Attributions of moral knowledge are common in everyday life. We say that we know that some actions are morally right or wrong, permitted or required. Yet how do we know such moral claims? Moral intuitionism is a family of theories in moral epistemology that tries to answer this question. Intuitionists are not skeptics about moral knowledge. They think that there are moral truths for us to know and, further, that knowledge of these truths is possible. What distinguishes intuitionism from other anti-skeptical moral epistemologies is the idea that we can know some moral truths directly, without inferring them from premises. According to many intuitionists, it is possible for us to know that keeping promises is morally right even if we do not hold this belief on the basis of further evidence or proof.

While intuitionism was popular in the early twentieth century, it was subsequently dismissed as implausible. Recently, there has been renewed interest in intuitionism. Philosophers have defended updated versions of the theory and argued that the view has been misunderstood. This chapter considers the merits of intuitionism in moral epistemology. In what follows, I examine different ways of being an intuitionist and indicate the relative strengths and weaknesses of various approaches within intuitionism.

**MORAL INTUITIONISM: A GENERAL CHARACTERIZATION**

All moral intuitionists are united by their commitment to two claims: (1) the descriptive claim that some moral beliefs are non-inferential, and (2) the normative claim that some non-inferential moral beliefs have positive epistemic status. The first claim is about the causal history of certain moral beliefs. It asserts that the moral beliefs are not inferred from prior premises. The notion of “inference” calls for clarification. Not all reasoning occurs explicitly. Implicit inferences, while not rehearsed overtly, are accessible to the agent upon reflection, and this is why they count as inferences nonetheless. Hence beliefs
held on the basis of implicit or explicit inferences are not targeted by intuitionism. The possibility of unconscious reasoning raises more difficult questions. Intuitionists are often suspicious of appeals to unconscious inferences. The alleged inferences are supposed to be completely hidden from our awareness, so it can be hard to show that we are making the arguments unconsciously. If we do reach moral beliefs on the basis of unconscious reasoning, intuitionists will have to decide if the resulting beliefs also qualify as inferential.

The descriptive side of intuitionism claims that some moral beliefs are not inferential. To defend this part of their theory, intuitionists will have to isolate a class of non-inferential moral beliefs and explain how the beliefs arise if not via inference. The normative side of intuitionism makes the further step of saying that the non-inferential moral beliefs have a positive epistemic status needed for knowledge. Intuitionists often understand this positive status in terms of being justified. According to the traditional analysis of knowledge, knowledge is justified true belief. Even if this analysis is incomplete, and something in addition to being justified and true is needed for a belief to count as knowledge, it is widely agreed that being justified is a necessary condition for knowledge. If intuitionists can establish that some non-inferential moral beliefs are justified, this would be an important step towards showing that the beliefs are candidates for moral knowledge.

Intuitionists do not always agree on how best to develop the descriptive and normative aspects of their theory. Different forms of intuitionism offer different accounts of how their targeted beliefs arise non-inferentially as well as what it is that makes them justified.

As just defined, intuitionism is essentially an epistemological doctrine according to which some non-inferential moral beliefs are justified. While intuitionism has been associated with other views, such as ethical pluralism, non-naturalism, and objectivism, the theory itself is neutral with respect to these issues. Some classic intuitionists, notably W. D. Ross (2002), were ethical pluralists and thought that there is a plurality of basic moral duties, but other intuitionists, including G. E. Moore (1993) and Henry Sidgwick (1907), rejected pluralism in favour of utilitarianism. Additionally, nothing about intuitionism per se requires that moral truths be objective or that moral properties are non-natural, though intuitionism may become more or less plausible when paired with these other commitments.

Before proceeding, a terminological point is in order. It is common to say that intuitionists hold that we can know some moral truths by intuition. Unfortunately, the term “intuition” does not have a consistent meaning in the literature. For some authors, intuitions are non-inferential beliefs. In other discussions, intuitions are not beliefs but non-doctrastic seeming states, inclinations to judge, or immediate gut reactions. To avoid confusion, I shall dispense with reference to “intuition” and focus instead on the intuitionist’s core idea that some moral beliefs are non-inferential and justified.

