likely ask why they should care about that procedure, and why they should legislate some other set of "normative" views for themself (those norms, prior to self-legislation, cannot be normative for that agent).

Constructivists need an account of what makes the procedure of rational reflection normative. The only option that is true to the spirit of constructivism's wholesale creation of normativity, is to show that the procedure of rational reflection is already one of our actual commitments, albeit, perhaps implicit. That is, constructivists must derive a commitment to rational reflection from the agent's actual commitments. To make matters harder, however, defective agents are a diverse bunch, there might not be too many actual commitments held in common. Wallace supposes that constructivists can only count on the most obvious and fundamental principles of rationality.[118] For example: the principle of noncontradiction, and the instrumental principle[119]. However, such a meagre set of principles is highly unlikely to push all agents to converge on a single set of truths (e.g. Korsgaard's Kantian moral law) unless the defective agent's actual normative commitments are already very close to that end point. I will demonstrate why.

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[118] Wallace, 2012, pg. 35

[119] The instrumental principle: willing an end entails that one wills the means required for that end.

Constructivists assert that an agent's actual commitments (what they self-legislate) are what ultimately imparts normativity. This implies that any possible normative commitment can be normative for an agent, so long as they maintain that commitment. Wallace worries that this appears to be an admission that normativity reduces to motivational force:[120] thinking you ought to do something makes it that you ought to do that thing. If this is true, Wallace worries that constructivists render normative moral truth "peculiarly self-validating" and objectivity is lost.[121] An agent might even recognise that the procedure of rational reflection would result in a change in their actual normative commitments, but refuse to rationally reflect. Consider a mafioso who recognises that clan honour would not survive rational reflection, but cares more about honour than coherence. The mafioso appears to be a defective agent, since surely the mafioso's normative commitments fall short of what they should be (under an ideal procedure of rational reflection). Wallace supposes that in one sense, the mafioso's commitments are reflectively unstable, since, hypothetically, they would not survive rational reflection. However, in practice, they could be entirely stable: sufficient emotional attachment to their actual commitments would ensure this. Constructivists can surely say that the mafioso is irrational, since even the mafioso also recognises this. However, the mafioso cares less about irrationality than they do their commitment to honour, so honour is normative for the mafioso. Rational or not, normativity is rendered troublingly unobjective.

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[120] Wallace, 2012, pg. 36

[121] Wallace, 2012, pg. 36

Korsgaard responds that while this does appear outrageous, she doesn't consider all (normative) commitments as moral.[122] Korsgaard suggests that we shouldn't encourage the mafioso in their commitment to honour. Instead, we should try and get the mafioso to see the ideal normative commitments that they should have instead. Though, just how we are supposed to demonstrate the "should" part of this claim is difficult to understand, since, by hypothesis, the mafioso doesn't see the ideal commitments as normative. Do we resort to appeals to employability? Fashion? Force? At this point, constructivists sometimes suggest that the mafioso faces a "radical choice" to adopt the ideal normative commitments, that is, in Sharon Street's terms, the mafioso must choose to adopt the ideal normative commitments <u>for no reason at all</u>.[123] What could this be but an abandonment of objective normativity?

In an attempt to rescue objective normativity, Korsgaard suggests that the mafioso's (unrealised) commitments to the ideal normative truths are deeper than their commitments to honour.[124] But are these deeper commitments to normative truth normative for the agent or not? If the deeper commitments are normative despite the agent not self-legislating them, then it is hard to see how this can be without those standards being normative from outside the procedure of construction. Furthermore, it is hard to see how we could ever recognise them as normative from outside the procedure of construction without intuition. As such, it appears that constructivism

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[122] C Korsgaard, *Sources of Normativity*, O O'Neill (ed.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, pp. 257-258

[123] See pp. 215-6 & 237-8 in, S Street, 'Constructivism about Reasons', in Russ Shafer-Landau (ed.), *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, vol. 3, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2008, pp. 207-245

[124] Korsgaard, 1996, pp. 257-258

cannot rescue normative objectivity from an intuition-free philosophy. I can now deliver the *reductio* promised at the start of this section.

Moral philosophy without intuitions has absurd implications: are normative moral theories really just assumption sets we have a "radical choice" between? Are they just equally valid sets of assumptions? This would imply that all moral theories, so long as they are coherent, are acceptable: Caligula can be entirely coherent but still be a murderous tyrant. Anti-utilitarians can also be perfectly coherent. Is the most that we can say about Caligula and anti-utilitarianism that they encompass different assumptions? Surely not. If anything is a conceptual constraint on morality it is that 'it is wrong to torture an infant' and any theory that says otherwise is wrong. What could be the evidence for this belief, if not intuition? Acceptable moral theories are conceptually constrained by a set of core moral beliefs grounded on such intuitions. These beliefs demand moral theory's allegiance in a way which is hard to interpret as mere assumptions: while we might be able to explain our unwillingness to shift from some assumptions as a result of stubbornness, or career reasons, the shift appears in principle possible. Core moral beliefs, however, demand more: it doesn't feel in principle possible for me to sincerely deny that 'it is wrong to torture an infant' - It doesn't feel like a "radical choice". These requirements of moral theory cannot be defended from Cappelen's view: there is no space for "must have" assumptions. So, any view that admits Caligula's and anti-utilitarian theories as tenable moral theories is absurd. Intuition is essential to moral inquiry.

One possible objection supposes Cappelen is right that intuitions are just unargued for premises. Pace the argument above, what we should really conclude is that

moral knowledge is impossible. However, recalling my assumption that moral scepticism is false, blocks this line of response. I believe there is scope to take the fight to Cappelen, at least as far back as only assuming global scepticism is false. Though this a full argument of this lies outside the scope of this thesis. My suggested avenue to do so, would be to argue that without intuition, rational inquiry becomes impossible. Many philosophers take intuitions as essential evidence used in a wide range of rational inquiry. George Bealer argues that intuitions are necessary evidence for making epistemic classifications:[125] What counts as an observation? Why is sense perception an observation? Why doesn't memory count as observation? What makes a theory justified? What makes an explanation simple? Intuitions about these questions must be the evidence that we use to answer them. Hilary Kornblith, despite deep differences with Bealer, likewise thinks intuitions are essential evidence.[126] Imagine a beginner stone collector. They might begin to collect interesting samples to examine what they have in common. They begin with obvious cases of classification to discover the underlying theoretical unity, they follow their intuitions: 'colour is relevant', 'hardness is relevant', and 'size is irrelevant', etc. The stone collector can then develop theories to explain similarities between samples. Theory then refines and hones their (geological) knowledge leading to deeper understanding. Despite the stone collectors' intuitions being theoretically immature, their starting intuitions must have some grip on the phenomenon under consideration

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[125] See pg. 105 in, G Bealer & P. F. Strawson, "The incoherence of empiricism", *Aristotelian Society of Supplementary Volume*, vol. 66, no. 1, pp. 99-138

[126] See pp. 134-7 in, H Kornblith, 'The Role of Intuition in Philosophical Inquiry: An Account with No Unnatural Ingredients', in MR DePaul & W Ramsey (eds.), *Rethinking Intuition: the psychology of intuition and its role in philosophical inquiry*, Studies in epistemological and cognitive theory, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., Lanham, Maryland, 1998, pp. 129-141

or else they could not get started. N.B. Intuition is not wholly supplanted by theory and empirics, rather, intuitions are used as evidence where none else is available, or where they have withstood testing: one still thinks 'size is irrelevant' to stone classification. Indeed, the emerging mature geologist will have developed expert intuitions. Remarks such as those from Bealer and Kornblith are behind Laurence BonJour's suggestion that to dismiss intuitions as a source of evidence is akin to intellectual suicide.[127]

I leave this last note as a suggested avenue for further argument, and conclude this section having established that, if moral knowledge is possible, intuition is essential.

4.2.4 Rock is Too Strong

If we take Rock strictly, as Cappelen characterises it, then any evidence of; hedging, puzzlement, argumentative support, or further questioning of some intuition, is an indicator that the intuition lacks Rock status. If intuitions lack Rock status, Cappelen argues, then intuition is functionally equivalent to common ground, and since common ground is less ontologically controversial, appeals to intuition should be interpreted as arguing from common ground.

