Debunking Arguments and Ethical Intuitionism: How Thought Experiments Can Help or Hinder our Understanding of Morality

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Abstract
Thought experiments can provide moral intuitions that influence the development of ethical systems. Some philosophers resist this influence by applying debunking arguments to intuitions that conflict with their ethical systems. I claim these conflicts can be best understood by appealing to an ethical system that has a foundation of multiple intuitions. I look at the work of Michael Huemer and W.D. Ross to see how a pluralistic moral theory can be justified and reconcile tensions between intuitions. Concluding, I propose a way to reimagine how thought experiments can function as reflective experiences that facilitate moral wisdom.

Keywords
intuition, debunking arguments, thought experiments, ethical intuitionism, unfamiliarity, foundationalism

I: A Defense of Deontological Intuitions

1. **The Inciting Incident**

Very often in normative ethics, theories are derived through an abstract process. Consider a plausible etiology of Utilitarianism. We abstractly consider what it means for an act to be "good": that which maximizes utility for all sentient beings. From this consideration we posit that since good is the most fundamental moral quality, a moral theory should compel acts which maximize it. We consider the premises, logic, and any implicit foundational principles. In this process it can be very apparent to our mind *why* we think certain things. Once formulated, you might disagree with Utilitarianism. Perhaps you believe the concept of utility is too reductive to capture the "greatest good". Unlike this formalized objection, many of the challenges and confirmations directed toward Utilitarianism, and normative ethical theories more generally, come

through thought experiments[1]. For instance, the popular thought experiment, The Trolley Driver Dilemma, is often thought to lend credence to Utilitarianism.

> **Trolley Driver Dilemma:** You are at the wheel of a runaway trolley quickly approaching a fork in the tracks. On the tracks extending to the left is a group of five railway workmen. On the tracks extending to the right is a single railway workman.
>
> If you do nothing the trolley will proceed to the left, causing the deaths of the five workmen. The only way to avoid the deaths of these workmen is to hit a switch on your dashboard that will cause the trolley to proceed to the right, causing the death of the single workman.
>
> Is it appropriate for you to hit the switch in order to avoid the deaths of the five workmen?

When presented test subjects typically agree that we should flip the switch to kill one person thus saving five people. The Trolley Driver Dilemma shows that when faced with a morally ambiguous situation, our judgment stays true to our abstract utilitarian theory. However, consider this reformulation:

> **Footbridge Dilemma:** A runaway trolley is heading down the tracks toward five workmen who will be killed if the trolley proceeds on its present course. You are on a footbridge over the tracks, in between the approaching trolley and the five workmen. Next to you on this footbridge is a stranger who happens to be very large.
>
> The only way to save the lives of the five workmen is to push this stranger off the bridge and onto the tracks below where his large body will stop the trolley. The stranger will die if you do this, but the five workmen will be saved.

In this scenario, people typically respond that we should not push the large man. This judgment contradicts our utilitarian theory, endorsing a more deontological prescription. With these two conflicting judgments, ***The Trolley Problem*** is now established.[2] This problem raises questions which are more fundamental in their nature

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[1] These tend to be unforeseen particular scenarios which attempt to assess/evaluate normative theories based on their prescriptions to action. However, these thought experiments can also work to affirm our normative theories.

[2] I am following in Selim Berker's use of "The Trolley Problem," where it refers to not one of the dilemmas, but rather the larger problem of conflicts between the two moral intuitions.

rather than being purely normative. This problem presses foundational questions about how we should view intuition in the scope of moral theorizing. Two such pertinent questions are: If the utilitarian calculus is the same across both dilemmas, why do our moral judgments differ? How can we work to understand and handle this divergence? To address these meta-ethical questions, I will start by assessing the strength of evolutionary debunking arguments made by consequentialists, Joshua Greene and Peter Singer. Evolutionary debunking arguments are attempts to nullify moral intuitions by using evolutionary genealogies to undermine their use in ethical theory. I will argue that these debunking attempts are not strong enough to disregard all deontological moral intuitions. Further, I will demonstrate that unfamiliarity arguments by Hanno Sauer cast doubt on whether strange thought experiments can deliver genuine moral intuitions. In the next section, I will move forward with these two conclusions to develop a positive claim. I will suggest a way forward for normative theories that wish to accommodate our genuine moral intuitions: Moral Pluralism. Once established I will consider the problem of weighing multiple principles present in pluralist systems. I then propose that this problem can be addressed by using thought experiments vehicles for reflective moral experiences.

2. **Evolutionary Explanations and Solutions**

Why do our intuitive moral judgments call us to act in completely different ways when the two trolley dilemmas are the same according to a Utilitarian analysis? In both cases they both generate the same consequences: you can perform an action to kill one person to save five. One prominent response which has generated support through both philosophy and moral psychology is based on our evolutionary history.[3] This response supposes that the only reason for different judgments between the two dilemmas is the mechanism of intervention. In the standard trolley driver dilemma, we intervene by flipping a switch and in the footbridge case we intervene by directly pushing someone. Two philosophers who endorse this explanation are Peter Singer and Joshua Greene. Singer posits that our contradicting intuitions can be explained by appealing to how common or uncommon the mechanism of intervention is to our evolutionary experience.

> Throwing a switch that diverts a train that will hit someone bears no resemblance to anything likely to have happened in the circumstance in which

[3] Singer, Peter. "Ethics and Intuitions." The Journal of Ethics 9, no. 3/4 (2005): Greene, J. D. "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 (pp. 35–80). MIT Press. (2008)

we and our ancestors lived.[4]

Before we continue it is important to recognize that one of the necessary background assumptions Singer holds is that our moral intuitions are developed through those habits which would be beneficial to our survival as a species. Thus, if we have experienced that pushing someone off a cliff would negatively impact our survival prospects, we will naturally develop an intuition against doing so. Singer explains that flipping switches to kill people is a very new concept, one which has not sufficiently had time to create a negative intuitive reaction. Therefore, this and this alone accounts for the reason why we judge not to push in the Footbridge Case.

Joshua Greene also shares many of the same ideas with Singer but develops a position which is more psychologically nuanced and supported with fMRI data. Greene's account provides a background hypothesis which more generally explains the difference in judgment. Instead of developing a specific reticence to pushing people, Greene believes that we likely have developed a moral intuition to discourage up close and personal harm. Greene posits that moral intuitions which respond to up close and personal harms are deontological because they are rationalized by appealing to respect for certain non-consequentialist considerations. His fMRI scans seem to show these deontological intuitions[5], derive from parts of the brain commonly associated with emotions, an association which he will later use to criticize those intuitions.