**WHY BE A MORAL INTUITIONIST?**

One of the key arguments in favour of moral intuitionism is that it is true to our moral experiences. We seem to arrive at moral judgements, both singular and general, immediately and without inference. Evidence from cognitive psychology suggests that automatic, non-inferential processes are responsible for many of our moral judgements (Railton, 2014).
Not all moral inquirers have a specific general moral principle in mind when they form their moral beliefs. Still, familiarity with moral theory does not seem necessary for moral knowledge. Someone could know, or justifiably believe, that lying is morally wrong without inferring this from a higher-order moral principle.

Even if one rejects the above idea and holds that singular moral beliefs must be deduced from some general moral principle to be justified, our knowledge of these moral generalities would be in need of explanation. Intuitionists have argued that the general principles of ethics, such as the Principle of Utility and the Categorical Imperative, are not empirical hypotheses, held on the basis of their ability to explain and predict what we observe, as are the theoretical principles of the empirical sciences (Shafer-Landau, 2006; Tropman, 2012). For many intuitionists, certain moral principles can be credible to us in their own rights, independent of their inferential relations to another theory or observational data.

Importantly, intuitionism can explain how sound moral thinking can get started. Moral inquiry has to begin somewhere, and according to intuitionism the initial inputs to moral thinking do not need to be inferred from something else to be justified.

**OBJECTIONS TO INTUITIONISM**

Despite the arguments in its favour, intuitionism has been dismissed for a host of reasons. Critics object that if intuitionism were true, we would need to posit a realm of strange, non-natural moral properties as well as an equally mysterious faculty of intuition to detect them (Mackie, 1977). It is also supposed that, for the intuitionist, the target moral beliefs would be indubitable, obviously true, and infallible, all of which flies in the face of the complexity and uncertainty of moral practice. Moreover, since the relevant moral beliefs are not held on the basis of any premises, agents would be unable to evaluate their beliefs critically. This is problematic, as it forecloses argumentation about one’s moral commitments.

Additionally, there is the worry that the intuitionist’s moral beliefs are not reliable and are disconnected from moral truth. This unreliability objection can be developed in multiple ways. According to one evolutionary explanation of our moral beliefs, we immediately believe that certain actions, such as cooperating with others and avoiding harm, are right not because they are right, but ultimately because having positive motivational tendencies towards these behaviours was fitness-enhancing for our ancestors (Street, 2006). If our non-inferential moral beliefs are influenced by selective forces, forces that have nothing to do with moral truth, it is hard to see how these beliefs could be accurate. Other explanations of our belief-forming practices also pose problems for intuitionism. Recent work in moral psychology suggests that many of our immediate moral judgements are due to gut reactions, emotional states, biases, framing effects, and other factors unrelated to moral reality (Sinnott-Armstrong, 2006). To the extent that our non-inferred moral beliefs are influenced by such distorting factors, we have reason to doubt the beliefs’ truth and, by extension, the intuitionist’s claim that the beliefs enjoy a positive epistemic status necessary for knowledge.

To evaluate the seriousness of these challenges, we need to consider specific versions of intuitionism. In what follows, I examine three kinds of intuitionism—views I call...
“rationalist intuitionism,” “appearance intuitionism,” and “response intuitionism”—and consider the extent to which they can overcome these, and other, objections.

**RATIONALIST INTUITIONISM: OLD AND NEW**

According to rationalist intuitionism, some moral truths are self-evident, and we can non-inferentially recognize these truths through an exercise of our rational capacities. Several philosophers in the first part of the twentieth century were rationalist intuitionists, including G. E. Moore (1993), H. A. Prichard (1912), W. D. Ross (2002), and Henry Sidgwick (1907). By the mid-1900s, the theory fell out of favour for many of the reasons outlined above. Rationalist intuitionism has recently received renewed interest in the literature. Contemporary ethicists, such as Robert Audi (2004) and Russ Shafer-Landau (2003), have reformulated the view and argue that the position warrants serious attention.

