

## The epistemic argument for hedonism

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I'll argue that we should give up all of our moral beliefs, except for belief in pleasure's goodness and whatever it entails about virtue and right action. Then we'd accept a version of ethical hedonism on which we doubt rather than reject nonhedonic moral facts.<sup>1</sup> I agree with the consensus that ethical hedonism is counterintuitive, so I won't argue that it's the theory best supported by moral intuition.<sup>2</sup>

Instead, I'll present an argument that would drive us to moral skepticism, except that hedonism has a unique way of refuting it. The first half of this paper presents the skeptical argument, which arises from the breadth of moral disagreement. Widespread disagreement involves enough false moral belief to entail the unreliability of the processes by which we form moral beliefs, bringing moral skepticism upon us. The second half of this paper argues that belief in the goodness of pleasure escapes skeptical defeat. Pleasure's goodness can be known through the highly reliable process of phenomenal introspection. If introspecting pleasure's goodness is the only answer to the skeptical argument, our only moral beliefs should be in pleasure's goodness and whatever it entails.

### 1.1 The argument from disagreement

This half of the paper presents the *argument from disagreement*. 1-4 are premises:

<sup>1</sup> According to ethical hedonism, pleasure's goodness and whatever it entails are the only moral facts. Ethical hedonism combined with suitable aggregative and consequentialist principles entails hedonic utilitarianism. "Pleasure's goodness" here includes displeasure's badness.

<sup>2</sup> Many cases suggest that hedonism is counterintuitive – for example, the Experience Machine from Robert Nozick, *Anarchy State and Utopia*, New York: Basic Books (1974), 42-45. Many other objections are canvassed in Chapter 3 of Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*, New York: Oxford University Press (2004).

1. In any moral disagreement, at least one party must be in error.
2. There is widespread moral disagreement.
3. If there is widespread error about a topic, we should retain only those beliefs about it formed through reliable processes.
4. If there is widespread error about morality, there are no reliable processes for forming moral beliefs.
5. There is widespread error about morality (from 1 and 2).
6. We should retain only those moral beliefs formed through reliable processes (from 3 and 5).
7. There are no reliable processes for forming moral beliefs (from 4 and 5).
8. We should give up all of our moral beliefs (from 6 and 7).

This section briefly explains how the argument works, and distinguishes it from other recent arguments involving disagreement. The next three sections defend 2-4 at length.

1 lays out how moral disagreement must work – at least one party must be in error. The objectivity of morality entails this. Parties to any moral disagreement assert genuinely contradictory propositions, some of which must be false. Noncognitivists and constructivists might deny 1, claiming that moral disagreement need not involve error on any side. I can't do their views justice here, and I'll assume that noncognitivist and constructivist construals of moral concepts are mistaken, and any genuine moral facts must be objective.<sup>3</sup>

Section 1.2 argues that there is widespread moral disagreement, as 2 suggests. 2 refers only to disagreement about the fundamental moral questions, not disagreement that arises from agreement on these questions combined with differing opinions on nonmoral matters.

Disagreement arising from differing nonmoral beliefs doesn't advance the argument, as it

<sup>3</sup> Noncognitivism can account for inconsistency only by giving a flawed account of nonmoral discourse, as argued in Mark Schroeder, *Being For*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2008). For an argument that noncognitivism cannot make sense of moral disagreement, see David Merli, "Expressivism and the Limits of Moral Disagreement," *The Journal of Ethics* 12 (2008): 25-55.

doesn't bear on the reliability of our processes for forming moral beliefs. 1 and 2 imply 5, that there is widespread moral error. Since parties to a moral disagreement contradict each other about an objective fact, each disagreement involves false belief. Disagreement between many parties about many things involves many false beliefs about many things.

What should we do if there is widespread error about some topic, as 5 suggests? Section 1.3 argues that we should retain only those beliefs about the topic formed through reliable processes, as 3 suggests. The processes driving belief-formation on the topic leave people at a high risk of having false beliefs. If we hold beliefs on the topic and the processes that created them are of average reliability for the topic, they run a high risk of being false. If this risk is high enough, we should abandon our beliefs. But we need not abandon our beliefs if an unusually reliable process of belief-formation supports them.

Section 1.4 argues that if there is widespread error about morality, there is no reliable process for forming moral beliefs, as 4 suggests. This might seem surprising, because it's easy to see how some processes might be reliable amidst widespread error. But widespread error entails that any one process responsible for a large majority of our moral beliefs must be unreliable, since it created a large share of the widespread error. 4 can still be false if some process which produces only a small fraction of our moral beliefs is reliable, allowing us to avoid the unreliability of our other ways of forming moral beliefs. (The second half of this paper answers the skeptical argument by offering what I think is the only counterexample to 4 – phenomenal introspection, which reliably informs us of pleasure's moral value.) So defending 4 requires denying the reliability of every such minor process. I'll argue against many of the most-discussed contenders. 4 and 5 together imply 7, the absence of any reliable processes of belief formation. When 6, which only allows moral beliefs formed through reliable processes, is combined with 7, we arrive at 8 and must abandon all our moral beliefs.