Weinberg points out that while intuition-theorists think that intuition has positive epistemic status, usually as providing a kind of default justification, they rarely characterise it as strongly as Rock. Most intuition-theorists take intuition to be fallible and corrigible, and the justification intuition provides as *prima facie*. So it is no surprise that intuitions can (and should) be "challenged, doubted, counter-argued,

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[127] L BonJour, *In Defense of Pure Reason*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, pp. 4-6

shored up, and weighted in balance[128]". Much like how visual perception is typically

justified by default, but can be challenged and doubted. Weinberg and John

Bengson suggest that when intuition-theorists provide extra support for some

intuition, it is not because that intuition has no epistemic value in itself, but because

they are ruling out defeaters like; their own intuitions being idiosyncratic, or as being

an illegitimate product of their theoretical preferences. Other times support for

intuitions help to guide one's reader such that certain features of a case become

salient and can be intuited upon.[129] For example, when we are told to look at a

necker cube in a certain way so that it 'flips' the percept's orientation.[130] In short,

Cappelen's Rock is not how most think of the epistemic status of intuition.

Weinberg suggests that in order for Cappelen to attack intuition as used by

intuition-theorists, Cappelen must cast a wider net that encompasses views of

intuition as both doxastic, and seeming states. While also capturing the myriad of

views within: special or ordinary phenomenology, special faculty or ordinary

cognition, etc. But this needs to be done without becoming so broad as to become

useless. So, how should the net be cast?

One of intuition's most widely accepted core characteristics are its direct (no

conscious reasoning) and intellectual (etiologically restricted: distinct from the

non-intellectual faculties of; perception, memory, and introspection, etc.) nature. This

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[128] See pg. 546 in, J Weinberg, "Cappelen between rock and a hard place", *Philosophical Studies*, vol.

171, no. 3, 2014, pp. 545–553

[129] See pg. 572 in, J Bengson, "How Philosophers use intuition and 'intuition'", *Philosophical Studies*,

vol. 171, no. 3, 2014, pp. 555-576

[130] Weinberg, 2014, pp. 551-552

provides a good starting point for investigation into the truth of some matter. Interestingly, intuition is distinct from our familiar bases of evidence (perception, memory, …) yet we take intuition to provide evidence despite it being somewhat mysterious as to how intuition does so.[131] Accordingly, Weinberg suggests that the role of intuition in philosophy should be understood in a *functional manner* as: whatever it is (if anything) that provides evidence for some claims in philosophy in which the familiar bases for evidence are not available.[132] Cappelen's task can then be framed as distinguishing between *non-evidential common ground* which; needs no evidence, provides no evidence, is not undermined by evidence, can be held hypothetically, and needs not incline belief. And *evidential common ground*: held in common between parties because all parties take themselves to already have *prima facie* evidence for some position.[133] From here Cappelen can try to argue that the epistemic role of intuition is insignificant or absent. But this cannot be achieved by looking for evidence of Rock status in philosophical papers. Cappelen should instead show that the evidence being used derives from; non-intuition sources (perception, memory, etc.), is not actually justified at all (held hypothetically), or is argued for in a way in which there is no role for intuition.[134] In the absence of such arguments, intuition as a kind of philosophical evidence is unchallenged.

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[131] Though chapter 2 combined with chapter 3 provides some answers to this, the lack of consensus as to just how this occurs belies some remaining mystery. So that we still take them as evidentiary common ground is what provides grist for the experimental philosopher's mill.

[132] Weinberg, 2014, pg. 549

[133] Weinberg, 2014, pg. 549

[134] Weinberg, 2014, pg. 550

4.3 Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on Cappelen's critique of (APP). I have made the case that Cappelen's interpretation of Thomson and Lehrer strains credulity, and that the Centrality friendly reading is superior. I then explored the implications of what Cappelen's view would entail for philosophy. Because of the explicit reliance on intuitions within intuitionism and reflective equilibrium, both these ethical theory structures are clearly within Cappelen's sights. Under the assumption that there is moral knowledge, I argued that no ethical theory structure can survive Cappelen's view without implying the absurd. Intuitionism, with a direct reliance on intuitions as foundations, would be hopeless. Similarly, without intuitions reflective equilibrium would revert to a pure coherence approach, which, as explained in chapter 1, is beset by the isolation objection and is only capable of producing coherent fictions. The best chance for a tenable moral theory would be to utilise an ethical theory structure with no explicit reliance on intuition, and Korsgaard claims that her Kantian constructivism is just such a beast. However, I argued that even Korsgaard Kantian constructivism requires intuition as evidence, lest it render moral normativity unobjective, and thus absurd. This establishes that intuition is required to capture the objective element of moral normative truth. This is at least one way in which intuition is essential for moral philosophy. I stop short of making the stronger argument that intuition as evidence is indispensable for intellectual inquiry, but leave a *prima facie* case for future investigation.

In brief summary, this chapter has established intuition as essential for moral philosophy while also acknowledging that intuition cannot be as evidently strong as Cappelen's "Rock".

Weinberg suggests that intuition-theorists take intuition to provide default evidence and *prima facie* justification. However, further questions now present themselves. Are all intuitions equal in evidentiary value? And, are all intuitions essential? In the next chapter I answer in the negative to both these questions. Chapter 5 begins by employing debunking arguments that challenge the evidence that intuition provides. While debunking arguments show that some intuitions are systematically in error, I find that intuition survives as epistemically valuable. This helps us understand: 1) how and why intuitions are dubitable and fallibile, and 2) the limits on the evidence that intuition provides.

5 Debunking arguments

Chapter 4 responded to an objection to the use of intuition in philosophy, and established that intuition is essential evidence in morality. This chapter now questions intuition's evidentiary value by considering debunking arguments. Debunking arguments operate by undermining the explanatory connection between one's beliefs (in these cases intuition based beliefs) and the truth of the matter. Daniel Korman illustrates debunking arguments with a brief example:[135]

> Suppose I am reading a book that contains facts about alien planets and their inhabitants, and I believe it. But a concerned onlooker informs me that; the author has no access to any information about the actual happenings on any distant planets; it is writing a work of fiction, and I shouldn't believe what I am reading.

What the onlooker is attempting to do is undermine my belief in those aliens. If successful, my beliefs will be shown to be unjustified.

Debunking arguments of moral intuition have become prominent in the literature and have led to a resurgence in accusations that moral intuition is too dubitable and fallible to be epistemically useful. I consider challenges from three such debunking arguments. Firstly, I consider an argument that targets intuitions with an emotional aetiology. I find this to be unsuccessful: emotion is too intertwined with general

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[135] D Korman, "Debunking Arguments", *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 14, no. 12, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12638>

cognition for such a debunking argument to be plausible. Secondly, I consider an argument that targets intuitions formed by evolution. This argument finds (qualified) success, and suggests three broad tiers of the evidence that intuition can provide (call intuitions that provide evidence *evidential intuitions*): 1) conceptual constraints which are essential evidence, 2) *prima facie* evidence, and 3) debunked evidence. Finally, I finesse the conception of objective morality (which I take this as a tier 1 evidential intuition) by considering a debunking argument that targets our beliefs in mind-independent moral truths. I find this debunking to be successful, however, the debunking doesn't do away with our conception of morality as objective. Rather, the successful debunking motivates a revision in what we think of as objectivity in moral normativity. This serves to outline how tier 1 intuitions can be challenged, but also the respect that tier 1 intuitions demand of moral theory.

I find that moral intuition survives as a source of evidence in moral inquiry, though debunking arguments establish important qualifications on evidential intuitions. Understanding how intuitions can systematically fail helps provide ways in which the dubitability and fallibility of intuition can be managed. And so the epistemic value of intuition can be defended. The implications on epistemological theory structures in ethics are then assessed.