To appreciate the new developments in rationalist intuitionism, let us begin with an earlier version of the position. A classic statement of rationalist intuitionism can be found in the work of W. D. Ross (2002). Ross was both a rationalist intuitionist and an ethical pluralist. He thought that there is a plurality of irreducible prima facie moral obligations, such as the obligations of fidelity, justice, and self-improvement. Prima facie duties depend on just one aspect of a situation, whereas final or all-things-considered obligations take all morally relevant considerations into account. An action may be prima facie right insofar as it fulfils a promise, but finally wrong if some other prima facie duty, such as justice, were more important in that instance. Of our knowledge of prima facie duties, Ross wrote:

That an act, *qua* fulfilling a promise, or *qua* effecting a just distribution of good … is **prima facie** right, is self-evident; not in the sense that it is evident from the beginning of our lives, or as soon as we attend to the proposition for the first time, but in the sense that when we have reached sufficient mental maturity and have given sufficient attention to the proposition it is evident without any need of proof, or of evidence beyond itself. It is self-evident just as a mathematical axiom, or the validity of a form of inference, is evident.

(Ross, 2002: 29)

Ross (2002) thought that some moral propositions, such as the proposition that promise-keeping is prima facie right, are evident in and of themselves. The comparison to mathematics and logic underscores the rationalistic element of this moral epistemology. For Ross, non-inferential moral knowledge, like our knowledge of mathematical axioms, is a matter of adequately grasping propositions that are self-evidently true. Because mature agents can know propositions about the prima facie duties solely upon considering them sufficiently, such moral knowledge would be independent of experience in a way that qualifies it as a priori.

Moral self-evidence secures both the descriptive and normative components of Ross’s intuitionism. The relevant moral beliefs are about self-evident truths, and they are held upon considering them sufficiently. The beliefs are non-inferential, as they are not held on the basis of prior premises that evidence the proposition. The beliefs
are justified because they are grounded in sufficient attention to propositions that are self-evidently true.

At this point, we can see that at least some of the objections to intuitionism mentioned earlier are misplaced. Ross (2002) stated that self-evident moral propositions are not immediately evident upon encountering them. Knowledge of them requires maturity and sufficient attention. This admission should mitigate the concern that the objects of non-inferential knowledge must be obvious or intuitive. Ross would claim that a special, occult faculty of moral intuition is not needed to grasp moral truths. Nothing over and above rational reflection, of the sort employed in mathematics and logic, underwrites moral knowledge. For this reply to succeed, rationalists will have to say more about what rational reflection involves and why this reflection yields knowledge in other domains.

It should be noted that Ross said other things about self-evidence that open his view up to additional criticism. He asserted that our knowledge of self-evident truths is certain, in the sense of being free from doubt (2002: 30). Ross famously said of self-evident moral and mathematical propositions, “We are dealing with propositions that cannot be proved, but that just as certainly need no proof” (2002: 30). According to Ross, self-evident moral propositions are impossible to prove.

Contemporary rationalist intuitionists have distanced themselves from some of the claims of their predecessors. Audi (2004), a leading current rationalist intuitionist, draws inspiration from Ross’s original position but moderates some of Ross’s commitments. An important innovation of Audi’s Rossian intuitionism is a new theory of self-evidence. On Audi’s view, self-evident propositions are such that:

1. in virtue of adequately understanding them, one has justification for believing them (which does not entail that all who adequately understand them do believe them); and
2. believing them on the basis of adequately understanding them entails knowing them. (Audi, 2015: 65)

If a proposition is self-evident, we can justifiably believe it solely on the basis of grasping it adequately. If our beliefs in the propositions are based on this understanding, and not on some other ground, then we can be said to know them. Like Ross, Audi (2004) thinks that the Rossian principles of prima facie duty, such as the principle that promise-keeping is prima facie required, are plausibly self-evident. Were one to grasp adequately the relevant concepts that figure in the proposition and sufficiently comprehend the moral principle, this understanding is all that is needed to justifiably believe that keeping one’s promises is prima facie required. By definition, any belief in a self-evident proposition held on the basis of this understanding is justified. One’s understanding of the principle also does not function as some sort of premise from which one concludes that the principle is true, and this is why a belief in a self-evident truth held on the basis of understanding it is not inferred from it. Once more, self-evidence secures the descriptive and normative claims of rationalist intuitionism.