The argument from disagreement avoids the difficulties with explanatory arguments

from disagreement, like John Mackie's argument from relativity. Mackie argues that moral belief isn't best explained by objective moral value, since there are so many differing views. He writes that "the actual variations in the moral codes are more readily explained by the hypothesis that they reflect ways of life than by the hypothesis that they express perceptions, most of them seriously inadequate and badly distorted, of objective values" (37).<sup>4</sup> The argument from disagreement doesn't suggest rejecting morality for its explanatory inadequacy, as Mackie does. Explanatory arguments against morality might be implausible or self-undermining if they also forced us to reject color, numbers, or epistemic norms, which are similarly hard to place in our best explanations.<sup>5</sup> The argument from disagreement avoids these problems, as it applies only when widespread disagreement entails so much error that our beliefs must be unreliably formed. Color, mathematics, and epistemic norms are topics where less disagreement obtains.

Much recent work in epistemology discusses disagreement between epistemic peers, especially disagreement between two people about a single proposition.<sup>6</sup> As Katia Vavova argues, this work doesn't seem to support moral skepticism.<sup>7</sup> Even if disagreement with one epistemic peer about one proposition doesn't force us to revise our beliefs, disagreement with

<sup>4</sup> John Mackie, *Ethics: Inventing Right And Wrong*, London: Penguin (1977). This is how Mackie's argument is understood by David Brink, *Moral Realism and the Foundations of Ethics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1989), 197-209.

<sup>5</sup> See Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, "Moral Theory and Explanatory Impotence," responding to Gilbert Harman, "Ethics and Observation," both in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord (ed.), *Essays on Moral Realism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Thomas Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," in Hawthorne and Szabo (eds.), *Oxford Studies in Epistemology Vol. 1*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2005); and Adam Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," *Noûs* 41:3 (2007): 478-502.

<sup>7</sup> Katia Vavova, "Moral Disagreement and Moral Skepticism," *Philosophical Perspectives* 28 (2014): 302-333.

the rest of humanity about entire theories may force such massive revisions. Unlike peer disagreement, mass disagreement can demonstrate the general unreliability of human belief-forming processes. The argument from disagreement provides a route to this conclusion, moving from widespread disagreement to widespread error to the unreliability of our processes of belief-formation.<sup>8</sup>

Several other arguments from moral disagreement to skepticism or anti-realism are nicely criticized by David Enoch and Michael Huemer.<sup>9</sup> But Enoch and Huemer don't respond to arguments that use the presence of error in each moral disagreement to show that widespread moral disagreement entails widespread error, which demonstrates our processes of moral belief-formation to be unreliable. My argument is the only one that does this. So I hope it'll be of independent interest, apart from the broader argument for hedonism.

Richard Joyce and Sharon Street present evolutionary debunking arguments that can support moral skepticism, just as the argument from disagreement does.<sup>10</sup> They hold that our moral beliefs are produced by evolutionary processes that are unlikely to have any systematic correlation with objective moral truth. Seeing this, we should abandon our beliefs in objective moral facts. This evolutionary debunking argument offers another route to the skeptical conclusion of the argument from disagreement. Section 2.1 will outline how hedonists' answer to the argument from disagreement answers evolutionary debunking arguments as well.

<sup>8</sup> For a helpful discussion of multiparty intertheoretic disagreement that inspires the argument presented here, see Todd Stewart, "The Competing Practices Argument and Self-Defeat," *Episteme* (2005): 13-24.

<sup>9</sup> David Enoch, "How is Moral Disagreement a Problem for Realism?" *Journal of Ethics* 13 (2009) 15-50; and Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan (2005).

<sup>10</sup> Sharon Street, "A Darwinian Dilemma for Realist Theories of Value," *Philosophical Studies* 127:1 (2006): 109-166, and Richard Joyce, *The Myth of Morality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2001).

## 1.2 There is widespread moral disagreement

Many philosophers will contend that there isn't enough moral disagreement to drive the argument from disagreement forward. Proving otherwise would require more anthropological and historical work than this paper could contain. So I'll just aim to make the existence of that much moral disagreement plausible enough that readers will regard the argument as worthy of concern. First I'll present some evidence that actual moral disagreement is this great. To answer the objection that differing opinions about moral questions really arise from nonmoral disagreement, I'll argue that the different nonmoral beliefs are often the products of underlying moral disagreement. Finally, I'll argue that the narrow areas of moral agreement remaining after taking this point into account won't block the argument from disagreement.

For a vivid illustration of how intensely we disagree about morality, consider a scene from the end of the *Odyssey*. Odysseus has returned home and killed the hundred suitors who sought his wife's hand. He and his son Telemachus bring out twelve of the servant women, and make them assist in cleaning up the dead bodies.

Then when they had made the whole place quite clean and orderly, they took the women out and hemmed them in the narrow space between the wall of the domed room and that of the yard, so that they could not get away: and Telemachus said to the other two, "I shall not let these women die a clean death, for they were insolent to me and my mother, and used to sleep with the suitors."

So saying he made a ship's cable fast to one of the bearing-posts that supported the roof of the domed room, and secured it all around the building, at a good height, lest any of the women's feet should touch the ground; and as thrushes or doves beat against a net that has been set for them in a thicket just as they were getting to their nest, and a terrible fate awaits them, even so did the women have to put their heads in nooses one after the other and die

most miserably. Their feet moved convulsively for a while, but not for very long.<sup>11</sup>

The *Odyssey's* treatment of these events demonstrates how dramatically ancient Greek moral intuitions differ from ours. It doesn't dwell on the brutality of Telemachus, who killed twelve women for the trivial reasons he states, making them suffer as they die. While gods and men seek vengeance for other great and small offenses in the *Odyssey*, no one finds this mass murder worth avenging. It's a minor event in the denouement to a happy ending in which Odysseus (who first proposes killing the women) returns home and Telemachus becomes a man. That the Greeks could so easily regard these murders as part of a happy ending for heroes shows how deeply we disagree with them. It's as if we gave them a trolley problem with the 12 women on the side track and no one on the main track, and they judged it permissible for Telemachus to turn the trolley and kill them all. And this isn't some esoteric text of a despised or short-lived sect, but a central literary work of a long-lived and influential culture.