Once Singer and Greene assert their reasons to disregard deontological intuitions, they apply them to solve ***The Trolley Problem***. Both philosophers reach the conclusion that we should disregard our non-consequentialist moral intuition in the Footbridge Case and proceed to push the large man. Both Singer and Greene want to show more than just a defense of consequentialism in the Footbridge case; they want to use this case as a particular example in a wider defense of consequentialism against situations where adhering to it has a perceived intuitive wrongness. Singer endorses this view by appealing to the weakness of particular intuitions in the face of reasoned moral principles. If a moral intuition contradicts our reasoned principles, we should disregard it. Greene's view integrates psychology concepts to generate a similar skepticism against deontological moral intuitions.

> The difference in emotional response explains why people respond so differently. That is, people tend toward consequentialism in the case in which the

[4] Singer, 348.

[5] Deontological Intuitions is the way Greene frames the intuitions he wants to debunk. These are those intuitions which are made out of respect of certain types of moral rules. Or as Greene describes those which favor "characteristically deontological conclusions."

> emotional response is low and tend toward deontology in the case in which the emotional response is high.[6]

Greene's theory posits that in strange environments like the Footbridge case, our emotional reaction to the scenario is morally biased and unjustified. Therefore, like Singer, we should discount the significance of that intuitive reaction and stay true to our reasoned principles. I will take a deeper look into both Singer and Greene's positions to better analyze their reasons for subverting some of our intuitive moral judgments.

Singer's Problem with Practical Intuitions

Peter Singer, as a Utilitarian, believes that **The Trolley Problem** presents an example where we should stay steadfast to our consequentialist normative system by discounting our conflicting moral intuition.[7] Singer's belief comes from his confidence in the abstract and reasoned process by which we developed Utilitarianism. Like a mathematical proof, we started from uncontroversial first principles. We saw that the moral value of an action is reducible to how much good it produces. Then it was deduced that a moral system should therefore seek to prescribe such actions that maximize good. From this series of deductions, the system seems extremely robust. Notice how when we consider the Footbridge case there is nothing about it which directly challenges one of our premises or assumptions in the abstract form of our Utilitarian argument. Rather it seems to direct its concern bluntly at the Utilitarian conclusion. So unsurprisingly instead of taking this odd experiment to discount our entirely pure normative system, Singer will disregard it. However, Singer will need a justified reason to disregard it. This is because, while it may seem possible to just discard intuitions entirely, Singer concedes that we need at least some intuitions to get our abstract theory off the ground. For instance, what makes five deaths worse than one? Or even more fundamentally that death is a bad thing at all?[8] The answers to these questions are the intuitive moral axioms necessary for the development of Utilitarianism. Back to our trolley problem, both the moral judgment to not push the man off the footbridge and the abstract concept that good is worth maximizing appears to share a similar type of self-evidence paradigmatic of intuition. Singer's move, though, is to draw a distinction between these intuitions, such that he can rationally save the utilitarian intuitions and dismiss the footbridge intuition. A helpful distinction

[6] Greene, 43.
[7] Singer, 332.
[8] Singer, 350.

to understand Singer's argument is that of ***Practical*** and ***Theoretical*** intuitions.[9]

> **Practical Intuitions:** An appearance of moral status on particular actions and cases. (Footbridge Intuition)
>
> **Theoretical Intuitions:** An appearance of moral status on abstract moral principles or ideas. (Utilitarian Intuition)

Singer's argument against the relevance of practical intuitions is three-fold. First, he asserts that they are automatic and non-reflective. When we consider the Footbridge case, the judgment to not push feels immediately apparent. A reflection on this immediate judgment does not reveal a robust line of reasoning like we had with our utilitarian theory.[10] Second, they are the outcome of evolutionary processes, and thus merit skepticism about how they may track the truth. If the only reason we feel this negative valence towards pushing is for evolutionary survival purposes, then why should we believe it tracks real ethical value other than survival? Third, they are prone to conflicts and inconsistencies across similar thought experiments. Like we saw with the two formulations of The Trolley Dilemmas, our intuitions seem differ on morally irrelevant properties, in this case the method of intervention.

According to Joakim Sandberg and Niklas Juth, Singer's argument is flawed because his three proposed differences between practical and theoretical intuitions do not hold up under further analysis. First, theoretical intuitions, such as good is worth maximizing or pain is bad, appear to us automatically.[11] Such concepts are immediately apparent as true and reflection on such beliefs are similarly unproductive. Any inquiry into these intuitions, like good is worth maximizing, brings us to an uncontroversial and self-evident proposition. Second, theoretical intuitions also appear to be the outcome of evolutionary processes. We could likely find an equally strong evolutionary explanation as to why we have such utilitarian intuitions like a death is bad, and that multiple deaths are worse than a single death. Last, theoretical intuitions can also conflict. Among philosophers there is much dispute over fundamental moral principles as seen in divergences among consequentialists and deontologists. Even among these philosophical ideologies there may be disagreements about how to properly apply their theory. These conflicts are presently apparent in the various proposed solutions to The

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[9] Sandberg, Joakim, and Niklas Juth. "Ethics and Intuitions: a reply to Singer." The Journal of Ethics 15, no. 3 (2011): 209-226.

[10] Even if we do believe we have intellectual reasons, many experiments have demonstrated they are likely post hoc rationalizations for emotions.

[11] In Ethics and Intuitions, Singer acknowledges that these beliefs are foundational and not based on reason or any directly empirical observations.

Trolley Problem. This criticism demonstrates that the flaws in Singer's distinction commits him to a chauvinism for one type of intuition without a valid justification for doing so.

Greene's Dual-Process Framework:

We now have seen a flaw with Singer's reasoning to disregard deontological intuitions. Next we will assess the strength of Greene's debunking argument. His argument shares a similar goal with Singer's, but his explanation of The Trolley Problem carries a more scientifically supported and nuanced empirical hypothesis, known as his Dual Process Framework.

