

Selective Debunking Arguments, Folk Psychology, and Empirical Moral Psychology

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Some framing questions

Reflecting on the significance of his early research on the neuropsychology of moral judgment, Joshua Greene (2007) raises an important and increasingly pressing kind of question: “Where does one draw the line between correcting the nearsightedness of human moral nature and obliterating it completely?” and goes on to more directly wonder “How far can the empirical debunking of human moral nature go?” (p. 76). The gist of such questions can be fleshed out in several ways; I attempt to distinguish different approaches in the latter half of this chapter, and situate my own in the resulting landscape. The approach I favor foregrounds the relationship between empirical cognitive science and morality,¹ in order to more crisply express certain kinds of question. For example: Are their constraints on human morality that make it inflexible or resistant to transformation in certain ways? If so, what are those constraints, what imposes them, and why do they make morality rigid in whatever way they do? Are those constraints only knowable a priori, perhaps via conceptual analysis or reflection on the essence of morality, or can cognitive science help to discover them, perhaps by revealing innate features of our moral psychology? On the other hand it could be the case that human morality is relatively unconstrained, and thus fairly malleable. Is it possible—do we have it within ourselves—to transcend the types of moral judgments that are so naturally made by minds like ours? Can cognitive science show us how to most effectively do so?

One virtue of this way of framing the issues is that it invites us to consider an analogy between moral theorizing and scientific theorizing and the relationship

each bears to its commonsensical starting place, with an eye toward where that analogy might break down. For instance, Noam Chomsky suggests that when we are doing science, theorizing can and should transcend the folk intuitions it begins with, and that departure or movement away from the common-sense concepts in which early investigation is typically couched is relatively unrestricted. For instance, while discussing scientific inquiries into the mind, and the relationship between the categories of folk psychology and those that will be taken up by cognitive science as it proceeds, he remarks:

These are serious inquiries, not to be undertaken casually; our intuitions about them provide some evidence, but nothing more than that. Furthermore, whatever may be learned about folk science will have no relevance to the pursuit of naturalistic inquiry into the topics that folk science addresses in its own way.

(Chomsky 1995, p. 14)

Indeed, he even suggests that in the practice of science, leaving the vernacular behind is indicative of advance, improvement—theoretic *progress*: “As the disciplines progress, they depart still further from the common sense and ordinary language origins of inquiry” (1995, pp. 25–6; for more recent comments in a similar vein, see Chomsky 2009).

K. Anthony Appiah appears to agree with Chomsky on this picture, at least as it applies to, say, the increasingly tenuous relationship between folk physics and contemporary physical theories. However, he takes the view that scientific theorizing is importantly *different* from moral theorizing on this score, that is, with respect to how tightly each is tethered to the intuitive categories of the folk. In his 2007 Presidential address to the *American Philosophical Association*, Appiah suggests there are, in fact, limits on the extent to which morality can be detached from common-sense psychology, or significantly transformed by advances in cognitive science. Furthermore, he suggests that the presence of such limits in the moral case, and their absence in the scientific, both stem from a difference in the roles that moral and scientific theories play in human lives, and the different kinds of connections each type of theory needs to bear to our intuitive understanding to effectively play its part:

It’s common to analogize folk psychology with folk physics. But, of course, professional physicists can happily leave folk physics far behind as they tinker with their Calabi-Yau Manifolds and Gromov-Witten invariants.

By contrast, moral psychology, however reflective, can't be dissociated from our moral sentiments, because it's basic to how we make sense of one another and ourselves. In a deliberately awkward formulation of Bernard Williams's, moral thought and experience "must primarily involve grasping the world in such a way that one can, as a particular human being, live in it."

(Appiah 2007, p. 15)

Put this way, a core question that emerges is whether morality and moral theory is special or distinctive in its relation to empirical psychology and other natural sciences—roughly, whether something about human *moral* nature makes it more or less debunkable than other aspects of human nature, or whether something about *moral* judgment makes it more or less resistant to transformation than other types of judgment.

These are fascinating and timely topics; they are also difficult ones. Rather than set out an overarching view or take a stand on the debunking of morality *tout court*, in what follows I'll explore a divide and conquer strategy. First, I will briefly sketch a debunking argument that, instead of targeting all of morality or human moral nature, has a more narrow focus—namely, the intuitive moral authority of disgust. The argument concludes that as vivid and compelling as they can be while one is in their grip, feelings of disgust should be granted no power to justify moral judgments. Importantly, the argument is grounded in empirical advances concerning the character of the emotion itself. Next, I will step back and consider the argument's general form. I then point to arguments that others have made that seem to share this form and selective focus, and comment on what such arguments do and do not presuppose. Finally, I locate the selective strategy with respect to approaches to debunking morality and end by reflecting on what the entire line of thought implies about Greene's question and Appiah's claim.