5.1 Emotion

Moral psychology is replete with studies apparently showing moral intuitions to be unreliable. In one study, an experimenter sits participants at a table with some forms to complete, then the experimenter putters around the lab. When the experimenter returns, participants are given a hypothetical story where a woman is arrested on

prostitution charges. The participant is asked to play the role of a judge, and to set bond for the woman by writing their answer on a form. Once the participant has finished this task the forms are collected, and then the experimenter asks some unexpected questions: "Did you notice anything odd about the experiment?" and "Did you notice anything odd about the experimenter?". 90% of subjects reported nothing unusual. However, while the experimenter was puttering around the lab, they swapped places with someone else; looking similar, dressed the same, but nonetheless a different person. Interestingly, despite being consciously unaware of the switch, participants who were subjected to the ruse set bond figures significantly higher than participants in the control group who had the same experimenter throughout. Travis Proulx & Steven Heine's findings indicate that participant's judgements vary with emotional arousal or anxiety.[136] Other experiments reveal similarly unreliable moral intuitions: Simone Schnall *et al* show that being sat at a dirty desk elicits harsher intuitive moral verdicts than when sat at a clean desk. Schnall *et al* suggest that participant's moral verdicts are influenced by how disgusting their work environment is.[137] Such findings also appear in natural experiments: prisoners awaiting parole decisions have higher chances of parole if the deciding judge has just eaten and rested.[138] Because the moral character of the cases is unchanged, it is worrying that the moral intuitions elicited by those cases

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[136] T Proulx & S Heine, 'The Case of the Transmogrifying Experimenter: Affirmation of a Moral Schema Following Implicit Change Detection', *Psychological Science*, vol. 19, no. 12, 2008, pp. 1294-1300

[137] S Schnall *et al*, 'Disgust as embodied moral judgment', *Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 34, no 8, 2008, pp. 1096-1109

[138] S Danziger *et al*, 'Extraneous factors in judicial decisions', *PNAS*, vol. 108, no. 17, 2011, pp. 6889-6892

varied significantly according to factors irrelevant to the moral facts of the case. This has led philosophers like Walter Sinnott-Armstrong to conclude that we cannot be justified in thinking that moral intuitions can lead us to moral truth.[139]

As the above experiments show, emotions are often a distortionary influence on moral intuition. Such findings were the inspiration for Joshua Greene to suggest that emotion based intuitions are unreliable as a class[140], and should be avoided in moral theorising.[141] On this construal of Greene's argument, the argument is motivated by our common experiences of when the emotions of anger or sadness cloud our judgement. To identify which intuitions are emotion based, Greene uses fMRI to determine which parts of the brain are recruited when different intuitions are elicited by cases. Giving participants dilemmas, like the standard trolley case, call this (Trolley):

> (Trolley): A runaway trolley is hurtling down the tracks towards five workers. A
> bystander realises that they cannot stop the trolley physically, nor can they
> call out a warning that will avert disaster. They do, however, happen to stand

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[139] W Sinnott-Armstrong, 'Framing Moral Intuitions', in W Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Moral Psychology, vol. 2 The Cognitive Science of Morality: Intuition and Diversity*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 47-76

[140] J Greene, 'The Neural Bases of Cognitive Conflict and Control in Moral Judgment', *Neuron*, vol. 44, 2004, pp. 389-400

[141] J Greene, 'The Secret Joke of Kant's Soul' in W Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Moral Psychology, vol. 3 The Neuroscience of Morality: Emotion, Brain Disorders, and Development*, MIT Press, Cambridge, 2008, pp. 35-79

by a switch which will divert the trolley down a fork in the tracks. On this other set of tracks, there is only one worker. What should they do?

And the Footbridge variant:

(Footbridge): The same as Trolley, except, instead of standing next to a switch, the bystander stands atop of a footbridge next to a large man. The large man can be pushed in front of the trolley, saving five at the cost of the large man's life. What should they do?

Note that action can be taken to bring about the death of one to save five, and Footbridge is, in the 'net lives saved' respect, identical to Trolley. Despite this, most people intuit that we should not push the large man. Greene found that in cases like Footbridge, when participants had intuitions against pushing the large man, parts of the brain associated with emotional excitement were recruited. Whereas in Trolley, when participants had intuitions in favour of pulling the switch, areas associated with cognitive conflict and control were recruited: Greene calls this a "rational"[142] area of the brain. Being suspicious of the evidential value of emotion based intuitions, Greene suggests that emotional intuitions should be discounted in favour of "rational" intuitions.

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[142] I use "rational" instead of rational here, partly following Greene's usage (albeit Greene uses "cognitive" to contrast with cognitive), but also, as will be shown shortly, it is far from clear whether "rational" truly is rational, because of it's contrast with being emotional.

As intuitions are essential evidence in ethics, this has wide-ranging implications. Typically, the intuition in Footbridge is used as evidence that theories like utilitarianism cannot account for, since it is intuitively wrong, despite utilitarian theory suggesting otherwise. If Greene is right that emotion based intuitions should be discounted, then this intuition would no longer count as strongly against utilitarianism. However, this has proved a controversial conclusion.

5.1.1 The Cognitive Value of Emotion

There are three short sharp responses to the debunking argument given by Greene. Firstly, Selim Berker points out that it is far from clear whether "rational" intuitions are truly unemotional.[143] Greene admits that his fMRI study shows that where participants intuited that pushing the large man is permissible, the "rational" intuition also engaged emotional processing areas of the brain, albeit different emotional processes.[144] So it is not a clear cut distinction between "rational" and emotional intuitions.

Secondly, debunking arguments of emotion are suspect since, as Folke Tersman points out, there is significant evidence from cognitive science (for example the work by Joseph LeDoux[145]) that suggests that emotion often enhances cognitive performance.[146] For just one example, intuitive tasks like facial recognition are

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[143] S Berker, 'The Normative insignificance of Neuroscience', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2009, pp. 293-329 (305)

[144] Greene, 2004, pg. 397

[145] J LeDoux, 'Rethinking the Emotional Brain', *Neuron*, vol. 73, 2012, pp. 653-676

[146] See pg. 393 in, F Tersman, 'The reliability of moral intuitions: A challenge from neuroscience', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 86, no. 3, 2008, pp. 389-405

impaired when emotional arousal is absent. This impairment presents in Capgras delusion: a condition where subjects lack the emotional arousal associated with recognising familiar faces. Subjects report that, while family and friends look familiar, they must really be imposters of some kind.[147]

Finally, it is highly plausible that emotion is essential for moral thought. For example, to properly understand the trolley dilemma we must understand whose interests are at stake, and empathy appears, if not necessary, then at least helpful here. These three considerations indicate that Greene's "emotions bad" debunking argument is misguided, as emotions appear too intertwined with cognition for this argument to get off the ground.

5.2 Evolution & Hardwired Responses

Another aspect of Greene's work is that immediate strong emotional responses were predominant when the moral dilemmas involved "up-close and personal" violence (hereafter just *personal violence*). Where moral dilemmas were impersonal, the "rational" areas of the brain were instead given free reign. From here, I will focus on Peter Singer's development of this idea.[148] Singer suggests that some emotion based intuitions are hardwired to evolutionary "aims", if this is so, the relationship between evolution and moral truth is critical.[149] The target of this debunking argument are emotional intuitions which are hardwired by evolution.

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[147] A Billion, 'Making Sense of the Cotard Syndrome: Insights from the Study of Depersonalisation', *Mind & Language*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2016, pp. 356-391

[148] Greene makes a similar argument in, Greene, 2008, pp. 35-79

[149] See pg. 348, P Singer, "Ethics and Intuitions", *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 9, no. 3, 2005, pp. 331-352

Life on earth evolved to the state it is in today according to the Darwinian processes of natural selection. An organism with a phenotype that made its colouring more camouflage-like avoids predators better, and enjoys greater reproductive success than organisms that visually stand out (*ceteris paribus*). Since the phenotypes of the parent are inherited by their progeny, those phenotypes also enjoy reproductive success (or, to be specific, those genes that code for that phenotype are reproduced). As such, any population of organisms comes to have a higher frequency of advantageous phenotypes over time. Emotional responses are likely to have also evolved for reproductive benefit. For example, the emotional connection we have with family evokes the intuition that our family holds moral priority over strangers. Resultantly, we wouldn't bat an eyelid if a family member asked for $5 to buy a coffee. While if a stranger asked for $5 to buy a mosquito net people are typically apprehensive, despite the great benefit it provides. Very plausibly, the emotional connection with family is a hardwired evolutionary adaptation: prioritising one's family at the expense of strangers promotes the reproduction of genes similar to our own rather than genes that tend to be different (an adaptive tendency known as kin selection).