Human history offers similarly striking examples of disagreement on a variety of topics. These include sexual morality; the treatment of animals; the treatment of other ethnicities, families, and social classes; the consumption of intoxicating substances; whether and how one may take vengeance; slavery; whether public celebrations are acceptable; and gender roles.<sup>12</sup> Moral obligations to commit genocide were accepted not only by some 20th century Germans, but by much of the ancient world, including the culture that gave us the Old Testament. One can only view the human past and much of the present with horror at the depth of human moral error and the harm that has resulted.

One might think to explain away much of this disagreement as the result of differing

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<sup>11</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, Butler (trans.), (1900): <http://classics.mit.edu/Homer/odyssey.html>.

Readers of mythology will easily find similar examples from other ancient texts.

<sup>12</sup> See John Doris and Alexandra Plakias, "How to Argue about Disagreement: Evaluative Diversity and Moral Realism," in Sinnott-Armstrong (ed.), *Moral Psychology Vol. 2*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press (2008): 303-331.

nonmoral beliefs. Those who disagree about nonmoral issues may disagree on the moral rightness of a particular action despite agreeing on the fundamental moral issues. For example, they may agree that healing the sick is right, but disagree about whether a particular medicine will heal or harm. This disagreement about whether to prescribe the medicine won't be fundamentally about morality, and won't support the argument from disagreement.

I don't think the moral disagreements listed above are explained by differences in nonmoral belief. This isn't because sexists, racists, and bigots share the nonmoral views of those enlightened by feminism and other egalitarian doctrines – they don't. Rather, their differing views on nonmoral topics often are rationalizations of moral beliefs that fundamentally disagree with ours.<sup>13</sup> Those whose fundamental moral judgments include commitments to the authority of men over women, or of one race over another, will easily accept descriptive psychological views that attribute less intelligence or rationality to women or the subjugated race.<sup>14</sup> Moral disagreement supposedly arising from moral views in religious texts is similar. Given how rich and many-stranded most religious texts are, interpretive claims about their moral teachings often tell us more about the antecedent moral beliefs of the interpreter than about the text itself. This is why the same texts are interpreted to support so many different moral views. Similar phenomena occur with most moral beliefs. Environmentalists who value a lovely patch of wilderness will easily believe that its destruction will cause disaster, those who feel justified in

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<sup>13</sup> For a good discussion, see Nomy Arpaly, *Unprincipled Virtue*, New York: Oxford University Press (2003). For striking psychological evidence about rationalization, see Jonathan Haidt, "The Emotional Dog and the Rational Tail", *Psychological Review* 108:4 (2001): 814-834.

<sup>14</sup> As system justification theorists in psychology argue, even subjugated groups form a structure of beliefs according to which their subjugation is justified. John Jost, Mahzarin Banaji, and Brian Nosek, "A Decade of System Justification Theory: Accumulated Evidence of Conscious and Unconscious Bolstering of the Status Quo", *Political Psychology* 25:5 (2004), 881-919.



eating meat will easily believe that the animals they eat don't suffer greatly, and libertarians who feel that redistributing wealth is unjust will easily believe that it raises unemployment. We shouldn't assume that differing moral beliefs on practical questions are caused by fundamental moral agreement combined with differing nonmoral beliefs. Often the differing nonmoral beliefs are caused by fundamental moral disagreement.

As we have no precise way of quantifying the breadth of disagreement or determining its epistemic consequences, it's unclear exactly how much disagreement the argument requires. While this makes the argument difficult to evaluate, it shouldn't stop us from proceeding, as we have to use the unclear notion of widespread disagreement in ordinary epistemic practice. If 99.9% of botanists agree on some issue about plants, non-botanists should defer to their authority and believe as most of them do. But if disagreement between botanists is suitably widespread, non-botanists should remain agnostic. A more precise and systematic account of when disagreement is widespread enough to generate particular epistemic consequences would be very helpful. Until we have one, we must employ the unclear notion of widespread disagreement, or some similar notion, throughout epistemic practice.

Against the background of widespread moral disagreement, there may still be universal or near-universal agreement on some moral questions. For example, perhaps all cultures agree that one should provide for one's elderly parents, even though they generally disagree elsewhere. How do these narrow areas of moral agreement affect the argument?

This all depends on whether the narrow agreement is reliably or unreliably caused. If narrow agreement results from a reliable process of belief-formation, it lets us avoid error, defeating the argument from disagreement. But widely accepted moral beliefs may result from widely prevailing unreliable processes leading everyone to the same errors. There's no special pressure to explain agreement in terms of reliable processes when disagreement is widespread. Explaining agreement in terms of reliable processes is preferable when we have some reason to

think that the processes involved are generally reliable. Then we would want to understand cases of agreement in line with the general reliability of processes producing moral belief. But if disagreement is widespread, error is too. Since moral beliefs are so often false, invoking unreliable processes to explain them is better than invoking reliable ones. The next two sections discuss this in more detail.