Disgust and moral justification

Consider some of the following contentious, "yuck-relevant" issues: abortion, nipple piercing, same-sex marriage, circumcision (either female or male), human cloning, stem cell research, euthanasia, pornography. Also imagine that your response to one of those activities or social practices is: "yuck!"

You find it simply, but unequivocally, revolting and repulsive, or you just find yourself slightly disgusted by it. What follows from that yuck reaction, from the point of view of morality? Do feelings of disgust, in and of themselves, provide good enough reason to think the practice is morally wrong or problematic?

Recently, such issues have come to the fore in normative and applied ethics, centering on the question of what role the emotion of disgust should play in morality, broadly construed: whether or not disgust should influence our considered moral judgments; if so, how feelings of disgust should be accounted for in various ethical evaluations, deliberations, and decisions; what sort of weight, import, or credit should be assigned to such feelings; and how our legal system and other institutions should best deal with the emotion (see Kelly and Morar manuscript for full references).

Elsewhere (Kelly 2011) I have fleshed out a debunking argument designed to undermine confidence in the normative force that feelings of disgust can seem to have in moral cognition. The resulting position, which I call *disgust skepticism*, holds that: feelings of disgust have no moral authority; that explicit appeals to disgust, while often rhetorically effective, are morally empty; that the emotion should not be granted any justificatory value; and that we should aspire to eliminate its influence on morality, moral deliberation, and institutional operation to the extent that we can. Rather than recapitulate the argument in full, I will here mention some of its most relevant properties.

First, while the argument has a normative thrust concerning the role that feelings of disgust should place in moral justification, it is firmly rooted in a descriptive and explanatory account of the nature of the emotion itself. It is worth noting that my argument shares this structural feature with arguments that others have made concerning the moral significance of disgust. All interested parties, both skeptics (Nussbaum 2004a, 2004b) and advocates (Kass 1997, 2002; Kahan 1998, 1999), base their normative conclusions on descriptive claims concerning the character of the emotion. On this score, a key advantage I claim over those competing arguments is that my account of disgust is superior to its competitors: it is more detailed, more evolutionarily plausible, and better able to explain the wealth of empirical data recently discovered by moral psychologists.

The two core claims of what I call the E&C view are the Entanglement thesis and the Co-opt thesis. The first holds that at the heart of the psychological disgust system are two distinguishable but functionally integrated mechanisms, one that initially evolved to protect the gastrointestinal system from poisons and other harmful food, and another that initially evolved to protect the entire organism from infectious diseases and other forms of parasites. Appeal to the operation of these two mechanisms and their associated adaptive problems can explain much of the fine-grained structure of the disgust response, its intrinsic sensitivity to perceivable cues associated with poisons and parasites, its propensity to err in the direction of false positives (rather than false negatives), and its malleability and responsiveness to social influence, which can result in variation in what triggers disgust from one group of people to the next. The second core claim, the Co-opt thesis, holds that this malleability and responsiveness to social influence was exploited by evolution, as disgust was recruited to perform auxiliary functions having nothing to do with poisons or parasites, infusing certain social norms and group boundaries with a disgust-based emotional valence. In doing so, disgust did not lose its primary functions or those properties clearly selected to allow it to perform those functions well. Rather, it retained those functions and properties, and simply brought them to bear on the auxiliary functions associated with norms and group membership (Kelly 2011, 2013).

In addition to these features, the argument in favor of disgust skepticism appeals to other facts about the emotion and key elements of the picture provided by the E&C view. One is that disgust has an intrinsic negative valence, which can manifest subjectively as a kind of nonverbal authority. Intense episodes of disgust obviously have a powerful and vivid phenomenology, but even less flagrant instances can bias judgments that they influence toward negativity and harshness. However, the mere activation of disgust, in and of itself, is not even a vaguely reliable indicator of moral wrongness. The emotion remains overly sensitive to cues related to its primary functions of protecting against poisons and parasite, which results in many false positives even in those domains. There is no reason to think the situation improves when disgust operates in the sociomoral domain. Indeed, there is reason to think that disgust renders those in its grip less sensitive to the agency and intentions of others, and can make it easier to dehumanize them.