Singer identifies this insight as troubling, since evolution neither "aims" towards moral truths, nor follows from moral truths. Given the evolutionary story above, we should expect that our emotional responses push us towards judgements that promote reproductive success, rather than moral truth. This mirrors the book example from the introduction to this chapter. Suppose we read a book about far off aliens and believe them as actual truths. But then we are told that those stories were

written just to be the kinds of stories that sell books. Our belief that those stories accurately report truths about aliens is undermined. Analogously, Singer argues that doubt is cast on the thought that evolved emotional responses are good indicators of moral truth.

Singer suggests that in Footbridge, our intuition that pushing the large man in front of the trolley is caused by our evolved emotional responses against personal violence (adaptive for social cohesion, and the reproductive success a stable society enables). While in Trolley, where we need only to pull the switch, we haven't evolved emotional responses to this kind of 'brand new' (on an evolutionary time scale) kind of impersonal violence. Since Footbridge and Trolley are identical, except for the distinction between personal and impersonal violence, it looks as though what triggers the differing intuitions must be the difference between personal and impersonal violence. Singer then asks what is the moral salience between personal violence like pushing, and impersonal modern forms of violence like pulling a switch? Singer answers "none".[150] So when emotions are elicited due to evolutionary "purposes", we should be sceptical that they could be evidence of moral truth. Having made a case against moral intuitions "directed" by evolution, Singer suggests that we root out all moral intuitions that are distorted by evolutionary forces.

While the previous section found that targeting emotion based intuitions directly was misguided, Singer has shown that the true cause of faulty moral intuitions is evolution. Emotions are only indirectly implicated, insofar as they blindly do the work evolution designed them for.

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[150] Singer, 2005, pg. 348

5.2.1 Replies & Best Explanations

Berker raises two points in response. Firstly, Berker agrees that emotions must be an evolutionary product, but asks why it is that Singer thinks that all other intuitions, "rational" or otherwise, are not? Surely these must also be a product of evolution, in which case their link to moral truth is just as questionable as emotion's was. As such, Singer has really debunked all intuition. This could lead one to a radically sceptical position in which all moral knowledge is called into question. Though, a thorough discussion of radical scepticism is outside of the scope of this thesis.

Secondly, Berker supposes that Singer doesn't mean to debunk all intuitions, so instead Berker interprets Singer as making the following debunking argument: only evolutionarily hardwired intuitions that respond to the morally arbitrary distinction between personal and impersonal violence. If this could be established, this would successfully debunk only evolutionarily hardwired intuitions that respond to morally irrelevant factors.

So how is it that Singer determines what is and is not a morally relevant factor? Berker answers that there must be some normative intuition about what is and is not relevant driving this determination.[151] (N.B. Singer is aware that such an intuition must be used.[152]). If this is the case, the normative intuition must have content like 'only the consequences of an act are morally relevant'. But since Singer's conclusion is that there is no morally salient distinction between personal and impersonal violence, and this is presupposed by a premise supported by his normative intuition.

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[151] Berker, 2009, pg. 323

[152] Singer, 2005, pg. 347

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Singer must be begging the question. Berker suggests that one might respond to Singer by suggesting that Singer's intuition, that there is no moral difference between the trolley and footbridge, is not responding to morally relevant features[153], such as using the large man (in footbridge) as a mere means to an end.

However, Berker's reply is problematic. While one could postulate that, in footbridge, 'my intuition is responding to the morally relevant factor where people are used as mere means to ends' that's why pushing the large man is impermissible. This is only a possible explanation. There are, however, better explanations for their moral judgement. I make two observations in support of this.

Firstly, I am pessimistic that there will be a neat normative theory that explains why our intuitions in the trolley cases differ. All proffered solutions as to what normative features cause intuitions to vary in trolley cases over the last 55 years have fallen prey to yet more trolley variants. For example, suppose that pushing the large man is wrong, because he is being used as a means to an end. While in the standard trolley case, pulling the switch uses no one as a means to an end: that a person is killed on the side track is just an unfortunate side effect. This, however, falls prey to a counterexample from the Loop variant:

> (Loop): The same as Trolley where a switch can be pulled diverting the trolley onto a side track. However, now the large man is on the side track, and this

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[153] Berker, 2009, pp. 324-325

side track rejoins to the main track and would still run over the five, if it were not for the large man blocking its way.[154]

1. Trolley

2. Footbridge

3. Loop
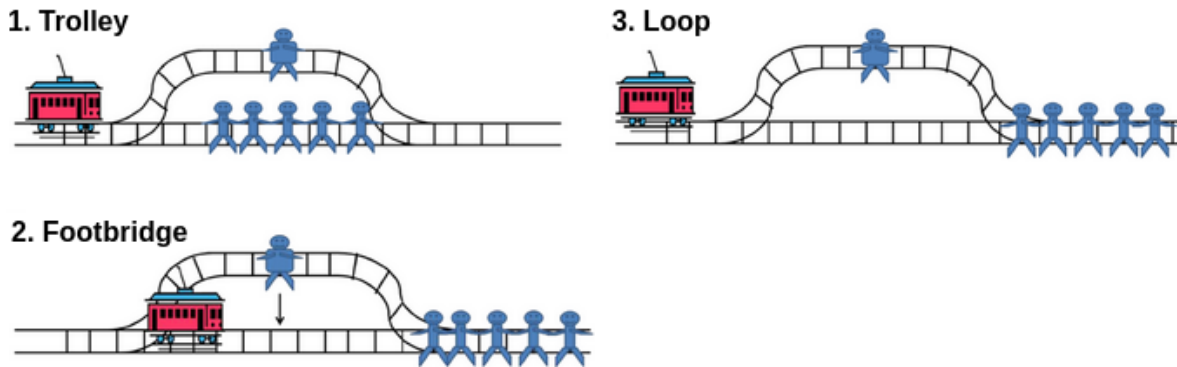
(Image from Stijn Bruers & Johan Braeckman.[155])

Note that the large man is required to stop the trolley from running over the five. So the large man is being used as a means. However, intuitively (for most people), the switch should be pulled. So was this really morally relevant in the first place? Is there now some other morally relevant factor, brought out by some extra piece of track? No matter what explanation has so far been put forward, proliferating variations on Trolley present counterexamples to each: workers on Lazy Susans; more track configurations; no trolleys, just surgeons; on boats; with sharks; brain scans; hitmen…[156] Because a solution has been elusive, many have chosen to bite the

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[154] J J Thomson, *Rights, Restitution, and Risk*, W Parent (ed.), Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1986, pp. 102-3

[155] See pg. 254, S Bruers & J Braeckman, 'A Review and Systemization of the Trolley Problem', *Philosophia*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2014, pp. 251-269

[156] J Fischer & M Ravizza, 'Thomson and the Trolley', *Journal of social philosophy*, vol. 23, no. 3, 1992, pp. 64-87

bullet and reject one of the conflicting intuitions. Some say it is never permissible to interfere, others that you should always save the most lives.

Secondly, note that since intuitive inferences are characteristically subconscious (recall that a core characteristic of intuition is its direct nature), it should be no surprise that introspection has failed to identify the reasons for those inferences. Philosophers can come up with possible answers easily enough, but what's the best explanation for our inferences?