We have many plausible explanations of narrow agreement on which moral beliefs are unreliably caused. Evolutionary and sociological explanations of why particular moral beliefs are widely accepted often invoke unreliable mechanisms.<sup>15</sup> On these explanations, we agree because some moral beliefs were so important for reproductive fitness that natural selection made them innate in us, or so important to the interests controlling moral education in each culture that they were inculcated in everyone. For example, parents' influence over their children's moral education would explain agreement that one should provide for one's elderly parents. Plausible normative ethical theories won't systematically connect these evolutionary and sociological explanations with moral facts. If disagreement and error are widespread, they'll provide useful ways to reconcile unusual cases of widespread agreement with the general unreliability of the processes producing moral belief.

### **1.3 If there is widespread error about a topic, we should retain only those beliefs about it formed through reliable processes**

Now I'll defend 3. First I'll show how the falsity of others' beliefs undermines one's own belief. Then I'll clarify the notion of a reliable process. I'll consider a modification to 3 that

epistemic internalists might favor, and show that the argument accommodates it. I'll illustrate

<sup>15</sup> For evolutionary explanations, see Street (2006) and Joyce (2001). For classic sociological explanations, see Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Sheridan-Smith (trans.), New York: Vintage (1977); and Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, Clark and Swensen (trans.), Indianapolis: Hackett, 1998.

3's plausibility by considering cases where it correctly guides our reasoning. Finally, I'll show how 3 is grounded in the intuitive response to grave moral error.

First, a simple objection: "Why should I care whether other people have false beliefs? That's a fact about other people, and not about me. Even if most people are wrong about some topic, I may be one of the few right ones, even if there's no apparent reason to think that my way of forming beliefs is any more reliable."

While widespread error leaves open the possibility that one has true beliefs, it reduces the probability that my beliefs are true. Consider a parallel case. I have no direct evidence that I have an appendix, but I know that previous investigations have revealed appendixes in people. So induction suggests that I have an appendix. Similarly, I know on the basis of 1 and 2 that people's moral beliefs are, in general, rife with error. So even if I have no direct evidence of error in my moral beliefs, induction suggests that they are rife with error as well.

3 invokes the reliability of the processes that produce our beliefs. Assessing processes of belief-formation for reliability is an important part of our epistemic practices. If someone tells me that my belief is entirely produced by wishful thinking, I can't simply accept that and maintain the belief. Knowing that wishful thinking is unreliable, I must either deny that my belief is entirely caused by wishful thinking or abandon the belief. But if someone tells me that my belief is entirely the result of visual perception, I'll maintain it, assuming that it concerns sizable nearby objects or something else about which visual perception is reliable. While providing precise criteria for individuating processes of belief-formation is hard, as the literature on the generality problem for reliabilism attests, individuating them somehow is indispensable to our epistemic practices.<sup>16</sup> Following Alvin Goldman's remark that "It is clear

<sup>16</sup> Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, "The Generality Problem for Reliabilism," *Philosophical Studies* 89 (1998):1-29. The generality problem seems to apply to all plausible epistemological views, as argued by Juan Comesaña, "A Well-Founded Solution to the Generality Problem," *Philosophical Studies* 129 (2006): 27-47.

that our ordinary thought about process types slices them broadly" (346), I'll treat cognitive process types like wishful thinking and visual perception as appropriately broad.<sup>17</sup> Trusting particular people and texts, meanwhile, are too narrow. Cognitive science may eventually help us better individuate cognitive process types for the purposes of reliability assessments and discover which processes produce which beliefs.

Epistemic internalists might reject 3 as stated, claiming that it isn't widespread error that would justify giving up our beliefs, but our having reason to believe that there is widespread error. They might also claim that our justification for believing the outputs of some process depends not on its reliability, but on what we have reason to believe about its reliability. The argument will still go forward if 3 is modified to suit internalist tastes, changing its antecedent to "If we have reason to believe that there is widespread error about a topic" or changing its consequent to "we should retain only those beliefs about it that we have reason to believe were formed through reliable processes." While 3's antecedent might itself seem unnecessary on the original formulation, it's required for 3 to remain plausible on the internalist modification. Requiring us to have reason to believe that any of our belief-formation processes are reliable before retaining their outputs might lead to skepticism. The antecedent limits the scope of the requirement to cases of widespread error, averting general skeptical conclusions. The argument will still attain its conclusion under these modifications. Successfully defending the premises of the argument and deriving widespread error (5) and unreliability (7) gives those of us who have heard the defense and derivation reason to believe 5 and 7. This allows us to derive 8. (Thus the pronoun 'we' in 3, 6, and 8.)

3 describes the right response to widespread error in many actual cases. Someone in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, especially upon hearing the disagreeing views of many cultures regarding the origins of the universe, would do well to recognize that error on this topic was widespread and

<sup>17</sup> Alvin Goldman, "What is Justified Belief?" in Sosa and Kim (eds.), *Epistemology: An Anthology*, Massachusetts: Blackwell (2000).

retreat to agnosticism about it. Only when modern astrophysics extended reliable empirical methods to cosmology would it be rational to move forward from agnosticism and accept a particular account of how the universe began. Similarly, disagreement about which stocks will perform better than average is widespread among investors, suggesting that one's beliefs on the matter have a high likelihood of error. It's wise to remain agnostic about the stock market without an unusually reliable way of forming beliefs – for example, the sort of secret insider information that it's illegal to trade on.