Moreover, triggers of disgust exhibit considerable variation from person to person and from culture to culture. This variation is found in types of cuisine that are considered edible or disgusting, but more importantly in the types of norms with which disgust becomes involved, as well as the group boundaries and markers to which it is sensitive (also see Henrich et al. 2010). Hence, when there is disagreement about the moral status of a norm, the practice it regulates, or the type of people who engage in that practice, the fact that disputants on one side of the debate denounce and feel disgust at the norm or practice, while the disputants on the other side of the debate feel no disgust and see nothing wrong with the norm or practice, may be an interesting psychological fact. But it is a psychological fact that holds no significance for the question of who is correct, or whose assessment of the moral status of the norm or practice is better justified.

It is worth nothing that there will be an evolutionary story to tell about many, if not most, of the psychological mechanisms that loom large in human moral psychology. I do not hold that *every* evolutionary explanation is intrinsically debunking, or that the mere existence of an evolutionary account of some psychological mechanism should by itself throw suspicion on it, or lead us to doubt that it has any role to play in moral justification. However, I do hold that debunking strategies can be more selective, and that the details of the *specific* evolutionary story provided by the E&C view should undermine confidence in the moral significance of feelings of disgust. For, the E&C view renders most properties of the disgust system understandable, and it also allows us to see that some of the properties that are *virtues* when disgust is performing its primary functions become *vices* when disgust performs the social and morally oriented auxiliary functions. A good example is provided by the automatically activated concerns about contamination: they straightforwardly help avoid contagious diseases, but they are mismatched to the social domain, where they drive irrational worries about moral taint and spiritual pollution. The distinction between primary and auxiliary functions provided by the evolutionarily informed E&C view shows that aspects of disgust that are features in one domain are bugs in another. Hence my skepticism about the value of disgust to specifically *moral* justification.²

I take it that the inference “it’s disgusting, therefore it’s immoral” has *prima facie* intuitive force for many people, but whether or not the inference is a

component of folk morality and human moral nature is ultimately an empirical one. Initial evidence suggests that the inference is common among the folk, at least in some cultures, and for some segments of the population (Haidt et al. 1993; Haidt et al. 1997; Nichols 2002, 2004; c.f. Cova and Ravat 2008). Also note that my argument for disgust skepticism is designed to show that whatever the empirical facts about who tends to make that inference, or how compelling they find it, it is a bad one. It *should not* be accepted by anyone, and those who make it are making a *mistake* (c.f. Haidt 2012). Of course, to say that this kind of argument is unsound is not to say that its conclusion will always be false, or that moral judgments accompanied by disgust are never justified. Rather, some disgust involving judgments may be justified while others are not. My claim is that no moral judgments are justified *by* disgust; the involvement of this emotion in a judgment is just irrelevant to whether and how the judgment is justified.³

The shape of the argument: Selective debunking

Now that my argument against the normative value of the yuck factor has been sketched, recall the framing questions posed at the beginning of the chapter about the relationship between morality, on the one hand, and a cognitive scientific understanding of the mind that may depart from intuition and folk psychology as it increases in sophistication, on the other. The issue is not always approached this way. Many conversations have explored related but different questions, and they have typically done so at a higher level of generality: morality and all moral judgments (or claims) are grouped together, and arguments are made that they are either all vulnerable to some sweeping form of debunking, or none of them are (Mackie 1977; Blackburn 1988; Joyce 2007; c.f. Ayer 1936; also see Street 2006; Greene 2013).⁴ While I have doubts about the viability of this kind of global debunking, I have just advanced what can be thought of as a *selective* debunking argument against the relevance of one circumscribed set of considerations, namely feelings of disgust, to moral justification.⁵ Here I will spell out the line of reasoning, first expressing it in condensed form before going on to elaborate and comment on different aspects of the premises and conclusion.

The first premise of my main argument can be expressed in the form of a conditional:

1. If some particular psychological mechanism can be shown to be problematic in a relevant way, and the intuitions or judgments influenced by that psychological mechanism can be identified, then we should disregard, discount, or discredit those intuitions and be suspicious of the judgments that they influence, to the extent that we can.