One feature of Audi’s account is that self-evident propositions are not belief-entailing. Nothing in Audi’s analysis requires that one believe a self-evident proposition upon considering it. One could fail to comprehend the proposition sufficiently or decide to withhold belief even in light of the adequate understanding one in fact has. Self-evident truths
need not be obvious and can be subject to doubt. Notably, just because a self-evident truth is in no need of proof, since it can be known on the basis of understanding it adequately, it does not follow—as Ross (2002) thought—that these truths are unprovable. Self-evident truths may be derived from or evidenced by premises but remain self-evident all the same (Audi, 2004: 101–14). By moderating the notion of self-evidence, rationalists are able to make sense of moral argumentation and uncertainty about the objects of non-inferential moral knowledge.

Rationalists will try to ease concerns about the unreliability of intuitionistic beliefs by pointing out that the relevant beliefs result from adequate reflection upon propositions that are self-evident. Beliefs caused by gut reactions, biases, and framing effects, and not by a sufficient understanding of self-evident truths, are not targeted by their theory, so it is not a problem for rationalists if these moral beliefs are mistaken and lack justification. In response to the objection that our moral thinking has been distorted by evolutionary pressures, rationalists would likely say that the belief-forming method in question is rational reflection, which seems to yield knowledge in other areas of thought. Rationalists then must explain why reflection is a reliable or appropriate way to form beliefs, in both ethics and other domains, even if our capacity for this reflection has its roots in our evolutionary history.

A concern with the rationalist's model of moral knowledge is that it may be overly rationalistic; morality is unlike mathematics and logic, and the appeal to self-evidence seems to ignore the affective and action-guiding character of moral thought. It also remains to be seen if any moral propositions are self-evident. Perhaps no moral truth is such that we could know it on the basis of understanding it alone. Further, these self-evident moral propositions need to be substantive enough to matter for moral knowledge (Väyrynen, 2008). A real worry is that only analytic statements—that is, those that are true by definition—would qualify as self-evident; this could include statements such as “It is unjust to punish someone for a crime they did not commit.” To reply, intuitionists need to show either that some non-analytic (synthetic) moral statements can be self-evident, or that it is not a problem if self-evidence attaches only to those that are analytic.

Even if some non-trivial moral claims are self-evident, there is the additional worry that they would only be of a very general sort, such as Ross's principles of prima facie duty or the Principle of Utility. Ross claimed that propositions about our final, as opposed to prima facie, moral duties are never self-evident (2002: 33). Weighing competing moral duties against one another in concrete situations requires more than an adequate grasp of moral propositions such as “I am morally forbidden to help Sam.” We need to know a great deal about the world—for example, the kind of help Sam requires and what other moral considerations are at play. Argumentation may also be needed to reach a conclusion about what to do. A rationalist might reply that if a moral proposition were sufficiently detailed and contained a more complete non-moral description of the world, it would be self-evidently true. In other words, once fleshed out, propositions of the form “If circumstances C obtain, then I am morally forbidden to perform action A” might meet the conditions for self-evidence. Such moral conditionals could quickly become quite complex, and rationalists would need to show that sufficiently understanding them is enough to know them. Also, on this approach, our knowledge of singular moral facts would be based on our prior knowledge of the moral conditionals. Such a model of moral
knowledge does not explain, as some intuitionists wish to, how we could know some singular moral facts non-inferentially.

**Appearance Intuitionism**

According to other intuitionists, such as John Bengson (2015) and Michael Huemer (2005), intuitionism’s target moral beliefs are not justified by an adequate understanding of self-evident propositions but by how things appear to the believer. We can call this view “appearance intuitionism.”