3 permits us to hold onto our moral beliefs in individual cases of moral disagreement, suggesting skeptical conclusions only when moral disagreement is widespread. When we consider a single culture's abhorrent moral views, like the Greeks' acceptance of Telemachus and Odysseus' murders of the servant women, we don't think that maybe the Greeks were right to see nothing wrong and we should reconsider our outrage. Instead, we're horrified by their grave moral error. I think this is the right response. We're similarly horrified by the moral errors of Hindus who burned widows on their husbands' funeral pyres, American Southerners who supported slavery and segregation, our contemporaries who condemn homosexuality, and countless others. The sheer number of cases like this requires us to regard moral error as a pervasive feature of the human condition. Humans typically form moral beliefs through unreliable processes and have appendixes. We are humans, so this should reduce our confidence in our moral judgments. The prevalence of error in a world full of moral disagreement demonstrates how bad humans are at forming true moral beliefs, undermining our own moral beliefs. Knowing that unreliable processes so often lead humans to their moral beliefs, we'll require our moral beliefs to issue from reliable processes.

**1.4 If there is widespread error about morality, there are no reliable processes for forming moral beliefs**

A reliable process for forming moral beliefs would avert skeptical conclusions. I'll consider several processes and argue that they don't help us escape moral skepticism. Ordinary moral intuition, whether it involves a special rational faculty or our emotional responses, is shown to be unreliable by the existence of widespread error. The argument from disagreement either prevents reflective equilibrium from generating moral conclusions or undermines it. Conceptual analysis is reliable, but delivers the wrong kind of knowledge to avert skepticism. If all our processes for forming moral beliefs are unreliable, moral skepticism looms. 4 is false only because of one process – phenomenal introspection, which lets us know of the goodness of pleasure, as the second half of this paper will discuss.

Widespread error guarantees the unreliability of any process by which we form all or almost all of our moral beliefs. While widespread error allows some processes responsible for a small share of our moral beliefs to predominantly create true beliefs, it implies that any process generating a very large share of moral belief must be highly error-prone. Since the process produced so many of our moral beliefs, and so many of them are erroneous, it must be responsible for a large share of the error. If more of people's moral beliefs were true, things would be otherwise. Widespread truth would support the reliability of any process that produced most or all of our moral beliefs, since that process would be responsible for so much true belief. But given widespread error, ordinary moral intuition must be unreliable. This point provides a forceful response to Moorean opponents who insist that we can't give up the reliability of a process by which we form all or nearly all of our beliefs on an important topic, since this would permit counterintuitive skeptical conclusions. Even if this Moorean response helps against external world skeptics who employ counterfactual thought experiments involving brains in vats, it doesn't help against moral skeptics who use 1 and 2 to derive widespread actual error. Once we accept that widespread error actually obtains, a great deal of human moral knowledge has already vanished. Insisting on the reliability of the process then

seems implausible and pointless. I'll briefly consider two conceptions of moral intuition – as a special rational faculty by which we grasp non-natural moral facts, and as a process by which our emotions lead us to form moral beliefs – and show how widespread error guarantees their unreliability.

Some philosophers regard moral intuition as involving a special rational faculty that lets us know non-natural moral facts.<sup>18</sup> They argue that knowledge on many topics including mathematics, logic, and modality involves this rational faculty, so moral knowledge might operate similarly. This suggests a way for them to defend the reliability of moral intuition in the face of widespread error: if intuition is reliable about these other things, its overall reliability across moral and nonmoral areas allows us to reliably form moral beliefs by using it. This defense won't work. When an epistemic process is manifestly unreliable on some topic, as widespread error shows any process responsible for most of our moral beliefs to be, the reliability of that process elsewhere won't save it on that topic. Even if testimony is reliable, this doesn't imply the reliability of compulsive gamblers' testimony about the next spin of the roulette wheel. Even if intuition remains reliable elsewhere, widespread disagreement still renders it unreliable in ethics.

I see ordinary moral intuition as a process of emotional perception in which our feelings cause us to form moral beliefs.<sup>19</sup> Just as visual experiences of color cause beliefs about the colors of surfaces, emotional experiences cause moral beliefs. Pleasant feelings like approval, admiration, or hope in considering actions, persons, or states of affairs lead us to believe they

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<sup>18</sup> For example, Huemer (2005).

<sup>19</sup> I fully defend this emotional perception account of moral judgment in my *Humean Nature*, Oxford University Press (under contract). See Simone Schnall *et al*, "Disgust as Embodied Moral Judgment", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 34:8 (2008): 1096-1109; Simone Schnall, Jennifer Benton, and Sophie Harvey, "With a Clean Conscience: Cleanliness Reduces the Severity of Moral Judgments", *Psychological Science* 19:12 (2008): 1219-1222; and Haidt (2001).

are right, virtuous or good. Unpleasant emotions like guilt, disgust, or horror in considering actions, persons, or states of affairs lead us to believe they are wrong, vicious, or bad. We might have regarded this as a reliable way to know about moral facts, just as visual perception is a reliable way to know about color, if not for widespread error. But because of widespread error, we can only see it as an unreliable process responsible for our dismal epistemic situation.

Reflective equilibrium is the prevailing methodology in normative ethics today. It involves modifying our beliefs about particular cases and general principles to make them cohere. Whether or not nonmoral propositions like the premises of the argument from disagreement are admissible in reflective equilibrium, widespread error prevents reflective equilibrium from reliably generating a true moral theory, as I'll explain.