Then the form of that argument can be understood as a *modus ponens*:

1. If some particular psychological mechanism can be shown to be problematic in a relevant way, and the intuitions or judgments influenced by that psychological mechanism can be identified, then we should disregard, discount, or discredit those intuitions and be suspicious of the judgments that they influence, to the extent that we can.
2. Disgust is problematic in a relevant way (the E&C view of disgust), and the intuitions and judgments influence by disgust can be identified (yuck-relevant issues).
3. Therefore, we should disregard, discount, or discredit those intuitions and be suspicious of the judgments that they influence, to the extent that we can (disgust skepticism).

Though it is schematic, I find the general line of thought expressed in the first premise compelling, and also find this way of framing it illuminating for a number of reasons. First, formulating the conditional premise this way shows that its subject matter will be a specific psychological mechanism, but it allows the identity and details of the psychological mechanism to vary from one instantiation of the argument schema to the next. Moreover, expressing the first premise like this makes clear that it says nothing specifically about *morality*, let alone any particular moral theory, be it utilitarian, deontological, or otherwise (c.f. Singer 2005; Greene 2007). Nor, for that matter, does it even say anything specific about emotions or sentiments, as opposed to less affective, more coldly cognitive types of psychological mechanisms (c.f. D'Arms and Jacobson 2000, 2003).

Second, the argument assumes a picture of the structure of the human mind that is now familiar in various forms from empirical work in psychology.

Whatever their differences in emphasis and preferred terminology, many approaches share a vision that sees the mind as comprised of many distinct, dissociable, semi-autonomous psychological mechanisms, whose different operational principles and evolutionary histories can be (and are being) discovered by cognitive scientists.⁶ This point is also relevant to separating out and assessing the prospects of global debunking strategies as compared to selective debunking strategies. Since different psychological mechanisms may turn out to be more or less problematic, it also suggests that individual selective debunking arguments will be more or less convincing depending on the details of the particular psychological mechanism they invoke.

Put another way, this picture of the mind implies that not all intuitions are created equal. In and of itself, this claim should not be anything controversial; most theorists at least tacitly accept the idea that not all intuitions are of equal value, and that in the course of theory construction some will have to be rejected or abandoned. So there is nothing revolutionary, or even very innovative, in the ruling out of some subset of intuitions. What may be novel about this line of argument is its method of identifying those intuitions that should be cast aside, and also perhaps the rationale it provides for doing so. That rationale looks to the sciences of the mind for guidance, rather than confining itself to a priori principles or general considerations of consistency and coherence.⁷ Different intuitions can be produced by different psychological mechanisms, and it is in virtue of this that a more sophisticated, empirically informed understanding of the mind and its component parts can reveal some intuitions to be of less value than others.⁸

A final reason I prefer this formulation is that it makes explicit that “problematic” is probably both the most crucial and most slippery of the notions in play. I do think that the types of considerations I have raised about disgust show it is indeed “problematic” in a relevant way. At this point, though, I do not know how to unpack that turn of phrase and remove the scare quotes. Indeed, I suspect no general recipe will be forthcoming, and that instead, each psychological mechanism and attempted selective debunk will need to be assessed on a case-by-case basis, and according to its own unique details. That said, I do think that there are some clear, perhaps paradigmatic examples that can be pointed to, in which mechanisms have been revealed as “problematic.”

For example, the psychological mechanisms that underlie vision are problematic in certain circumstances (or in selective domains) because they

are notoriously susceptible to certain kinds of perceptual illusions. Even though the two lines in the Muller-Lyer illusion seem (to many of us) like they are the same length, we should disregard that impression, despite whatever intuitive grip it might have on us. Another example is provided by Gil Harman in his discussion of “folk physics” intuitions:

Ordinary untrained physical intuitions are often in error. For example, ordinary people expect that something dropped from a moving vehicle or airplane will fall straight down to the point on earth directly underneath the place from which it was released. In fact, the dropped object will fall in a parabolic arc in the direction of the movement of the vehicle or airplane from which it was dropped. This means, among other things, that bombardiers need to be trained to go against their own physical intuitions.

(Harman 1999, p. 315)

Indeed, Harman uses this as an example to soften up his reader for the main claim he makes in the paper, which is, roughly, that folk psychology consistently makes a *fundamental attribution error* about the determinants of people’s behavior, and that virtue ethical theories that seem to enshrine that error in the character trait-based moral psychology they advance are flawed on empirical grounds.⁹ Cast in my terminology, Harman is offering a debunking argument that selectively targets a specific component of folk psychology (rather than the kind of global attack on the whole conceptual framework associated with, e.g., Churchland 1981). Harman even offers an account of the psychological mechanisms that drive the fundamental attribution error, and uses it to advance his argument against those select intuitions that lead us¹⁰ to overestimate the extent to which people’s behavior is driven by internal character traits, and overlook the strong (and empirically documented) influence of external cues and situational factors.