Some moral propositions appear true prior to argument. It just seems wrong to push a large stranger over a footbridge to save five lives. Being beneficent, fair, and honest all seem like morally right things to do, and they can seem this way independent of any argument for why this is so. Appearances, or seemings, are non-doxastic mental states that represent propositions as being true. According to Bengson’s (2015) quasi-perceptualist form of intuitionism, appearances are best understood as presentational states that directly present the world as being a certain way. Appearances should be distinguished from beliefs. A proposition can strike us as true, even if we do not believe it. We can believe that a stick in the water is straight, despite its seeming to be bent. Similarly, utilitarians can believe that it is morally right to exploit the poor, even though it might still seem wrong to them. That said, in most cases appearances invite belief, and when they do, the appearances do not function as premises in an argument for a proposition’s truth. Appearances are not the objects of belief or pieces of evidence from which we reason to moral conclusions, and this is why beliefs based on appearances are not inferred from them (Huemer, 2005: 121–22).

Appearance intuitionists combine the above descriptive account of non-inferential moral belief formation with an epistemological view about the justificatory powers of appearances. Huemer has endorsed the Principle of Phenomenal Conservatism, which states, “If it seems to S that p, then, in the absence of defeaters, S thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that p” (Huemer, 2007: 30). On phenomenal conservatism, appearances give us some justification for believing their contents. This justification can be defeated. Things are not always as they appear, and when we have reason to think that an appearance is misleading, this defeats the justification that the appearance would otherwise confer to the belief. Still, beliefs grounded in appearances have some, albeit defeasible, justification. Suppose that I believe that lying is wrong because it seems wrong, and not because any argument has persuaded me of lying’s wrongness. Suppose there are no defeaters to this belief, so I have no reason to distrust the appearance. Even though the belief was not a conclusion of a reasoning process, it still has some initial positive epistemic credibility on this view insofar as it was based on how things appeared to me.

Appearance intuitionists have resources to respond to many of the classic complaints about intuitionism. We do not need to suppose that there is anything strange or objectionably non-natural about morality to allow that certain moral propositions just seem true. A special faculty of moral intuition is not needed to make sense of non-inferential moral knowledge. Appearances are not specific to ethics. The claims of natural science and everyday experience lend themselves to appearances. Appearances can be deceiving, and we can deny that things really are as they seem on the basis of argument or
evidence to the contrary. It might seem wrong to pay people to participate in research, but arguments can convince us otherwise. Similarly, we can construct arguments to support the belief that things are as they seem, and hence we can argue for or against our non-inferred beliefs. Appearance intuitionism, like its rationalist counterpart, does not preclude moral argument.

Unlike rationalist intuitionism, appearance intuitionism does not have to defend the contentious claim that some moral propositions are self-evident. A proposition does not have to be self-evident for it to appear true prior to argument. It can strike us as wrong to push the stranger off the footbridge, lie to a friend to spare her pain, or fail to obtain a subject’s informed consent to undergo a routine medical procedure, even if the objects of these appearances do not meet the conditions for being self-evidently true. Indeed, a proposition need not even be true for it to seem so to us. Appearance intuitionists have a much more liberal picture of what can be justifiably believed non-inferentially, and this allows them to avoid the worry that intuitionism only accounts for how we can know trivial or highly general moral truths.

Still, appearance intuitionism faces its own set of problems. While rationalists may be too restrictive in their account of which moral beliefs are non-inferential and justified, appearance intuitionists arguably go too far in the other direction. Suppose that Smith, having given the matter no thought at all, believes that he morally ought to deceive others whenever it would further his own interests because it appears to him that he should. Any appearance, no matter how it came about—be it the result of irrationality or carelessness—is supposed to confer some justification on Smith’s belief. Yet it is hard to see how such appearances would justify resulting beliefs.

This brings us back to the objection that the intuitionist’s moral beliefs are tainted by factors such as bias, emotion, framing errors, cultural background, and evolutionary history. Rationalist intuitionists have a ready reply to this objection since they limit the class of non-inferential beliefs to those about self-evident truths held on the basis of adequate understanding. Appearance intuitionists do not restrict non-inferential justification in this way, so this strategy is not open to them.