If the premises of the argument from disagreement are admitted into reflective equilibrium, the argument can be reconstructed there, and reflective equilibrium will dictate that we give up all of our moral beliefs. To avoid this conclusion, the premises of the argument from disagreement would have to be revised away on moral grounds. These premises are a metaethical claim about the objectivity of morality which seems to be a conceptual truth, an anthropological claim about the existence of disagreement, a very general epistemic claim about when we should revise our beliefs, and a more empirically grounded epistemic claim about our processes of belief-formation and their reliability. While reflective equilibrium may move us to revise substantive moral beliefs in view of other substantive moral beliefs, claims of these other kinds are less amenable to such revision. Unless ambitious arguments for revising these nonmoral claims away succeed, we must follow the argument to its conclusion and accept that reflective equilibrium makes moral skeptics of us.<sup>20</sup>

If only moral principles and judgments are considered in reflective equilibrium, it won't  
<sup>20</sup> For a discussion of how odd it would be to revise away empirical nonmoral claims on moral grounds, see Alex Barber, "Science's Immunity to Moral Refutation", *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, 91:4 (2013): 633-653.



make moral skeptics of us, but the argument from disagreement will undermine its conclusions. The argument forces us to give up the pre-existing moral beliefs against which we test various moral propositions in reflective equilibrium. While we may be justified in believing something because it coheres with our other beliefs, this justification goes away once we see that those beliefs should be abandoned. Coherence with beliefs that we know we should give up doesn't confer justification.

Now I'll consider conceptual analysis. It can produce moral beliefs about conceptual truths – for example, that the moral supervenes on the nonmoral, and that morality is objective. It also may provide judgments about relations between different moral concepts – perhaps, that if the only moral difference between two actions is that one would produce morally better consequences than the other, doing what produces better consequences is right. I regard conceptual analysis as reliable, so that the argument from disagreement does not force us to give up the beliefs about morality it produces. Unfortunately, if analytic naturalism is false, as has been widely held in metaethics since G. E. Moore, conceptual analysis won't provide all the knowledge we need to build a normative ethical theory.<sup>21</sup> Even when it relates moral concepts like goodness and rightness to each other, it doesn't tell us that anything is good or right to begin with. That's the knowledge we need to avoid moral skepticism.

So far I've argued that our epistemic and anthropological situation, combined with plausible metaethical and epistemic principles, forces us to abandon our moral beliefs. But if a reliable process of moral belief-formation exists, 4 is false, and we can answer the moral skeptic. The rest of this paper discusses the only reliable process I know of.

## **2.1 Phenomenal introspection reveals pleasure's goodness**

<sup>21</sup> G. E. Moore, *Principia Ethica*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1903). For dissent, see Frank Jackson, *From Metaphysics to Ethics*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (1998). Even if Jackson is right, moral concepts may be complex enough that epistemic difficulties arise again.

Phenomenal introspection, a reliable way of forming true beliefs about our experiences, produces the belief that pleasure is good. Even as our other processes of moral belief-formation prove unreliable, it provides reliable access to pleasure's goodness, justifying the positive claims of hedonism. This section clarifies what phenomenal introspection and pleasure are and explains how phenomenal introspection provides reliable access to pleasure's value. Section 2.2 argues that pleasure's goodness is genuine moral value, rather than value of some other kind.

In phenomenal introspection we consider our subjective experience, or phenomenology, and determine what it's like. Phenomenal introspection can be reliable while dreaming or hallucinating, as long as we can determine what the dreams or hallucinations are like. By itself, phenomenal introspection doesn't produce beliefs about things outside experience, or about relations between our experiences and non-experiential things. So it doesn't produce judgments about the rightness of actions or the goodness of non-experiential things. It can only tell us about the intrinsic properties of experience itself.

Phenomenal introspection is generally reliable, even if mistakes about immediate experience are possible. Experience is rich in detail, so one could get some of the details wrong in belief. Under adverse conditions involving false expectations, misleading evidence about what one's experiences will be, or extreme emotional states that disrupt belief-formation, larger errors are possible. Paradigmatically reliable processes like vision share these failings. Vision sometimes produces false beliefs under adverse conditions, or when we're looking at complex things. Still, it's so reliable as to be indispensable in ordinary life. Regarding phenomenal introspection as unreliable is about as radical as skepticism about the reliability of vision.

While contemporary psychologists reject introspection into one's motivations and other psychological causal processes as unreliable, phenomenal introspection fares better. Daniel Kahneman, for example, writes that "experienced utility is best measured by moment-based

methods that assess the experience of the present.”<sup>22</sup> Even those most skeptical about the reliability of phenomenal introspection, like Eric Schwitzgebel, concede that we can reliably introspect whether we are in serious pain.<sup>23</sup> Then we should be able to introspectively determine what pain is like. So I'll assume the reliability of phenomenal introspection.

One can form a variety of beliefs using phenomenal introspection. For example, one can believe that one is having sound experiences of particular noises and visual experiences of different shades of color. When looking at a lemon and considering the phenomenal states that are yellow experiences, one can form some beliefs about their intrinsic features – for example, that they're bright experiences. And when considering experiences of pleasure, one can make some judgments about their intrinsic features – for example, that they're good experiences. Just as one can look inward at one's experience of lemon yellow and recognize its brightness, one can look inward at one's experience of pleasure and recognize its goodness.<sup>24</sup> When I consider a situation of increasing pleasure, I can form the belief that things are better than they were before, just as I form the belief that there's more brightness in my visual field as lemon yellow replaces black. And when I suddenly experience pain, I can form the belief that things are worse in my experience than they were before.