Similarly, current empirical work has shown how the psychological mechanisms underlying racial cognition can lead people to naturally, intuitively ascribe some deep and evaluatively laden racial “essence” to individuals based on their observable phenotypic characteristics like skin color or hair type. Such discoveries about the operational principles and evolutionary history of those psychological mechanisms look to be important to contemporary discussions about the nature of race itself, but also the pragmatics of racial classification. A society might decide, in light of its considered goals about

how to deal with racial categories and biases, and also in light of the mounting facts (genetic, biological, social, historical, etc.) about race and the source of racial differences, that its members should aspire to overcome the influence of the psychological mechanisms underlying racial cognition, and disregard the intuitions that issue from them. Indeed, empirical work on the character of those psychological mechanisms will likely point the way to the most effective methods of controlling their influence (see Kelly et al. 2010a, 2010b for discussion).¹¹

The upshot of these examples is that arguments that have a form similar to the one I have made about disgust are not uncommon. However, there does not appear to be a single monolith or univocal notion of “problematic” that they all have in common, suggesting that there is a variety of ways in which psychological mechanisms and the intuitions that issue from them can be found to be problematic. As nice as it would be to have a single, all-purpose, or universally applicable criterion to apply to every psychological mechanism, no such clean, algorithmic test is yet in the offing, and may never be. This does not render the general argumentative strategy specious, though. Rather, it pushes us to look at and assess each instance of the argument type on a case-by-case basis, and tend to the details of the individual psychological mechanisms to which it appeals.¹²

Conclusion

One might find reason for optimism in the themes of malleability and variation that run throughout some of the above examples, including my main example of disgust. Perhaps psychological mechanisms that are problematic in some people are unproblematic in others, suggesting that such mechanisms are plastic enough to be “fixable.” This is an interesting possibility, to be sure. However, it leaves untouched the question of what being fixed amounts to, and which mechanisms are “properly tuned” and which are not. One way to understand my point about justification is to say that in cases of disagreement about this kind of issue, members on one side of the debate cannot appeal to their own calibrated psychological mechanisms or the intuitions that issue from them to justify their position without begging the very question being

raised. Even once (or if) the issue of what proper tuning amounts to is settled, the argument still goes through for those improperly tuned mechanisms, and I maintain that we should continue to be on guard against their influence on judgment and action.

Finally, it is also likely that different psychological mechanisms will be malleable to different extents, and in different ways. This provides more support for the divide-and-conquer strategy I advocate. Together, I think these considerations raise problems for familiar globally oriented approaches that seek to draw more encompassing conclusions in one fell swoop. I began this chapter with a passage from K. Anthony Appiah suggesting that human moral nature, morality, and moral psychology will be resistant to transformative influences originating in advances in the sciences of the mind, and with some questions raised by Joshua Greene about how far the empirical debunking of human moral nature can go. I will end not by addressing these head on, but by pointing out that in asking questions and making claims about morality as a single phenomenon and moral psychology as a uniform whole, they rely on an assumption that I think we have good reason to doubt. Rather, the argument of this chapter shows that advances in cognitive science can indeed have a transformative effect on how we think about selective aspects of morality, and how we should make sense of ourselves and some of our own moral impulses. Perhaps more importantly, the empirical work is also revealing how a more piecemeal approach is required if we are to draw any defensible normative conclusions from it. The need for a more selective focus opens up new ways to think about whether and which components of morality might be debunked by, transformed by, or even just informed and guided by our growing empirical understanding of our own moral psychology.

Notes

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- 1 A similar concern animates much of Daniel Dennett's early work on the relationship between cognitive science and propositional attitude psychology as well (see especially 1978, 1987).