> **The Dual Process Framework:** Humans have developed two processes for responding to moral problems: emotional and cognitive. The emotional process is fast and bluntly responds accurately only to common moral problems. The cognitive process is slow but can be finely tuned to accurately respond to uncommon moral problems. Our characteristically deontological judgments are driven by the emotional processes, whereas characteristically consequentialist judgments are driven by the cognitive process. Together in moral situations these processes compete for one's overall moral verdict about a case.[12]

This proposed framework hypothesizes two empirically confirmable data points. First that moral dilemmas like the Footbridge case should show activity in the emotional regions of the brain and that the traditional Trolley Driver dilemma should show activity in the cognitive brain regions. This is because, according to the framework, if the Footbridge elicits a deontological response it must be from emotional processes and for The Trolley Driver, a consequentialist response implies an origin from a cognitive process. Greene also posits that this emotional response is triggered by the scenario's instantiation of up-close and personal harm. Apart from the fMRI data, the framework expects non-traditional responses to emotionally charged moral dilemmas to be delayed. This is because humans will have needed to override their fast emotional process for the slower cognitive process. Greene et al.'s experiments return two empirical findings that seem to verify this framework. Now that Greene's Framework has been established what is the normative significance of his framework? How can we interpret his findings to understand their implications for moral judgment? How can we formalize the worry Greene is raising? I will address these questions by applying the argumentative form of Obsoleteness Debunking to Greene's Framework.

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[12] Greene, J D., L E. Nystrom, A D. Engell, J M. Darley, and J D. Cohen. "The neural bases of cognitive conflict and control in moral judgment." Neuron 44 (2004): 400.

Obsoleteness Debunking:

To analyze the normative implications of The Dual Process Framework, we will need to understand the theoretical concept of obsoleteness debunking. Obsoleteness in this context is used to characterize certain moral intuitions which may only be justified in a subset of environments. Relying on evolutionary accounts, if pushing other humans to kill in most situations created adverse consequences, then we will develop a repulsive intuition against doing so. Avoiding such acts will likely increase chances of survival. However, if there do arise rare unforeseen situations in which pushing does generate positive consequences, then the moral intuition may be responding to the situation improperly since it has only been adapted to common situations. These unforeseen situations are considered *hostile* environments. Hanno Sauer provides us with a formalized version of Obsoleteness Debunking: [13]

Obsoleteness Debunking:

1. Intuition **p** is based on process **P**
2. **P** has been biologically or culturally adapted to produce correct judgments only in specific, nonhostile environments
3. **P** is unlikely to produce correct results in hostile environment **H**
4. **p** is formed in **H**
5. **p** is unjustified

Then we can plug in the Dual Process Framework to see how it directly appeals to this form:

Greene's Dual Process Debunking:

1. Deontological Intuitions (don't push the man) are based on an aversion to Up-Close and Personal Harm (**P**)
2. **P** has been biologically or culturally adapted to produce correct judgments only in specific, nonhostile environments
3. **P** is unlikely to produce correct results in the Footbridge Dilemma (**H**)
4. Our intuition to not push is formed in the Footbridge Dilemma (**H**)
5. Our intuition to not push is unjustified

We saw that (1) is what Greene's empirical fMRI studies attempt to show. Similar to Singer's debunking attempt, Greene needs to find a strong reason to discard the class of intuitions associated with deontological judgments that is unique from the other necessary moral intuitions. This reason from (2) and (3) is that these deontological

[13] Sauer, Hanno. Debunking Arguments in Ethics. Cambridge University Press, 2018: 33-36.

intuitions are unreliable since they have been developed for certain evolutionary typical scenarios. The Footbridge Dilemma is hostile to these intuitions because it supplies uncharacteristically good outcomes to a typically morally wrong immediate action. Greene's argument posits that we should have no confidence that the intuitions around the Footbridge Dilemma are justified since they have been tuned for significantly different scenarios. It would be akin to training a machine to read printed text and then trusting the output on handwriting. It just hasn't been adequately prepared with experience to handle this situation. Greene widens his skepticism to more than just our intuition in Footbridge Dilemma. He wants to debunk all our deontological intuitions for similar reasons, arguing that they are often based on morally irrelevant properties like the emotional salience of up-close and personal harm. Greene does admit that our emotional process may often coincide with the cognitive process, but when presented with a challenging moral problem we should defer to the cognitive process. By debunking the normative worth of deontological intuitions, he can defend consequentialist normative theories against any future strange counterexamples.

Criticism of Greene's Debunking Argument

Greene's debunking arguments left us with concerns about the validity of deontological intuitions. However, he does little to demonstrate why we should default to endorse consequentialist ones instead. This is problematic because Greene uses consequentialist intuitions to suppose that the amount of people who are in danger is the only significant moral property. Is it not possible that our violation of a human's right to not be killed is morally relevant or that the inherent uniqueness of persons makes humans resistant to a simple quantified analysis? Greene argues that appeals to the existence of other morally relevant properties are false intellectual rationalizations developed post-hoc of our emotions. Greene will argue this point by deferring to his fMRI scans that seem to show this. This response is insufficient because the corresponding brain region does not necessarily demonstrate that the intuition is completely vacuous. Our emotional brain region may be capable of aligning with real moral value in the same way as the cognitive. Further these questions of which properties are morally relevant are not resolved in moral philosophy.[14] If such properties were universally agreed upon and we found that the emotional center never tracked any of them, then Greene's arguments would be right. However, this is not the case and therefore the applications of fMRI scans are premature.[15]

Even if we were to grant that Greene's debunking argument for The Trolley Problem is

[14] Berker, Selim. 'The Normative Insignificance of Neuroscience.' Philosophy and Public Affairs 37, (2009): 293–329. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1088-4963.2009.01164.x.
[15] Berker, 326.

correct, does it necessarily imply that the debunking conclusion will achieve the wider range of discarding the significance of all deontological intuitions? Attempting to expand the debunking conclusion beyond the specific counterexample risks missing important cases where the deontological intuition does respond to a morally relevant property. To shear an entire class of moral intuitions as normatively insignificant should demand an incredible amount of certainty in our conclusions. Intuitions uniquely function as a check on our reason-based theories. By widely disregarding the intuitions that conflict with our theories we abandon the project of finding a better theory which can rationally accommodate them. This is not to say that there will not be some intuitions which are unequivocally worthy of debunking and Footbridge may be like a good example of this. But rather we should approach debunking responsibly and with a safety razor, establishing the evidence of bias case by case, rather than trying to bluntly disregard them at the root of human psychology using empirical neuroscientific studies.