In reply to these concerns, an appearance intuitionist could first point out that appearances only justify in the absence of defeaters. If someone has evidence that their moral appearance is faulty, this would defeat the appearance’s justificatory powers.

This response does not account for agents who do not think that their appearances are caused by unreliable processes. Such people would lack a defeater for their beliefs, and their beliefs would once more be justified by how things appeared to them. Appearance intuitionists might claim that these cases are rare; most adults realize that certain kinds of moral appearances are influenced by bias, illusions, and emotion. In situations in which the agent is ignorant of these effects, appearance intuitionists would have to concede that the beliefs have at least some justification, but they could note that this justification may not be enough for the belief to constitute knowledge. Further, if the appearance is misleading and things are not as they appear, the belief would be false and for this reason also would not rise to the level of knowledge.

Appearance intuitionists could also put pressure on the critic’s assumption that many moral appearances are in error. The framing effects, faulty heuristics, and other mistakes that psychologists see in the lab may not generalize well to everyday moral life. Responding to a contrived moral dilemma in a questionnaire is importantly unlike confronting a real
moral situation. It could also be argued that being emotional and partial improves, rather than clouds, one's moral judgment (Little, 1995).

Even if some of our moral appearances are faulty, this does not mean that they all lead us astray. Huemer (2008) is willing to grant that certain kinds of moral appearances are often distorted by emotion, personal interest, cultural background, or evolutionary history. Appearances about specific cases or mid-level principles are, for Huemer, especially vulnerable to these influences, whereas other appearances are more insulated from these errors. Huemer draws our attention to abstract, formal propositions, such as "If it is permissible to do x, and it is permissible to do y given that one does x, then it is permissible to do both x and y" (Huemer, 2008: 386). Once we reflect upon what permissibility involves and what the principle says, this proposition seems true. These kinds of abstract propositions present themselves as true not because of personal bias or emotion but upon rational reflection, and this is why the appearances are highly trustworthy. Huemer thinks that some moral appearances should be given more priority in moral thinking than others.

This way of developing appearance intuitionism shares some interesting similarities with rationalist brands of intuitionism. The abstract propositions that Huemer identifies are plausibly self-evident; they could be justifiably believed solely on the basis of grasping them adequately. The difference is that appearance intuitionists maintain that it is the proposition's appearing true that justifies one's belief in it, not an adequate understanding of it. Still, like rationalist intuitionism, Huemer's appearance intuitionism faces the objection that its account of moral knowledge is too intellectual and only concerns trivial or non-substantive principles. If appearance intuitionism is to distinguish itself more clearly from its rationalist competitors, it needs to offer another picture of non-inferential moral belief formation, one that does not rely on rational reflection on abstract, general propositions. The challenge is to offer this account without falling prey to the objection that such non-inferential beliefs are unreliable and unjustified.

RESPONSE INTUITIONISM

Another class of intuitionism focuses on the role that emotion and other affective responses play in non-inferential moral knowledge. For these intuitionists, the relevant non-inferential moral beliefs are grounded in, or combine with, certain felt responses such as anger, indignation, approbation, and a sense of wrongdoing. Call this approach "response intuitionism."

The central idea here is that affective experiences can be a source of moral knowledge. Suppose that, upon witnessing a driver flee the scene of a hit-and-run accident, I am outraged and angered. In some versions of response intuitionism, this affective response can be prior to, and the basis of, my subsequent moral belief that the driver's actions were wrong (Audi, 2013). The emotional experience is not a piece of evidence from which I infer that the driver acted wrongly, and thus the grounding relation between response and moral belief is non-inferential. Other response intuitionists, such as Sabine Roeser (2011), claim that the affective response is not prior to the moral belief but instead combines with it to form a single unitary state. According to Roeser's view, which she calls "affectual intuitionism," these complex unities of moral belief and affect constitute the
moral emotions such as guilt and anger. Roeser argues that these moral emotions are candidates for genuine moral knowledge. In general, response intuitionism sets itself apart by its descriptive claim that certain moral beliefs are non-inferentially grounded in, or bound up with, affective responses.