<sup>22</sup> Daniel Kahneman, “Experienced Utility and Objective Happiness: A Moment-Based Approach,” in Kahneman and Tversky (eds.), *Choices, Values and Frames*, New York: Cambridge University Press (2000).

<sup>23</sup> Eric Schwitzgebel, “The Unreliability of Naive Introspection,” *Philosophical Review* 117:2 (2008) 245-274. Schwitzgebel's purported counterexamples to the reliability of phenomenal introspection usually show something else instead: that false beliefs about our experiences can be formed by reasoning about what we're likely to believe in a given situation, and not by phenomenal introspection.

<sup>24</sup> Occasionally I doubt that pleasure is really good. Seeking evidence, I eat or drink something with a pleasant taste. When I consider my experience, I become convinced again.

Having pleasure consists in one's experience having a positive hedonic tone. Without descending into metaphor, it's hard to give a further account of what pleasure is like than to say that when one has it, one feels good. As Aaron Smuts writes in defending the view of pleasure as hedonic tone, "to 'feel good' is about as close to an experiential primitive as we get."<sup>25</sup> Fred Feldman sees pleasure as fundamentally an attitude rather than a hedonic tone.<sup>26</sup> But as long as hedonic tones are real components of experience, phenomenal introspection will reveal pleasure's goodness. Opponents of the hedonic tone account of pleasure usually concede that hedonic tones exist, as Feldman seems to in discussing "sensory pleasures," which he thinks his view helps us understand. Even on his view of pleasure, phenomenal introspection can produce the belief that some hedonic tones are good while others are bad.

There are many different kinds of pleasant experiences. There are sensory pleasures, like the pleasure of tasting delicious food, receiving a massage, or resting your tired limbs in a soft bed after a hard day. There are the pleasures of seeing that our desires are satisfied, like the pleasure of winning a game, getting a promotion, or seeing a friend succeed. These experiences differ in many ways, just as the experiences of looking at lemons and the sky on a sunny day differ. It's easy to see the appeal of Feldman's view that pleasures "have just about nothing in common phenomenologically" (79). But just as our experiences in looking at lemons and the sky on a sunny day have brightness in common, pleasant experiences all have "a certain common quality – feeling good," as Roger Crisp argues (109).<sup>27</sup> As the analogy with brightness suggests, hedonic tone is phenomenologically very thin, and usually mixed with a variety of other

<sup>25</sup> Aaron Smuts, "The Feels Good Theory of Pleasure," forthcoming, *Philosophical Studies*. For similar views, see John Locke, *Essay concerning Human Understanding* (1690) 2.2.1; David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature*, L. A. Selby-Bigge (ed), Oxford: Clarendon Press (1888) 1.1.2; Roger Crisp, *Reasons and the Good*, New York: Oxford University Press (2006): 107-109.

<sup>26</sup> Fred Feldman, *Pleasure and the Good Life*, New York: Oxford University Press (2004).

<sup>27</sup> Crisp (2006).

experiences.<sup>28</sup> Pleasure of any kind feels good, and displeasure of any kind feels bad. These feelings may or may not have bodily location or be combined with other sensory states like warmth or pressure. “Pleasure” and “displeasure” mean these thin phenomenal states of feeling good and feeling bad. As Joseph Mendola writes, “the pleasantness of physical pleasure is a kind of hedonic value, a single homogenous sensory property, differing merely in intensity as well as in extent and duration, which is yet a kind of goodness” (442).<sup>29</sup>

What if Feldman is right and hedonic states feel good in fundamentally different ways? Then phenomenal introspection suggests a pluralist variety of hedonism. Each fundamental flavor of pleasure will have a fundamentally different kind of goodness, as phenomenal introspection more accurate than mine will reveal. This isn't my view, but I suggest it to those convinced that hedonic tones are fundamentally heterogenous.

If phenomenal introspection reliably informs us that pleasure is good, how can anyone believe that their pleasures are bad? Other processes of moral belief-formation are responsible

<sup>28</sup> For a similar analogy, but with the volume of sounds rather than the brightness of colors, see Shelly Kagan, “The Limits of Well-Being,” in Paul, Miller, Jr., and Paul (eds.), *The Good Life and the Human Good*, Cambridge University Press (1992).

<sup>29</sup> Joseph Mendola, “Intuitive Hedonism,” *Philosophical Studies* 128 (2006): 441-477. Also: “Each moment of phenomenal experience presents itself as positively or negatively valenced to some degree. The valence is either (a) a lesser or greater degree of intrinsic value, as in the phenomenal component of happiness and pleasure; (b) a lesser or greater degree of intrinsic disvalue, as in the phenomenal component of unhappiness and pain; or (c) a null valence, which is neither intrinsic value nor disvalue. That valence of the experience of a moment is an objective phenomenal property.” Joseph Mendola, “Objective Value and Subjective States,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 50:4 (1990) 695-713. For a similar defense (with a graph of how the magnitude of this value fluctuates over a day) see Torbjorn Tannsjo, “Narrow Hedonism,” *Journal of Happiness Studies* 8 (2007): 79-98. See also Crisp (2006).

for these beliefs. Someone who feels disgust or guilt about sex may not only regard sex as immoral, but the pleasure it produces as bad. Even if phenomenal introspection on sexual pleasure disposes one to believe that it's good, stronger negative emotional responses to it may more strongly dispose one to believe that it's bad, following the emotional perception model suggested in section 1.4. Explaining disagreement about pleasure's value in terms of other processes lets hedonists maintain that phenomenal introspection univocally supports pleasure's goodness. As long as negative judgments of pleasure come from unreliable processes instead of phenomenal introspection, the argument from disagreement eliminates them.