3. **Familiarity Concerns in Trolleyology**

So far, we have seen arguments from Singer and Greene which attempt to resolve The Trolley Problem using evolutionary debunking arguments. An analysis of these arguments found serious flaws or significantly weakened their scope. Another approach to resolving the tension presented in The Trolley Problem involves questioning the approach philosophers have taken toward using the intuitive moral judgments generated from strange and unfamiliar scenarios. A person's response to a moral dilemma is affected by whether the situation is realistic.[16] It follows that an important metric to evaluate thought-experiments is how familiar they are. Familiarity is defined by how well the relevant thought-experiment mirrors our real-world experiences. An exemplary thought-experiment would work to faithfully recreate a common moral dilemma from a real-world situation to ensure reliable human responses.[17] Familiarity gives us confidence that these responses will likely map onto how the actor would respond in the real-world, thereby providing us with judgments that are probative. If the thought-experiments are unfamiliar then to accept the responses as evidence of wider human moral beliefs is to start on unstable ground. Directly applied, when someone provides you with the Footbridge Case how confident are we that your response in lab-like conditions mirrors what you would do at the actual Footbridge? There are five different dimensions by which moral dilemmas should aspire to adhere to if they want to generate genuine intuitions worthy of our

[16] Sauer, 155.

[17] Singer's shallow pond thought experiment is one of such exemplary character. We will discuss this more in-depth later.

normative consideration[18]:

> **Ecological Validity:** Moral dilemmas that aren't far-fetched are more likely to give us information about how actors may response to real life situations.
>
> **Novelty:** A completely unforeseen case, even if it is ecologically valid, may merit a moral response which does not genuinely reflect an actor's judgment.[19]
>
> **Imaginative Resistance:** Moral dilemmas which are so strange or under described that an actor is incapable of fully comprehending the situation as described or may implicitly fill in details.[20]
>
> **Specificity:** Using moral dilemmas with hyper-specific details, especially between multiple similar scenarios may not give us interesting or valid information.[21]
>
> **Certainty:** Moral dilemmas which stipulate absolute certainty about consequences or relevant factors of a scenario may conflict the familiarity of a dilemma.[22]

According to Sauer, the Trolley Dilemmas may be fundamentally flawed and the moral judgments we based our entire debunking objective on ill-suited. To directly demonstrate why familiarity is so crucial, I will consider in-depth two of the ways we can see thought experiments as unfamiliar: **Imaginative Resistance** and **Certainty**.

Imaginatively Resistant Premises:

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[18] Sauer, 177.

[19] Imagine a case where a person's car skids out of control, and they can quickly either drive into on-coming traffic or into a busy pedestrian crosswalk. This is certainly an ecologically valid situation, but one that people have unlikely ever experienced. Their immediate response in judgment may favor a particular course of action, say the pedestrian crosswalk, but then later upon further reflection prefer the on-coming traffic. Regardless, after this consideration, when faced with this situation again their reaction will better represent their moral beliefs since it is no longer novel. This reveals that novelty could potentially curbed by allowing actors time to weigh their response.

[20] I elaborate on this more on in the next section: Imaginatively Resistant Premises.

[21] For example, Greene attempts to further his case for our unreliability with up-close and personal harm by showing how Footbridge responses change if the experimenter must push with their hands or push with a long stick. Greene believes that his model further demonstrated since more people opt to push with the long stick then with their bare hands. Sauer believes that these types of ultra-precise adjustments in thought-experiments should not correspond with meaningful evidence. As they return responses from participants which attend to slight changes between experiments as morally significant that ordinary people wouldn't.

[22] I elaborate on this on this in the next section: Certainty as a Consequentialist Bias

Consider the following example from the philosophy of mind:

> Mary lives in a room where all things are black and white. In this room she has access to ***all*** physical information about color, the neuroscience, physics, or anything else that may be relevant. When she leaves the room for the first time and sees the blue sky, does she learn something new?

The intuitive conclusion that many people come to believe is that she likely learns the experience of blue. This implies that there must be some non-physical information which is essential to consciousness. However, if we look for imaginatively resistant premises, we may be able to track a flaw in the argument.

> **P:** Mary knows all physical information about color.

This seems like a simple premise; however, it is extremely complex. There are many abstract and open concepts required to comprehend what **P** means. We would first need to grant Mary a super-human level of memory and intelligence to understand all the physical information we know that pertains to how color works. Further, and perhaps most resistant, to know all physical information would include such information reliant on scientific discoveries we don't know of and those by which we don't know we don't know about. Therefore, it seems more likely that when we 'comprehend' this premise we are comprehending something like:

> **P2:** Mary knows a lot of the physics, scientific literature, and other references about color.[23]

Notice now that if we grant **P2** instead of **P,** the conclusion completely changes. If Mary only knows "a lot" of physical information then it is obviously weaker than her knowing "all" physical information. The conclusion of the thought-experiment demands on the utmost strength from this premise such that when Mary learns something new upon seeing a blue sky it must **necessarily** grant the existence of non-physical information. This provides us with the generalized form of the problem:

Problem of Imaginative Resistive Premises:

> Suppose that **P** is an imaginatively resistant premise. It seems possible that when I am coming to an intuitive conclusion on my conception of **P**, I really am

[23] This **P2** can be formulated and qualified in various ways. For instance, maybe you think we can intuitively grasp more than what I have explicitly stipulated in **P2**. The important distinction though is that our intuitive grasp of **P** is not logically or functionally equivalent to **P**, and in this case asserts a significantly weaker conclusion.

believing some other more conceivable premise **P2**. Since **P** is different from **P2,** it is unlikely that **P2** will generates or carries the same power to disprove or show what the thought experimenter intends to.

Certainty as a Consequentialist Bias:

Another reason to be skeptical of using unfamiliar situations is that their formulation can implicitly favor certain moral theories. Premises which stipulate **certainty** both (1) undermine familiarity of a thought experiment and (2) begs the question for consequentialists. On (1), true certainty is so uncommon in real-world scenarios that it functions as an imaginatively resistant premise. Certainty is importantly more than just knowing the direct outcomes of your actions. It often provides us with exceptionally sterile and complete knowledge of circumstances.

Examples of Certainty in The Footbridge Dilemma:

A. The trolley will certainly kill the five people
B. Pushing will certainly stop the trolley
C. Pushing will certainly kill the man
D. You are the only person who can intervene
E. Pushing or not pushing are the only possible actions

On (2), one of the prominent arguments against consequentialism is our inability to accurately forecast the consequences of our actions.[24] This is part of the reason why deontologists may prefer to act with the best intentions rather than go against them and risk the toxic combination of a bad consequence with a bad direct intention. When we assume certainty in thought experiments, we are stipulating what the consequences must be. Therefore, we are implicitly granting consequentialists a key premise. This provides an account for why we may feel conflicted in the Footbridge Case. When we are standing at the Footbridge with the choice to push the large man, we are told that it will certainly stop the trolley and save five people (A), (B), (C). If we wanted to remove the certainty to achieve a more familiar version of the Footbridge Case, it might look something like:

> **Footbridge Dilemma Revised:** A runaway trolley is heading down the tracks toward five workmen who **may likely** be killed if the trolley proceeds on its present course. You are on a footbridge over the tracks, in between the approaching trolley and the five workmen. Next to you on this footbridge is a

[24] Lenman, James. "Consequentialism and Cluelessness." Philosophy & Public Affairs 29, no. 4 (2000): 342–70.

stranger who happens to be very large.