There is growing evidence coming from moral psychology that the justifications given for intuitive moral judgements are often just rationalisations, and not the true cause of our judgement. Moral dumbfounding experiments conducted by Jonathan Haidt bring this to the fore.[157] For example, the case of Julie and Mark was given to test participant's moral judgements. I adapt this case below:

> Julie and Mark are brother and sister who are both on vacation in France. One night they decide that it would be interesting and fun if they tried making love. At the very least it would be a new experience for each of them. Julie is already taking birth control, but Mark uses a condom too, just to be safe. They both enjoy making love, but they decide not to do it again. They keep that night as a special secret, which makes them feel even closer to each other. What do you think about that? Was it OK for them to make love?[158]

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[157] Haidt, 2001, pg. 814

[158] Haidt, 2001, pg. 814

Subjects typically answer "no". When asked to justify their judgement, subjects indicate the dangers of inbreeding. However the experimenter reminds them that Julie and Mark used two kinds of contraception, so this can't be right. Subjects then jump to the emotional harm that will be caused. But this, again, is ruled out by the thought experiment. Eventually subjects are dumbfounded, but stick to their guns, asserting "I just know it is wrong!".[159] What is happening here, is that cases of incest spark strong emotional intuitions that have obvious evolutionary purposes, but cannot be defended by reason. Such moral dumbfounding experiments illustrate that intuition is the primary driver of moral judgements.[160]

Psychological evidence also supports the thesis that people typically reach for culturally acceptable reasons that were known prior to being asked, even when they can't be right (inbreeding, harm, etc). Along similar lines to Haidt, Hugo Mercer and Dan Sperber draw upon psychological evidence to argue that reason's primary purpose is to justify oneself, and to convince others, rather than seeking the truth.[161] These considerations should cast doubt on the typical explanations for intuitive judgements on trolley cases.

While the evidence from neuroscience and moral psychology is not complete[162], suggestions that the normative intuition in Footbridge comes from a moral factor postulated by some moral theory, must compete with the evidence mounting against

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[159] Haidt, 2001, pg. 814

[160] Haidt, 2001, pg. 817

[161] See both: H Mercier & D Sperber, *The Enigma of Reason*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 2017; Haidt, 2001, pp. 822-3

[162] There are a number of issues that Berker points out in, Berker, 2009

them. So if the intuition in Footbridge is responding to personal violence, as the science suggests, then moral philosophers need to work out whether personal violence is more morally salient than impersonal violence.

Regina Rini suggests that likewise, if our intuition that family members deserve higher moral standing is a consequence of the evolutionary pressures of kin selection, philosophers need to decide whether this is an appropriate ground for moral thought.[163] On the one hand, we are most often best placed to help those that are familiar to us and nearby, so perhaps kin selection is sometimes an appropriate basis for moral judgement. However, this explanation appears to suggest that familial relation is merely correlated with our ability to bestow help, rather than being intrinsically valuable. On the other hand, kin selection is a very plausible basis for racism. Furthermore, people tend to favour family in a manner many magnitudes higher than warranted by ease of care. Such findings lead many to conclude that kin selection is a distortionary factor in many cases. As such, intuitive moral judgements that one ought expend significant resources on close kin before one even spares a modicum for a stranger in need, are really based upon factors inappropriate to moral judgement. The same goes for our intuition that what Julie and Mark did was wrong. If this is really just an evolved response against inbreeding, but there is no actual danger of inbreeding, then we ought to discount the evidentiary value of that intuition.

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[163] See pp. 267-268, R Rini, 'Making Psychology Normatively Significant', *The Journal of Ethics*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2013, pp. 257-274

5.2.2 Tiers of Evidential Intuitions

While Singer primarily makes a case against evolved emotional intuitions, I will supplement this discussion with a sketch of a positive case for "rational" intuitions. Note that, the subservience of "rational" intuitions to evolutionary "aims" can be attenuated by observing how "rational" intuitions can lead us towards ends that work against evolution's "goals". For example, we can, and do, rationally choose to use contraception, and advocate the moral value of the disabled (who are evolutionarily "unfit"). I suggest that intuitions, like Singer's "rational" intuitions (which appear to escape debunking), provide *prima facie* evidence. This is the middle tier of evidential intuitions and captures most of our intuitions on many matters.

Some intuitions are essential, on pain of epistemic self-defeat. As established in section 4.2.3, there are just some intuitions we cannot do without. These form the highest tier of evidential intuitions. Intuitions about epistemic norms are conceptual constraints on rationality: it cannot be the case that both P and ¬P; and, and one's beliefs ought to be coherent, etc. And some moral intuitions provide conceptual constraints on morality, for example, from the previous chapter, moral norms are objective norms. This likely also includes other intuitions like; pleasure is better than pain, etc. Any moral theory that denies these must surely be perverse.

Evidential intuitions from the middle tier fall to the lowest tier when successfully debunked. The case of Julie and Mark stands out as a case where we have strong intuitions of wrongness. However, upon closer scrutiny this intuition is debunked, and so falls to the lowest tier of evidence.

I have argued that some intuitions are undermined by debunking arguments, and as such we should discount the evidence they provide (tier 3). Instead, we should prefer (tier 2) evidential intuitions that aren't similarly undermined. Above all of these are (tier 1) intuitions that act as conceptual constraints on some subject matter, and are highest in evidentiary value. However, I don't want to call these intuitions indubitable, or infallible. I leave open the possibility that they may be debunked. However, such an argument will need to be strong indeed, for what sort of argument would suffice to convince us that pleasure isn't better than pain? What is more likely is that conceptual constraints might face a tolerable level of revision, so long as the revision can be vindicated. I turn to a debunking argument that leads to such a revision in the next section.

5.3 Evolution & Mind-independent Moral Truths

The final debunking argument I consider begins with a conception of morality as mind-independent and then critiques this with evidence from evolutionary psychology. In contrast with the previous section, the target for debunking is the belief that moral truth is mind-independent.

To establish the target, consider that we appear to know many moral truths, and intuition appears to deliver much of it to us, intuitively: it is wrong to lie, one should repay favours, infanticide is wrong, etc. The normative content of these moral oughts, are typically thought to be truths about the world, binding us no matter what we think. This stands in contrast to hypothetical oughts: 'I ought to go to the fridge' is only true of me if it is also true that I want the beer therein. Moral oughts, however, are normative without reference to any desire of the agent. 'One ought not torture an

infant for fun' is true no matter what one's desires are. In this sense, moral truths are

mind-independent: child torture is wrong; no matter what I think; no matter what you

think; and no matter if everyone that ever lived always thought otherwise.

Given this is the case, Sharon Street then poses a question: if moral truths are

mind-independent, what is the relation between Darwinian forces and the moral

truths they report on?[164] Street presents this as the *Darwinian Dilemma*, call this

(DD):[165]

> (DD) Either there is:
>
>> i) No relation between Darwinian forces and moral truths. Or,
>>
>> ii) There is a relation between Darwinian forces and moral truths.

Street contends that either horn is going to be problematic. For the first horn (DDi): if

there is no relation between Darwinian forces (which are responsible for our

intuitions and thus our moral beliefs) and moral truths, then, if we believe any

mind-independent moral truths, it can only be as a result of some miraculous

coincidence. As Hartry Field quips:

> "It is rather as if someone claimed that his or her belief states about the daily
>
> happenings in a remote village in Nepal were nearly all disquotationally true,
>
> despite the absence of any mechanism to explain the correlation between

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[164] See pg. 109, S Street, 'A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value', *Philosophical Studies*,
vol. 127, no. 1, 2006, pp. 109-166

[165] Street, 2006, pg. 109

those belief states and the happenings in the village. Surely we should accept this only as a very last resort."[166]

That a miraculous coincidence is required for our moral beliefs to be true, serves to undermine any justification we might have for holding those beliefs. I will now address responses to (DDii) in 5.3.1. before returning to (DDi) to consider responses in 5.3.2.