- 2 In arguing that the role of disgust in the moral domain should be minimized, I realize that I am recommending that we should refrain from using what could be a useful heuristic and powerful motivation tool. However, given the risks attached to this particular emotion, namely its hair trigger sensitivity to cues that are *prima facie* irrelevant to morality and its susceptibility to false positives, together with its propensity to dehumanize its object, I think the costs outweigh the benefits.
- 3 One might imagine an individual with a “perfectly tuned” sense of disgust, whose psychological makeup is such that she feels revulsion at all and only those norms, actions, and practices that are genuinely morally wrong. My position is not undermined by this possibility. Even though, *ex hypothesi*, all of her judgments about those norms, action, and practices are justified, it remains open for me to claim that it is not the attendant feelings of disgust she feels that justify her judgments. Rather, the ultimate arbiter of justification is something *else*, above and beyond the mere presence of feelings of disgust, namely whatever standard is being appealed to in claiming that her sense of disgust is “perfectly tuned.”
- 4 I am particularly skeptical of the prospects of *empirically* motivated debunking of the entirety of morality or all moral judgments because (among other reasons) it remains unclear how to delimit the scope of such arguments. Separating the domain of morality and moral cognition off from the rest of non-moral or extra-moral cognition—identifying what moral judgments have in common that makes them *moral* judgments—has proven surprisingly difficult. Certainly, no consensus has emerged among practitioners in the growing field of empirical moral psychology. See Nado et al. 2009, Machery and Mallon 2010, Parkinson et al. 2011, Sinnott-Armstrong and Wheatley 2012.
- 5 The terminology “selective debunking” is taken from a series of thought-provoking posts on the topic by Tamler Sommers at The Splintered Mind blog (<http://schwitzsplinters.blogspot.com/2009/05/on-debunking-part-deux-selective.html>).
- 6 I mean to cast my net widely with the first premise, but recognize that the details and preferred jargon used to discuss the distinguishable psychological mechanisms vary in different literatures. For instance, see Fodor (1983, 2000), Pinker (1997), and Carruthers (2006) for discussion in terms of different psychological *modules*; Evans (2003), Stanovich (2005), and Frankish (2010) for discussion in terms of *dual process* theory, and Ekman (1992) and Griffith (1997) for discussion of *affect programs* and basic emotions.

- 7 See Rawls (1971) on the method of reflective equilibrium and also David Lewis's methodological contention that "to the victor go the spoils" (Lewis 1973). For some interesting recent discussion on the later, see (Eddon 2011; Ichikawa 2011).
- 8 This suggestion is very much in the spirit of some comments in Tim Maudlin's book *The Metaphysics in Physics*: "if we care about intuitions at all, we ought to care about the underlying mechanism that generates them" (Maudlin 2010, pp. 146–7). In the main text, I am working with a picture similar to that implied by Maudlin's comment, namely that one of the things psychological mechanisms that comprise the disgust system do is generate an intuition, namely the intuition that whatever triggered the system (or whatever the person thinks triggered the system, in cases of misattribution) is disgusting.
- 9 Also see Doris (2002) for a book-length defense of what has become known as the situationist critique of virtue ethics, and Alfano (2013) for a discussion of the current state of the debate.
- 10 That can lead those of us in Western cultures to commit the error, anyway. Members of Eastern Asian cultures are less prone to the mistake, suggesting it is not a universal component of folk psychology (Nisbett 2003). For another discussion about cultural variability and the fundamental attribution error, this time within the context of Confucian versus Aristotelian versions of virtue ethics, see Sarkissian (2010).
- 11 A final illuminating comparison, and one that might feel more apt to someone sympathetic to metaethical constructivism, is suggested by considering how intuition, on the one hand, and theoretical psychological knowledge, on the other, can best inform and guide not moral judgment but artistic creation. Reflecting on his project in *Sweet Anticipation: Music and the Psychology of Expectation*, cognitive musicologist David Huron offers some reasonable and intriguing comments:

My musical aim in this book is to provide musicians with a better understanding of some of the tools they use, not to tell musicians what goals they should pursue. If we want to expand artistic horizons and foster creativity there is no better approach than improving our understanding of how minds work. Many artists have assumed that such knowledge is unnecessary: it is *intuition* rather than *knowledge* that provides the boundaries for artistic creation. I agree that intuition is essential for artistic production: in the absence of knowledge, our only recourse is to follow our intuitions. But intuition is not the foundation for artistic freedom or creative innovation. Quite the contrary. The more

we rely on our intuitions, the more our behaviors may be dictated by unacknowledged social norms or biological predispositions. Intuition is, and has been, indispensable in the arts. But intuition needs to be supplemented by knowledge (or luck) if artists are to break through “counterintuitive” barriers into new realms of artistic expression.

(Huron 2006, pp. ix–x, italics in original)

- 12 Another metaethical view that bears intriguing similarities to the one suggested by the selective debunking approach endorsed here is the “patchy realism” described by Doris and Plakias (2007).

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