It seems like the only way to save the lives of the five workmen is to push this stranger off the bridge and onto the tracks below where his large body **seems likely to stop** the trolley.

We suddenly notice with this new formulation, our intuition to not push calls out something intellectually significant here, that pushing the man may be a 'risky' move. This risk comes from the possibility that if we push this man, we could potentially make the situation worse (by killing 6 instead of 5) than if we hadn't intervened at all. Further, it is possible that the certainty stipulation functioning in an imaginatively resistant way pushes us to think we are comprehending the situation as presented initially even though in fact we may be considering the more realistic dilemma as modified above.

II: A Positive Account of Intuitions in Ethics

4. **Developing Ethical Intuitionism**

So far, we have considered two prominent ways of resolving **The Trolley Problem.** Within both attempts we discovered that justifications for following consequentialist intuitions seemed to be the same as deontological intuitions.[25] The debunkers tried to find a characteristic to rationally distinguish between the two types in order to explain why we should dismiss the non-consequentialist intuitions. Singer's attempt at separating the two types using his theoretical and practical distinction failed. Greene's attempt using fMRI scans was similarly unsuccessful due to its improper assumption of what properties were morally relevant. In the wake of these two failed attempts, if we want to rationally move forward in normative theory, we cannot do so by taking only one type of intuition. The most natural way forward then is to build a theory which accommodates these diverse intuitions. Those intuitions, both consequentialist and deontological, were varied and conflicting, therefore we saw that we cannot simply reduce them to one principle. Our consequentialist intuitions provide us with a principle to maximize good, but our deontological intuitions consider moral properties which aim to absolutely prevent harm, regardless of the consequences. These principles are destined for much conflict where morally ambiguous situations arise, like the trolley dilemmas. If you want to maximize good in the footbridge case, you can only do so by directly killing the large man, violating the deontological intuition. There will simply be many instances where to maximize good you will need to treat someone as a mere

[25] I am using deontological intuitions, in the way that our debunkers did, to stand in for all intuitions which attend to non-consequentialist properties.

means to that end. This leads us toward a normative system that will have multiple fundamental moral principles. While the traditional monistic normative theories denied the relevance of some intuitive moral properties, the pluralist theory can address challenging moral dilemmas more directly with its unique ability to account for the full and diverse range of our moral considerations.
Before commencing on the project of developing an intuitive moral theory along the lines we just sketched, we should consider what desirable characteristics would we want such a theory to have?

> **First Tenet**: we want to have confidence that our foundational intuitive axioms are epistemically justified. (Metaethical)

A theory which can reliably capture what moral properties exist would supply us with valuable and powerful understanding of reality. To do this we will need to show that intuition as a source of knowledge can be justified foundationally. This tenet can be seen as meta-ethical in nature. It seeks to explain the questions of how we can have moral knowledge.

> **Second Tenet:** we want a theory which can adequately prescribe normative guidance on how to act. (Normative)

We would not want to stop at a moral theory that can just describe moral properties of the world. Ideally, we would want our theory to consider all these moral properties and turn to render a conclusion for an *all things considered* moral status of a particular act. Philosophers in this space often adequately cover arguments supporting one of these tenets but not both. This will make it necessary to pull from two different authors. For the first tenet, Michael Huemer will provide us with arguments from metaethics to defend our appeal to intuitions as our justified foundational moral axioms.[26] For the second tenet, W.D. Ross will provide us with insight as to how we come to know intuitive moral knowledge and a framework on applying these intuitive moral foundations in practical cases.[27]

Justifying Intuitive Moral Foundations

Our objective in this section will be to begin arguments for the first characteristic of our intuitive moral theory. This will comprise fundamental questions such as: What is

[26] Huemer, Michael. Ethical Intuitionism. Palgrave Macmillan, 2005.
[27] Ross, David, and William David Ross. The right and the good. Oxford University Press, 2002.: Ross, W. David. Foundations of ethics. Read Books Ltd, 2011.

foundational intuitive moral knowledge and how can we be justified in believing it? And how do I come to know it? So far, we have worked with intuitions but have yet to formally define what an intuition is. Huemer supplies us with a plausible definition:

> **Definition of Intuition:** An intuition is an intellectual appearance of seeming which does not depend on inference from other beliefs.[28]

An ethical intuition is then such an intuition whose content is evaluative. The following are common examples of intuition:

1. 3 > 1
2. A triangle has 3 sides
3. Nothing can be red and green all over at the same time
4e. Pain is bad
5e. Enjoyment is better than suffering
6e. It is good to keep promises

The first three were non-evaluative and the last three were evaluative (ethical) intuitions. These ethical intuitions deserve further analysis because they will be our foundation for moral knowledge. Suppose someone were to ask why you believed pain is bad. How could we reply? Careful consideration reveals a stubborn dead end.[29] We would be hard pressed to find a reason other than it just seems to be that way. This appeal to a seeming may look problematic. This is because generally in philosophy if we want to say we know that P is true, we need a reason to believe that P. But, when we are considering foundational concepts for any theory, moral or otherwise, there must be at least some initial propositions we suppose to get us started. If we were to instead *always* demand a reason to believe P, then acknowledging this principle would mean that our reason R would need its own support. A support which would be another proposition P2 that needs its own reason R2. This begins what is an infinite regress argument into global skepticism. To resist this regress, we can instead suppose that there exist some propositions which are justified without other reasons beyond itself. This is not to say we can arbitrarily pick which concepts are foundational. We are restricted to granting those propositions which have a high degree of initial plausibility to us. Huemer supplies us with a concept to formalize a process for granting foundational intuitive concepts as true:

> **Phenomenal Conservatism (PC)**: it is reasonable to assume that things are the way they appear, and these appearances are the source of foundational

[28] Huemer, 102.
[29] Huemer, 101.

justification.[30]