5.3.1 Comparison: Tracking and Adaptive-link accounts

Street supposes that proponents of mind-independent moral truths (hereafter, for the sake of brevity, 'moral truth' can be assumed to be 'mind-independent moral truth' unless stated otherwise) will prefer to grasp (DDii) and argue that there is a relation between Darwinian forces and mind-independent moral truths. Given that our intuitions greatly shape our beliefs, this must be done by showing that moral truths are responsible for our moral intuitions. And because Darwinian forces shaped our intuitions, this needs to be established by showing that intuiting moral truths promotes reproductive success. Call such responses *tracking accounts*. Tracking accounts posit that human beings have evolved a capacity to recognise moral truths because of their adaptive advantages. The reason we have evolved to intuitively evaluate our offspring as demanding a nurturing response rather than an intuitive evaluation of indifference or violence, is because the intuition 'nurturing one's child is right' is true, and believing such a truth promotes the survival of our offspring, which promotes reproductive success.[167]

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[166] H Field, *Realism, Mathematics and Modality*, Blackwell, New York, 1989, pp. 26-7

[167] Street, 2006, pg. 126

However, Street argues that such explanations are not the best on offer. Put simply, the *adaptive-link account* gives a superior explanation of our moral intuitions, without needing to invoke moral truths at all. Just as there is an advantage to evolving a reflex to remove one's hand from a hot surface, so is there an advantage in intuitively evaluating certain situations as calling for certain responses: when someone helps me, the intuitive evaluation that 'I should return the favour', leads to a collaborative community with survival benefits. Thus, intuitively evaluating certain situations as 'demanding' or 'calling for' certain responses promotes reproductive success without any need to invoke moral truths. If this explanation is shown to be superior, it serves to undermine justification for the tracking account.

Street lists three explanatory virtues of the adaptive-link account. The first is straightforward: with no need to commit to an ontology that requires mind-independent moral truths, the adaptive-link account yields the same explanatory power but is more parsimonious.

Secondly, it is also unclear as to how exactly the tracking account promotes reproductive success. On the face of it, believing the truth appears adaptive: true beliefs about where the predator is, appears adaptive. However, believing truths are not always adaptive: for Pleistocene hunter-gatherers, true beliefs about low frequency electromagnetic fields weren't adaptive at all. If they did develop the ability to have true beliefs about low frequency electromagnetic fields, it would probably be detrimental, seeing as maintaining this faculty would likely be costly, and confer little

benefit to life on the African savannah. So what is needed is an account of how believing these truths is adaptive.

Non-naturalists have a harder time here, as their mind-independent moral truths are acausal. Non-naturalists can't point to how a predator may kill you (this is a natural fact). An answer about how believing the non-natural truths themselves are adaptive is required, but it is hard to see how this might be, since they are acausal entities. Naturalists who reduce moral truths to natural facts have an easier time, as natural facts have causal powers: being killed by a predator is a natural fact which can be tracked.

However, Street is targeting mind-independent moral truths, that is, moral truths that stand wholly independent of our evaluations.[168] Naturalists who take our evaluations (which are determined by Darwinian forces), to determine moral facts, for example, the evaluation that being killed by a predator is bad, aren't Street's target. This is because, this conception of moral truths are mind-dependent: had our evaluations been different, so would the moral truths. For example, while it might be hard to envisage how being killed by a predator can be anything but bad, suppose that the human lifecycle was radically different. Some other organisms reproduce only after being eaten (some parasites, for instance). If we had a similar life-cycle, then perhaps we would not judge being eaten as bad. Note that, this puts some pressure on the conception of moral oughts being objectively binding, since it opens up the possibility that any sort of act could be right or permissible, given a change in the relevant natural facts. Moral oughts become hypothetical oughts, which depend on

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[168] Street, 2006, pp. 135-141

our evaluative attitudes. If we were more like communal insects, we'd not value individuals as highly. And if we were more Nazi-like, moral truths would be correspondingly Nazi-like. This last suggestion is deeply troubling, and is picked up in 5.3.3.

Street does however target naturalists who maintain that the natural-moral identities hold no matter what our evaluative attitudes are.[169] This is because what we think the natural-moral identity is, is determined by our intuitions (and hence, Darwinian forces), but moral truths are independent from this. What this strain of naturalist must supply is how believing the true mind-independent natural-moral identity is supposed to be adaptive. So the dilemma has only been pushed back one step. Once the adaptive-link account is used to explain why we believe that we ought to nurture our young, there is nothing left over to explain. The assertion that we believe that 'we ought to nurture our young' because it is a moral truth obscures the answer and adds nothing.

Thirdly, and finally, assessing our moral intuitions through the adaptive-link lens illuminates why it is that people have the moral intuitions they do. The moral intuition that 'we should care for our children', is explained by how it promotes reproductive success. Whereas the tracking account must posit this moral intuition as merely true with no further illumination in the offing. Street shows why this explanation is poor in three ways.[170] i) It cannot explain why there is a remarkable coincidence between the moral truths it posits, and what the adaptive-link account would predict. ii) It cannot

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[169] Street, 2006, pp. 137-141

[170] Street, 2006, pp. 132-133

explain why, upon reflection, we consider some of our moral intuitions to be untrue. For example, moral intuitions for favouring kin result in racist tendencies, but can easily be explained by in-group versus out-group evaluations which tend to promote kin selection. Proponents of the tracking account cannot posit that it is true that in-group persons have higher moral worth than those in the out-group, because this is a paradigm example of a moral evaluation that no plausible moral theory would allow. So the tracking account is left with no explanation of why some evaluative judgments feel so much alike others, yet are of "the wrong kind". And finally, iii) why do we have some set of moral intuitions, but not others? Why don't we intuit infanticide as laudable, why don't we intuit animals as higher in moral worth than people, and why don't we intuit something's being purple as reason to verbally abuse it?[171] The adaptive-link needs merely to show how such intuitions do not promote reproductive success. However, the tracking account must insist that, as a matter of brute fact, such intuitions are false, while contributing nothing to our understanding of why we have such intuitions. This is to say that the adaptive-link can show why an otherwise mixed assortment of intuitions, some selfish, some kin oriented, and some concerning other organisms, are actually deeply connected via survival benefits underwriting those intuitions.

I take Street to have successfully demonstrated that the adaptive-link explanation is superior to the tracking account. This leaves proponents of mind-independent moral truths with only (DDi) left, and it is to this which I now turn.

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[171] Street, 2006, pp. 133-134

5.3.2 Pre-established Harmony

David Enoch responds by noting that if the miracle required by (DDi) is sufficiently small, then grasping that horn won't be as problematic.[172] Shrinking in one dimension, Enoch makes two observations.

Firstly, unlike our mathematical beliefs, our moral beliefs aren't quite as strikingly correct. While there is strong agreement on concrete moral cases like trolley problems, there is still a significant level of disagreement (minority opinions range from 10%-40%, depending on the survey). While there is still a correlation between evolutionarily shaped intuitions and the moral truths in need of explanation, Enoch points out that the weaker the connection, then the smaller the miracle required.

Secondly, our reasoning ability can further reduce the gap between moral truths and our intuitive moral beliefs by; eliminating inconsistencies, increasing coherence, and eliminating arbitrary distinctions, etc. Enoch supposes that our reasoning capacities can be explained by the process of evolution: our reasoning ability is adaptive, and reason is broadly applicable to all our beliefs. William FitzPatrick presses this line, and suggests that our reasoning capacity can further be developed in an intellectual culture, and with philosophical and/or scientific training.[173] FitzPatrick here appeals to companions in guilt, for example; mathematical, scientific, and metaphysical

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[172] D Enoch, "The epistemological challenge to metanormative realism: how best to understand it, and how to cope with it", *Philosophical Studies: An International Journal for Philosophy in the Analytic Tradition*, vol. 148, no. 3, 2010, pp. 413-438

[173] W FitzPatrick, 'Debunking evolutionary debunking of ethical realism', *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 172, 2015, pp. 883-904

knowledge. These plausibly derive from our crude intuitive capacity for working with numbers. From these crude tools, intellectual culture and training has fashioned sophisticated tools that have led us to arcane truths. For example, in mathematics: there are infinite prime numbers. And in metaphysics: if water is H_2O, then this is metaphysical necessary truth, and water is H_2O in all possible worlds in which it exists. FitzPatrick points out that despite such arcane truths being irrelevant to the reproductive success of Pleistocene hunter-gatherers, we still take ourselves to know these truths. So why should we be so worried about our knowledge mind-independent moral truths? Knowledge of mind-independent moral truths could equally be an extension of crude moral intuitions. These intuitions have been fashioned through intellectual culture and training into the sophisticated tools that enable us to know "arcane" moral truths such as 'it is unjust to restrict voting rights according to race'.