Endorsing this descriptive account of non-inferentiality is not enough to make one a moral intuitionist. One also has to show that such affective moral beliefs are epistemically justified, and this is why related views in psychology that share some affinities with response intuitionism do not count as forms of intuitionism in the sense under consideration here. Jonathan Haidt's (2001) social intuitionism, for example, holds that many moral beliefs are caused by affective responses; however, the responses are usually socially informed gut reactions or flashes of disgust, and Haidt does not defend the normative claim that the beliefs have positive epistemic status.

Unlike appearance intuitionism and rationalist intuitionism, response intuitionism is not wedded to a specific account of justification for its beliefs. Response intuitionists could adopt the appearance intuitionist's account of justification and then argue that the relevant affective responses are a species of moral appearance. Insofar as anger and outrage present their objects as morally wrong, these responses—as appearances—defeasibly justify our belief that things are as they seem (Kauppinen, 2013). Alternatively, response intuitionists could argue that the relevant felt responses reliably indicate moral truths and that the affective moral beliefs are accurate enough to count as justified (Roeser, 2011).

Response intuitionism is attractive because it does not over-intellectualize moral knowledge as other intuitionists arguably do. The focus on affective responses captures the dynamic and motivating force of moral judgements. Because these responses usually concern particular instances of moral or immoral conduct, this kind of intuitionism accounts for our non-inferential beliefs about concrete actions, as opposed to merely general, abstract moral propositions.

Response intuitionism is perhaps most vulnerable to concerns about the trustworthiness of its moral beliefs. Whatever view of epistemic justification response intuitionists endorse, they will have to overcome doubts that affective moral beliefs are justified. To do this, they will likely adopt some of the defensive strategies already discussed: showing that emotional responses help rather than hurt moral judgement; arguing that felt moral beliefs are not as unreliable as critics suppose; and even narrowing the relevant class of non-inferential moral beliefs further to exclude certain kinds of affective belief. Because response intuitionism restricts itself to felt moral beliefs, worries about the reliability of emotion and affect become more pressing.

An additional problem unique to response intuitionism is that it seems possible for an agent to believe sincerely that an action is morally wrong without experiencing any kind of emotional response like guilt or approbation. Such cases seem especially common when it comes to more general moral beliefs, such as the beliefs that one is morally required to keep one's promises and that one has a duty to take others' ends as one's own. This poses difficulties for the response intuitionist's descriptive claim that non-inferential moral beliefs are grounded in, or integrate with, affective experiences. Response intuitionists might reply that they are not interested in dispassionate moral beliefs and that if a moral belief left an agent cold in this way, it would not be targeted by their theory. The drawback with this rejoinder is that the response intuitionist's account of moral knowledge is more limited than initially supposed. Alternatively, response intuitionists could
argue that in apparently dispassionate moral beliefs, a felt response is there, but it is either weak or overwhelmed by other mental states. The ultimate success of response intuitionism hinges on its ability to defend its descriptive and normative claims against these sorts of criticisms.

CONCLUSION

Moral intuitionism is frequently misunderstood. Recent work in intuitionism is trying to correct these misconceptions, and intuitionism now deserves serious consideration as a plausible option in moral epistemology. Intuitionism is currently being developed along multiple lines. Different formulations of intuitionism can be distinguished by their descriptive accounts of non-inferentiality and their normative accounts of justification. A central disagreement among intuitionists concerns which non-inferential moral beliefs should be targeted by their theory. Do the relevant moral beliefs result from rational reflection, affective experiences, or some other process? How intuitionists answer this question will affect how they respond to the most pressing challenge they face, which is to show that their moral beliefs have positive epistemic status despite not being inferred from antecedent theoretical commitments or other premises. If intuitionists can address concerns about the epistemic credentials of non-inferential moral beliefs, they hold out the hope of helping us see how sound moral thinking can get started.

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REFERENCES

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