Phenomenal Conservatism is a principle, not limited to just ethics, which provides us a justification for the intuitive moral propositions that we will be working with. So, when we ask the question: is the proposition that pain is bad justified for foundational moral knowledge? We can explain that it is self-evident and that foundational self-evident propositions do not depend on other reasons to be considered knowledge. Now we must note that this justification provided to us by Phenomenal Conservatism is defeasible. It can be revoked if we discover a reason that causes a lack of confidence in our initial appearance. In other words, that the initial appearance we had turned out to be an illusion. To expand on how this illusive nature can function, another source of knowledge which shares this same PC justification can be used, perception. Consider a plausible statement of someone who says: "The arch seems to be taller than it is wide, but I don't think it is." This statement acknowledges a skepticism toward an appearance. If we said that appearances are foundational, how can we come to know that we were under an illusion? What undermines these initial appearances are other more plausible ones. When the arch seems taller than it is wide, we may attempt to verify this appearance by viewing it from another angle. As we do so, we can see *with our perception* that the previous illusion of the arch fades within our new location. Back from afar the illusion may persist, but now we have had a direct and more convincing experience that gives us a reason to discount this appearance. This example shows that those propositions which come from the principle of phenomenal conservatism have a prima facie justification. They may not be considered settled; they are initial convincing presumptions.

Being aware of this possibility, we of course would want to ensure that our foundational ethical intuitions were such that it would be very unlikely to be overturned by other appearances. We can increase our confidence by restricting our ethical foundations to simple concepts which are not so simple as to be reductive. Suppose we wanted to say that the proposition that *abortion is bad* was fit for a foundational role in our theory. This would not be a viable choice because its truth is contingent on other beliefs. Imagine someone were to ask why abortion was bad, it seems reasonable that the person could explain that fetuses are conscious, abortion kills the fetus, killing conscious beings is bad, therefore *abortion is bad*. Through this explanation we can see that this proposition is loaded with other empirical concepts. Even worse it is not only contingent on these empirical factors, but these factors are still currently very controversial. To plant our foundational flag here would place us on phenomenally uncertain ground. Also notice that the actual foundational intuition that

[30] Huemer, 99.

"colors" in the evaluative *abortion is bad* proposition is **killing conscious creatures is bad**. Therefore, it is this concept which is a better fit for a foundational role in our theory.

Another reason we would want to use the simplest moral foundations is because of the way in which empirical disagreement can lead to confusions of moral disagreement. Consider the case of human sacrifice performed by the Aztecs.[31] What seems like a moral catastrophe can quickly become reasonable once we share their empirical beliefs. If we genuinely believed that without a human sacrifice to the proper god, the sun would not rise again, it becomes obvious that the amount of suffering from one death becomes trivial to the widespread extinction of humanity. Therefore, through the eyes of the Aztecs we can see why they believed what they were doing was an immensely good moral act. It was not that they did not share our fundamental intuitions like life is valuable and pain is bad, but it was their different non-moral beliefs that were likely the source of confusion. Examples like these demonstrate why if we do believe we have an ethical intuition fit for foundations, we should be sure there are no implicit controversial premises present that will place our theory on contingent and unstable ground. Formally, this restriction is noted in our definition of intuition: it must be an intellectual appearance of seeming which does not depend on inference from other beliefs. If we heed these warnings and leave the most basic intuitive concepts as our foundation, our chances of illusion will decrease.

With a grasp on what should qualify for our justified foundational ethical intuitions, we can see that the various foundations can work as a fund of moral properties that evaluatively color in our practical situations. We can imagine these foundations as tags which we discover that describe situation in terms of its goodness or badness. We saw from back from our debunkers, there was a real drive to reduce to just one morally salient property that suffering is bad. However, we saw that the utilitarian ethical intuition was not uniquely justified. We now can see that the intuition that anchored utilitarianism, namely that enjoyment is better than suffering is a great candidate for one of our foundational moral intuitions. It is simple and does not depend on any other beliefs. But what about those non-consequentialist intuitions we saw earlier, how can we state those? How can we search for and document these other foundational intuitive axioms? To address this, we will refer to W.D. Ross' work on what he calls: Prima Facie Moral Duty.

5. **Rossian Moral Pluralism and Prima Facie Moral Duty**

In *The Right and the Good*, Ross uses ethical intuitions to generate a fund of prima facie

[31] Huemer, 129.

moral principles like we sketched out above. Ross comes to establish seven moral principles through this process: duties of: fidelity, reparation, gratitude, justice, beneficence, self-improvement, and non-maleficence.[32] Now, although these prima facie moral duties are regarded as self-evident, Ross notes that they are not necessarily evident from the beginning of our lives. It is only when we have reached sufficient mental maturity capable of providing enough attention to a proposition that it becomes evident without any need for proof or evidence beyond itself.[33] Like foundational mathematical axioms, we discover these prima facie moral duties through experience. 2 + 2 = 4 can become self-evident once you see that if you have two apples and you have another two then together you have four apples. However, it is not this experience by itself that establishes the knowledge of 2 + 2 = 4, but it is the necessary addition of sufficient reflection on the matter. Ross uses reflection to represent the act of serious mental consideration and thought on a particular experience. This necessity of reflection can explain why it is very well possible that a person can spend their whole life experiencing the addition of 2 apples with another 2 apples and its result in 4, but never come to know about the underlying truth of the general abstract law of addition and how it can theoretically explain why the apples behave the way they do. Moral knowledge works similarly. When you are born you quickly find out pain is bad, not by some pure a priori deduction, but that you have a painful experience then *feel* and *see* its undesirability. Unlike the very primitive ethical intuition that pain is bad, some of our other prima facie moral duties present themselves in more complex social interactions. It is later life experiences, like more complicated math proofs, which encourage your reflection toward seeing the other prima facie moral duties. For example, when you have developed the intellectual capacity for careful reflection and are engaged with another person and make a promise you will then be capable of apprehending the moral duty of fidelity. It is then from particular instances that we can come by reflection to apprehend a general prima facie duty.[34]

This process of moral knowledge acquisition is complex and deserves a greater degree of description. We have seen that experience seems to be a necessary part of this process. If we never came to know what a promise was or been engaged with one, it seems strange to say that we would come to know that there is a moral duty to keep our promises or even that promises existed. However, just because we generate this intuitive moral insight based on an experience does not mean that it corresponds directly and only to that experience. For example, say I had promised to give your keys

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[32] Ross explains that this list of prima facie duties as a starting suggestion. It is not a definitive or complete list of duties. We will continue forward with it as an outline of a pluralist system more generally to do further work.

[33] Ross, *The Right and The Good*, 29.