However, in order for crude tools to be able to fashion sophisticated tools that deliver truth, the crude tools we begin with need to be good enough to be able to deliver us the truth in conjunction with culture and training. Otherwise culture and training will just deliver sophisticated fiction. This is because if Darwinian forces have fundamentally shaped our intuitions, they have also shaped the content of our moral concepts and beliefs. Problematically, moral thinking begins with crude moral intuitions, and these same moral intuitions are used in scrutinising our other moral beliefs when we reflect and reason upon them. So if our moral intuitions are too far off the mark, we are stuck with garbage-in/garbage-out. Hence the need to assure that our crude moral intuitions are good enough.[174]

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[174] Recall a similar argument in section 2.2.3.

To show how crude moral intuitions are good enough, the miracle needs to be shrunk from the other direction too. Enoch suggests a third-factor, a pre-established harmony, is responsible for moral beliefs starting close enough to moral truths.

Enoch invites us to assume that survival is at least somewhat good.[175] Firstly, note what kind of good survival is not. Survival is not good because it is the "aim" of evolution. Neither is survival always good, nor an ultimate good. Survival doesn't always rank higher than other goods, and is not good in itself. However, survival is by-and-large good, when compared to the alternative. Enoch supposes that though evolution shapes our moral intuitions towards survival, survival happens to be systematically related to moral truth. This is because survival is at least good for the organism that is surviving. Since survival is by-and-large good, this means that our moral intuitions have developed somewhat inline with moral truths, though independently of moral value itself. And since survival will also sit in coherence and constitution relations with other moral truths, moral truths are reachable by reasoning. Enoch suggests that this makes the correlation between our moral intuitions and mind-independent moral truths less mysterious, and this is explanatory progress.[176]

Enoch recapitulates that some small miracle required, insofar as evolution could have "aimed" at ends with no value. Such examples are hard to imagine, but perhaps some creatures might have no interests at all. And it is conceivable that they

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[175] Enoch, 2010, pg. 430

[176] Enoch, 2010, pg. 433

could develop something like reason, and come to judge that survival is good for them. Though, for creatures without interests, nothing is really good for them at all. Enoch suggests that this miracle shouldn't bother us. Consider our capacity to have by-and-large true beliefs generally. This general capacity evolved because it is adaptive, which happens to line up with truths generally, and this is also miraculous. However, few quibble with our ability to reason to truths because of a brute miracle, unless they are in a darkly sceptical mood.

Objecting to Enoch, Michelle M. Dyke suspects that the pre-established harmony response relies on a form of *bootstrapping*, an illegitimate form of question-begging.[177] The problem of bootstrapping was originally an objection to reliabilist accounts of knowledge, call this (RK):

> (RK) One knows that *P* iff: i) *P* is true and ii) one's belief in *P* was formed through a reliable process.

The bootstrapping objection aims to show that one can come to new "knowledge" too easily. Assume (RK) is true, and consider Roxanne. Roxanne forms a belief through perception (a reliable process) that the fuel gauge in her car reads "full". Roxanne then forms the additional belief that the fuel tank is indeed full (trusting the gauge is also a reliable process). Roxanne is then in the position to deduce (a reliable process) that the fuel gauge is displaying the correct value. After sufficient viewings, Roxanne will be able to "know" that the gauge is highly reliable via induction (another

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[177] M Dyke, 'Bad bootstrapping: the problem with third-factor replies to the Darwinian Dilemma for moral realism', *Philosophical Studies*, vol. 177, 2020, pp. 2115-2128

reliable process). However, that Roxanne can apparently come to know that the fuel gauge is reliable just by looking at it on several occasions is surely wrong.

Note that whether or not one adopts (RK) doesn't matter, since Roxanne's reasoning is pre-theoretically illegitimate, it doesn't matter what one's epistemology is, Roxanne's new "knowledge" should always be ruled out. So the bootstrapping objection applies whenever this reasoning appears.

Dyke, borrowing from Jonathan Weisberg, analyses the problem of bootstrapping by focusing on the probabilistic aspects.[178] Probabilistic support violates cumulative transitivity: sometimes (*A*) supports (*B*), and (*A&B*) supports (*C*), yet (*A*) does not support (*C*). For example, if someone (*A*) gets good grades, they are (*B*) probably competent with the material. If they (*A&B*) scored highly and are competent, then they (*C*) probably did not cheat. But (*A*) high grades does not support the hypothesis that they (*C*) did not cheat, because either competence or cheating could be responsible for high grades.

Applying this analysis to Roxanne: Roxanne (*A*) looks at the gauge and forms the perceptual belief that the gauge reads "full". Roxanne then forms the additional belief (*B*) that the fuel tank is indeed full by trusting the fuel gauge. Roxanne then takes (*A&B*) and to support (*C*) that the fuel gauge is displaying the correct value. Roxanne makes several such observations, and inductively concludes that the fuel gauge is reliable. However, as (*A*) does not support (*C*), (*A&B*) cannot be used inductively to

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[178] J Weisberg, 'The Bootstrapping Problem', *Philosophy Compass*, vol. 7, no. 9, 2012, pp. 597-610

assess the reliability of (*C*) because this would be to assume that probabilistic support obeys cumulative transitivity, but it does not.

Weisberg considers that bootstrapping is a problem of "epistemic feedback". This occurs when one feeds the conclusions of one's premise-set back into the premise-set then draws a stronger conclusion from the augmented premises. But one should be limited to only being able to draw conclusions from the unaugmented premise set. Call this a *no feedback* criterion: Having inferred (*B*) from (*A*), one can only infer from (*A&B*) what was supported by (*A*) alone, otherwise the feedback loop results in illegitimate bootstrapping.

Dyke applies Weisberg's no feedback criterion to Enoch's pre-existing harmony argument: (*A*) Evolutionary pressures are responsible for our tendency to judge survival as good. (*A*) is responsible for the thought that (*B*) It is a mind-independent moral fact that survival is by-and-large good. (*A&B*) then supports (*C*) our evolutionarily influenced judgements that survival is good, are by-and-large accurate reports of mind-independent moral truths. Dyke identifies that because (*B*) is the basis for (*C*), but as (*B*) was based on (*A*) it cannot raise the probability of (*C*) anymore than (*A*) can, on pain of an illegitimate bootstrapping.

This is to say that any progress of shrinking the miracle by evoking a pre-established harmony is illegitimate. Because a miracle is needed in order for our moral beliefs about mind-independent moral truths to be true, it is more likely that knowledge of mind-independent moral truths is just sophisticated fiction. So, Enoch's pre-established harmony response is unsuccessful.

5.3.3 Mind-dependence & Objectivity Revised

Street sees that mind-independent moral truths simply cannot be had. But, at the same time, we do have moral knowledge. Moral truths just aren't the kind of truth we thought they were, they must be mind-dependent. Street suggests that reasons were born from the experience of normativity or value, and these experiences come from the intuitive evaluation of certain situations as 'demanding' or 'calling for' certain responses.[179] Street here argues that our moral intuitions are responsible for moral truths. Thus Street adopts an anti-realist position where moral truths are determined by our intuitive evaluations, that is, moral truths are determined by what we think. As foreshadowed, moral truth as mind-dependent is controversial. So is Street's conception of moral truth tenable?

Simon Blackburn considers some forms of mind-dependence as unproblematic:

> "... if we were to change so that everything in the world which had appeared blue came to appear red to us, this is what it is for the world to cease to contain blue things, and come to contain only red things."[180]

But when it comes to moral truths, Blackburn continues:

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[179] Street, 2006, pp. 152-154

[180] S Blackburn, 'Errors and the Phenomenology of Value', in T Honderich (ed.) *Morality and Objectivity, A Tribute to J.L. Mackie*, Routledge & Kagan Paul, New York, 1985, pp. 1-22 (14)

> "… if everyone comes to think of it as permissible to maltreat animals, this does nothing at all to make it permissible: it just means that everybody has deteriorated."[181]

So does a mind-dependent morality conflict with conceptual constraints on what morality is? Despite appearances, I don't think so. There is at least one way to rescue objective morality from relativism, though it requires a nuanced revision on what we think objectivity is. Thomas Nagel suggests that objectivity comes in degrees.[182] A point of view is more objective the less it is coloured by one's own peculiar perspective. However, as we shift from our own view point to more objectivity, some features persist for a while. Heights are terrifying for some, but only provoke hesitation and mild anxiety for most. But we can all agree that, from a slightly more objective view point from our own, heights start to look less fearsome: a drop does not necessitate a fall, afterall. As we move further towards the objective extreme we might say that heights are not terrifying at all. In fact, maybe nothing really is: there is no terrifyingness out there, only terrified people. But acknowledging this does not stop us from agreeing that there are genuinely terrifying things like nuclear war, and things that aren't really terrifying at all, like mice.