[34] Ross, *The Right and The Good*, 27.

back when you returned from vacation, and I reflected on this interaction. The moral insight is not that in this and only this situation I am going to be morally obligated to return the keys. What we come to know is more general and not reducible to that one situation. The more abstract knowledge we see is that we have a prima facie duty to keep our promises. Notice the work that prima facie can do for us here. It is not that we come to some knowledge that we should *always* keep to this principle, but rather we have seen that where promises are involved, we will have a moral reason to act in a certain way. This shows how the moral knowledge generated from this reflection really is general, prima facie and irreducible. These quotes from Immanuel Kant and Bertrand Russell capture the source complexities of how this type of cognition may occur:

> But although all our cognition commences with experience, yet it does not on all that account arise from experience. [35]

Although the experience can direct us where to look, what we come to discover does not get its reality from the particular non-moral properties of the experience. With a grasp on how these intuitive moral concepts can correspond with moral knowledge, we will consider the next tenant of our pluralist moral theory: how can such a theory prescribe normative recommendations?

Applying Prima Facie Moral Duties:

With a list of the relevant moral duties comes the unique challenge for pluralists: how do we reconcile these often-countervailing duties? To illustrate, an analogy to physics is often applied.[36] In physics we calculate the net force on an object by breaking down and adding the composite forces. A box resting on a table experiences the force of gravity pull downward, but also an equal and opposite normal force from the table. This produces a net force of zero, so the box remains in place. The analogy rests on the idea that gravity and the normal force both necessarily exist in physical systems and when applied can "cancel out" without casting concern about their necessity. Like moral actions, we can envision a situation and analyze it with prima facie duties that push our assessment towards rightness or wrongness. For example, imagine you made a promise to a friend that you will be at their birthday party. On your way over you realize that you can help assist someone in need, but to do so will make you unable to attend the party, breaking your promise. We can analyze the circumstances pluralistically to find which act is right. We know that our duty to fidelity will be a force applied in favor of going to the party, keeping our promise. Our duty of beneficence may act against going

[35] Kant, Immanuel. Critique of Pure Reason. Paul Guyer Allen W. Wood. The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Immanuel Kant. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
[36] Huemer, 204: Ross, *The Right and The Good*, 28.

to the party if assisting the person in need will generate more good than the amount of good we would create from attending the party.[37] The analysis would continue for any other relevant moral duties. Once we have this established, we can reflect on the different moral 'forces' and determine the combined net force to discover which act is right. A unique advantage from pluralist theories is that this process preserves a fine-grained understanding of the right and wrong of components of an act. If we weigh the duties and decide that we should break the promise to assist the stranger, we can still understand that breaking the promise was a bad thing to do, but that this badness was outweighed. This consideration may manifest itself as an acknowledgement of a duty to our friend to repair the harm caused from our infidelity. This is unlike some crude forms of utilitarianism which may unabashedly prescribe monstrous actions as right without a clear and explicit acknowledgement of the innate bad that is associated with certain acts. In the pluralist system, killing someone will always be viewed as a reason against an act from the duty of non-maleficence, but even this duty may be outweighed in circumstances where the other duties strongly prescribe us to kill.

A prominent reply to this system, and against the physics analogy more generally, is a concern around how we are to determine the weights of the different prima facie moral duties. On the birthday party example, how can we decide how much good we would need to provide the stranger for it to outweigh the wrongness of breaking a promise? It may be easy to establish the relevant duties and their direction, but how do we decide the magnitudes of these various moral forces? Ross gives some general insight into how to move forward with this weighing process. He observes that the duty of non-maleficence may be prima facie more binding than other duties as we in general do not consider it justifiable to kill one person to keep another alive.[38] He also borrows the concepts of perfect and imperfect obligations from Kant as another way to possibly establish a supremacy of some moral duties over others.[39] These ways of distinguishing moral duties are just general pro tanto ways to apply them, there are no fixed rules in this weighing process. I will refer to this concern as:

> **The Problem of Pluralism:** If there are multiple moral properties that merit our consideration, how should we weigh the competing influence of the different properties?

Ross addresses this concern but responds that the process of weighing different prima facie moral duties should be performed with a full and honest reflection of the act and

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[37] The duty of beneficence may be present in both options for action. We generate good by being a positive presence to those at the party and by helping the person in need.

[38] Ross, *The Right and The Good*, 22.

[39] Ross, *The Right and The Good*, 18.

all its circumstances. It may be fallible and challenging to get the weights right for each of the morally relevant obligations, but it is the only guide we have to know right acts from wrong ones.[40] This recognition of fallibility admits defeat to some extent about how perfect our moral system will ever be. If weighing is an imperfect process, then our system will be imperfectly applied often. Rather than just accepting this concern, I suppose that there may be a way to at least improve our weighing process.

In the discussion we have seen it became evident that our best prospect for weighing would not be a fixed rule, but a more intuitive weighing endeavor. This characterization implies a concept of the potential for moral education. If we acknowledge that there is an art to weighing the different moral obligations, then like virtue ethicists, to begin to know the correct weights for our moral obligations in different scenarios is a skill which we develop from our moral experience. As we become better moral decision makers, we begin to better track relevant obligations and how particular circumstances weigh on the scenario. Suppose we decided to help the person in need, breaking our promise. We may learn that the breaking of a promise caused significant harm and damage to our relationship with our friend. This provides us with a piece of wisdom which in the future will advise us to place more weight on the duty of fidelity. As one lives their life as a moral agent, they will have no choice but to accumulate moral experiences which can fine-tune their moral decision-making process in the future. To gain moral education, we require not only these experiences but also considerable reflection on the experiences to access the moral wisdom to be better moral weighers in the future. Therefore, if we want to curb **The Problem of Pluralism,** we are going to need a way to generate moral wisdom more quickly. This is where I believe Thought Experiments can be reimagined: to facilitate this generative process.

6. **Thought Experiments as Moral Experience**

If we proceed with the pluralism we have developed, we have seen that experience and reflection will be crucial for generating moral knowledge and becoming good moral decision makers. We saw that to know each prima facie moral duty required at least some experience which when coupled with reflection provided the self-evidence needed to accept it. Then with the pluralism of duties established, we need more experience and reflection to learn how to weigh these competing obligations. To facilitate these necessary experiences are where I believe our use of thought experiments should be directed in ethics. Thought experiments, if properly stipulated, can function to generate reflective moral experiences. Consider two of the possible routes to moral knowledge:

[40] Ross, *The Right and The Good*, 42

1. I will try to explain to you why we ought to keep our promises, by using language to state the reasons why you should think it is good to do so.

2. I propose to you a thought experiment which directly involves promise making. This thought experiment strives to stimulate a mental experience of the moral duty we are discussing.

By imagination we picture and simulate the described experience. This experience we imagine allows for an intuitive and reflective grasp through a process of self-discovery and self-evidence which more closely aligns with reasons why a moral duty is true. This experiential nature can be the difference between merely following a line of reasoning toward an *understanding* and *feeling* the self-evidence of the ethical intuition. This distinction is beneficial because of the unique type of knowledge those ethical intuitions are. Since they are not based on a chain of reasoning and are accepted as initial presumptions you cannot fully grasp their truth without this *feeling* / *seeing* generated from experience. This shows how thought experiments can help us learn about morality and discover prima facie moral duties.

Another, and perhaps more important function, for thought experiments is how they can provide us with the moral experiences to become better moral weighers of the prima facie moral duties, curbing **The Problem of Pluralism**. As before, thought experiments strive to place the hearer in a situation to generate real experiences. If I want a thought experiment to function as a moral experience which will provide me with moral wisdom for the real world, it will need to register in our minds as realistic and as uncontroversial as possible. Therefore, this is where the unfamiliarity concerns elucidated from Sauer are so important. If I try to explain the unfamiliar Footbridge case to you, we saw that this thought experiment can create experiential confusion. This confusion can complicate a though experiment's goal by not successfully recreating the proper environment for the hearer. Also, any imaginatively resistant concepts in the thought experiment can halt the ability to imagine and anticipate experience accurately. Therefore, if we have familiarity concerns, then any of the lessons which are meant to be taken from the thought experiment will either be confused or fruitless. An example of an exemplary thought experiment which does stimulate a reflective moral experience is Peter Singer's Shallow Pond Dilemma.[41]

Shallow Pond Dilemma: Imagine you are walking by a shallow pond when you suddenly spot a child drowning. The pond is shallow enough that you can safely enter and rescue the child. You are wearing an expensive suit which will be

[41] Singer, Peter. "Famine, Affluence, and Morality." Philosophy & Public Affairs 1, no. 3 (1972): 229–43.

ruined if you enter the water. Will you act to save the child?

If you do decide to save the child at cost to your expensive suit, what does this choice say about the weights of human life and material goods? Should the distance from the child in need matter in our consideration?

If we applied Sauer's unfamiliarity criteria, we would see that this thought experiment is sufficiently familiar. It is ecologically valid because of its relatively normal circumstances. There really are not any stipulations to the environment that feel unfamiliar. It is not novel since we know circumstances where people need to save a drowning person occur. This public awareness of drowning events curbs our misunderstanding or confusion that we might have if we had not been aware of drowning. There are no premises which suppose any imaginatively resistant concepts. We feel as though imagining the circumstances in the shallow pond comes easily and that this imagination feels amendable to a genuine intuition. It avoids specificity concerns because in this situation any stipulated particulars about the child or slight changes to circumstances do not register to us as morally relevant. Lastly, none of the assertions of certainty strike one as unbelievable or controversial. The description of scene in the thought experiment can, if thoughtfully considered, manifest an experience within the hearer. This experience can provide us with **particular moral wisdom**. By experiencing a dilemma ahead of time, we can pre-process the relevant moral properties and their countervailing weights. This provides us with confidence that if faced with this situation we will act in accord with our considered moral view. The last part of the thought experiment puts forth a call to reflect and understand what **general moral wisdom** we can extract from our particular judgment in the case. Singer famously proposes this thought experiment to argue that distance should not be a morally relevant property in our moral decision-making process. We also see that the general wisdom that the weight of human life far outweighs our consideration for material goods. Whether or not we decide to completely agree with Singer's motivation, we can be struck by the quality of the experience that his thought experiment generates. All together the reflection on this experience may work to shift our weights toward more utilitarian considerations in future real-world moral decisions. Thought experiments which encourage this type of self-discovery are those which we need more of if we want to become better and more equipped moral decision makers. To generalize this process, I propose that if we want normatively significant Thought Experiments we should adhere to the following criteria:

Familiar: the situation should simulate real experiences to generate genuine intuitions.

Encourage Reflection: grasp the general wisdom that we can come to know from

our understanding of particular cases.

Repeat and Multiply: generate these moral insights within a variety of cases and properties.

This contrasts with the debunkers who used thought experiments to undermine our confidence in large categories intuitions. Thought experiments can allow us to generate crucial moral insight synthetically and without the need of genuinely facing the shallow pond in real life to know its lessons. When we are faced with the shallow pond and any situations like it, we will be better prepared and equipped with training to act in a reflective and consistent manner.

7. **Conclusion**

Normative ethical theories which only have one foundational principle have become dominant in the field of ethics. These systems inevitably have issues when their theoretical arguments face practical situations. They can prescribe certain moral acts which intuitively feel wrong. When faced with these divergences from our common-sense, theorists are left with the choice to either reconsider their theoretical reasoning or discount the intuition and situation which presented the concern. Peter Singer and Joshua Greene both put forward arguments that attempt to explain away the concern by supposing that non-consequentialist intuitions are invalid. They then make the greater leap that in general non-consequentialist intuitions are biased out-growths from evolution which should be dismissed without giving them any normative significance. Both of their arguments failed to debunk these counter-intuitions. Peter Singer's argument failed to establish a significant difference in the epistemic justification between practical and theoretical intuitions. Joshua Greene's controversially assumed which situational properties were morally relevant and thus his arguments using fMRI scans were unsuccessful. Seeing the failure in these attempts to hold one type of intuition without another, we decided to move forward accepting both types. This led to our development of a pluralistic intuitive moral theory. I showed that using arguments from Huemer, we can epistemically justify multiple genuine ethical intuitions as a source of foundational knowledge. We then theorized a possibility to form a fund of foundational ethical intuitions to lay at the base of our normative theory. From W.D. Ross' work in *The Right and the Good*, we had the opportunity to consider a robust pluralistic system that aligned with our fund theory. One challenge we considered was **The Problem of Pluralism** that when we have plural ethical intuitions, we somehow need to weigh their competing concerns. Ross gave us general principles to resolve this but maintained that this weighing process would remain complicated and fallible. We then reconsidered how to use thought experiments in ethics to help us

reduce these fallibility concerns. Using arguments from Sauer we found areas which thought experiments can fail to accurately represent the moral dilemmas they strive to present. I then proposed that by attending to Sauer's critiques of unfamiliar thought experiments, we can make use of thought experiments as reflective moral experiences. This allows them to function as a key component of our moral education to become better pluralistic weighers in both our consistency and acuity.

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