Note that, it is plausible that morality is intrinsically linked to minds. For something to be good for a moral subject requires that that subject has things that matter to them. So, there is no right/wrong good/bad independent of moral subjects, only things that are right/wrong, good/bad for moral subjects. So perhaps moral truths can be

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181 Blackburn, 1985, pg. 14

182 T Nagel, *The view from nowhere*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1986, pp. 4-5

objective in a sense which is tied to the perspective of moral subjects. There are genuine objective wrongs, like Nazi genocide, and things that aren't really objectively wrong at all: as repugnant as it is, is Julie and Mark's incest really wrong? To distinguish genuine objective wrongs from mere apparent wrongs, one needs to identify a conception of wrong that is independent from any one moral subject's judgement. A genuine objective wrong is anchored in a conception of morality that is independent of any particular stance that one might take. Such wrongs are akin to the conceptual constraints on morality established in section, 4.2.3. Note that the intuition that moral norms are objective holds true, but how we think about objectivity requires more nuance. Ultimately, whether the revision is tolerable will be answerable to the (tier 1) intuition. This invites a further investigation into what a stance-independent perspective on morality is. Is it from the perspective of humanity? An idealised version of humanity? All animals? I leave these as indicators for a future discussion that lies outside of scope of this thesis.

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that though not all intuitions are equally valuable, intuition survives as a source of evidence. I did this by assessing three debunking arguments that are prominent in the literature. I have shown that debunking of emotional intuitions is a misguided line of argument. This is because emotion is cognitively virtuous, and further, empathy is plausibly required for moral understanding. However, due to the "aims" of evolution pushing our intuitions in a direction that is unlikely to coincide with moral truth, hardwired evolved intuitions are ripe for debunking. This poses a problem for the evidentiary status of intuitions, as, on pain of moral scepticism (which I have been assuming to be false), we must rely

on some intuitions, and these had better be the good ones. For example, we at least need intuitions about what factors are morally relevant. This invites a tiered classification of evidentiary intuitions. So I end section 5.2.2 with three broad tiers of evidential intuitions. In order of decreasing evidential value: 1) intuitions that are essential, and provide conceptual constraints on morality. These deserve the most evidential respect, and significant counteracting evidence is required before they need revision. 2) intuitions that remain in good standing. This is a varied group that provides *prima facie* evidence. And, 3) intuitions subject to successful debunking, which should be discounted.

Finally, I look at a debunking argument that targets a (tier 1) intuition about conceptual constraints on morality: that moral truths are objective and mind-independent. Street's Darwinian Dilemma debunks beliefs in mind-independent moral truths, and I find that responses from tracking accounts and the pre-established harmony are unsuccessful. However, instead of discarding our conception of morality as objective, we instead have reason to reassess our conception of morality. Morality is plausibly centred on moral subjects, and this implies a level of mind-dependence. Worries that mind-dependence leads to unobjective moral truth - and that all is lost - can be attenuated by allowing that objectivity comes in degrees: morality is objective insofar as it is stance-independent. As such, the (tier 1) intuition still dictates that morality is objective, but can admit a level of revision, when the revision is tolerable.

The upshot of studying these debunking arguments is a greater understanding of intuition's dubitability and fallibility. Thus we are better able to manage intuition's shortcomings so that errant intuitions need not lead us astray.

Reflective equilibrium takes the findings of this chapter in its stride, a constant revision of one's considered moral judgements is already part and parcel of the process of reflective equilibrium, especially when committed to finding wide reflective equilibrium between competing normative theories and background scientific theories. In this light, this chapter serves to bring out one way that considered moral judgements are critiqued.

Constructivism is likewise not directly challenged, since it takes our tier 1 conceptual intuitions, e.g. about the rational will, as starting points, then derives all substantive normative claims. The constructivist commitment to Protagoreanism (a constructivist account of moral truth must be recognisably normative to regular people with clear reasoning) does constrain the more esoteric substantive normative claims possible from tier 1 intuitions about the rational will. That is, agents might only see some construction as acceptable if it already sufficiently matches their intuitive beliefs. However, this chapter demonstrates how more "esoteric" substantive normative claims can be made convincing: by debunking the beliefs an agent might have which are blocking them from accepting the substantive normative claims of some constructivist theory.

Intuitionism is directly challenged by this chapter. Noting that intuitions require management through knowledge gained from the sciences, reinforces the argument

against the epistemology of intuitionists: many intuitions appear in need of confirmation from outside sources, and this doesn't sit right with the thought that intuitions can be foundational. If intuitionists instead rely solely on the sturdier tier 1 evidential intuitions, their foundations aren't at the same risk of undermining. Though even tier 1 intuitions are still subject to some revision, and the intuitionist's resources for theory building become much more restricted. This chapter serves to highlight how difficult it is for intuitionists to uncover true foundations, and explains why some philosophers, like Jeff MacMahan, suggest employing reflective equilibrium in the search for those foundations.[183] This admits a somewhat hybrid approach to moral epistemology, and makes something of a compromise between intuitionism and reflective equilibrium (and constructivism). I have argued throughout this thesis, that reflective equilibrium and constructivism need to employ intuitions with some kind of foundational role: be it as beliefs with some prior warrant, so coherentism to overcome the isolation and alternate systems objections (section 1.2); or as evidence required to rescue objectivity for constructivism (section 4.2.3). This discussion serves to bring intuitionism back down to earth, admitting the difficulties of unearthing true foundations.

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[183] See pp. 111-115 in, J McMahan, 'Moral Intuition', in H LaFollette & I Persson (eds.) *The Blackwell Guide to Ethical Theory*, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013, pp. 103-120

Thesis Conclusion

In this thesis I established a *prima facie* case that all epistemological structures in ethics employ intuition in an important role. I argue that intuition is epistemically valuable by showing intuition provides knowledge either through the understanding and reliability accounts. I contrasted these accounts with each ethical theory structure to show how intuition operates within each. While the different ethical theory structures inherit traditional complaints against the use of intuition in moral theory (that intuition uses a "spooky" mental faculty, and that intuition is implausibly indubitable and infallible), the understanding and reliability accounts have the resources to allay these worries (invoking no exotic mental faculty, and accommodating intuition as dubitable and fallible). I then consider debunking arguments that challenge the epistemic value of intuition and find that intuition remains epistemically valuable.

More boldly, I argue that: if there is moral knowledge, then intuition is essential for that moral knowledge. To make this argument, I assessed an intuition-free conception of moral philosophy. I demonstrate that intuition-free moral philosophy implies absurd conclusions which proves that moral philosophy needs intuition. Given that the best case of intuition-free moral philosophy would rely upon a moral theory like Christine Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism, this argument also serves to tighten the case that all epistemological theory structures in ethics require the use of intuition (given that Korsgaard's Kantian constructivism was the last possible hold out for intuition-free morality).

This thesis doesn't reach for an even bolder claim, that intuition is essential, not only for moral philosophy, but for rationality generally. Such an argument would negate the need to rely on the assumption that moral scepticism is false. Instead, only needing to assume that global scepticism is false. Some of the materials for such an argument have presented themselves from the critique of intuition-free philosophy: note how problems with intuition-free philosophy bleed over into epistemology in section 4.2.2, and the existence of some literature pointing towards intellectual paralysis in section 4.2.3. Such an argument, while of interest, lies outside of the scope of this thesis. The materials here only suggest a possible future project.

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