The parallel between yellow's brightness and pleasure's goodness demonstrates the objectivity of the value detected in phenomenal introspection. Just as anyone's yellow experiences objectively are bright experiences, anyone's pleasure objectively is a good experience.<sup>30</sup> While one's phenomenology is often called one's "subjective experience", facts about it are still objective. "Subjective" in "subjective experience" means "internal to the mind", not "ontologically dependent on attitudes towards it." My yellow-experiences objectively have brightness. Anyone who thought my yellow-experiences lacked brightness would be mistaken. Pleasure similarly is objectively good. It's true that anyone's pleasure is good. Anyone who denies this is mistaken. As Mendola writes, the value detected in phenomenal introspection is "a plausible candidate for objective value" (712).

Even though phenomenal introspection only tells me about my own phenomenal states, I can know that others' pleasure is good. Of course, I can't phenomenally introspect their pleasures, just as I can't phenomenally introspect pleasures that I'll experience next year. But if I consider my experiences of lemon yellow and ask what it would be like if others had the same experiences, I must think that they would be having bright experiences. Similarly, if in a

<sup>30</sup> Here I use "goodness" and "value" interchangeably, as is customary. See for example Mark Schroeder, "Value Theory," Zalta (ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/value-theory/>.

pleasant moment I consider what it's like for others to have exactly the experience I'm having, I must think that they're having good experiences. If they have exactly the same experiences I'm having, their experiences will have exactly the same intrinsic properties as mine. This is also how I know that if I have the same experience in the future, it'll have the same intrinsic properties. Even though the only pleasure I can introspect is mine now, I should believe that others' pleasures and my pleasures at other times are good, just as I should believe that yellow experienced by others and myself at other times is bright. My argument thus favors the kind of universal hedonism that supports utilitarianism, not egoistic hedonism.

Now I'll outline hedonism's answer to Joyce and Street's evolutionary debunking arguments, as promised in section 1.1. Phenomenal introspection is a process of belief-formation that evolved to be generally reliable, like visual perception. Knowing what one is experiencing seems to be important for perception, so creatures who couldn't know what their experiences were like would die without reproducing, having failed to form useful beliefs about their surroundings. So creatures who could reliably form true beliefs about their phenomenal states would be more likely to survive and reproduce. Hedonism withstands evolutionary debunking arguments via what Street calls a "byproduct hypothesis." Since belief in pleasure's goodness is a byproduct of phenomenal introspection, which is selected for reliability, it's reliably caused even if other moral beliefs aren't.<sup>31</sup> If all other moral beliefs are undermined by their origins in processes not selected for reliability, an evolutionary debunking argument could do the same work for hedonists that the argument from disagreement has done in this paper.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> This would provide a targeted debunking argument of the sort considered in Guy Kahane, "Evolutionary Debunking Arguments" *Nous* (2011). For further discussion of how hedonists are poised to use targeted debunking arguments, see Adam Lerner, "Fine-Tuning Evolutionary Debunking Arguments" (unpublished).

<sup>32</sup> Street considers defenses of realism grounded in pleasure's goodness and pain's badness, but these arguments don't regard pleasure and displeasure as hedonic tones.

A full moral theory encompassing rightness and virtue can be built from the empirical results of phenomenal introspection along with conceptual analysis. Phenomenal introspection reveals pleasure to have a kind of goodness that makes states of affairs better in consequentialist moral theories. Conceptual analysis then connects the concept of goodness with the concept of a better state of affairs, and with other moral concepts like rightness and virtue. Even if conceptual analysis can't connect the moral and the nonmoral as a full normative ethical theory requires, it connects moral concepts to each other. The following propositions or something like them seem to be conceptual truths: states of affairs are *pro tanto* better insofar as they include more goodness, an action is *pro tanto* better insofar as it causally contributes to better states of affairs, and agents are *pro tanto* more virtuous insofar as they desire that better states of affairs obtain. These putative conceptual truths about *pro tanto* relations don't rule out strong forms of deontology. It's still conceptually possible for obligations to trump good consequences in determining right action. Utilitarians building theories along these lines can treat deontology as a conceptually coherent position whose substantive claims lack any empirical evidence. The argument from disagreement provides empirical reasons to abandon belief in rightness that isn't reducible to pleasure's goodness. If the argument from disagreement forces us to abandon belief in all other moral facts, introspecting pleasure's goodness and following these conceptual *pro tanto* connections to other moral concepts will be the only way to develop a full moral theory.

## **2.2 Pleasure's goodness is moral value**

This section argues that the goodness of pleasure detected in phenomenal introspection is moral value. "Good" also expresses many nonmoral value concepts, including aesthetic, functional, and prudential value.<sup>33</sup> So one might object that phenomenal introspection reveals pleasure only to have some kind of nonmoral value, which hedonists mistake for moral value. It

<sup>33</sup> Many of these are not plausible alternatives. Phenomenal introspection does not reveal that pleasure has functional value like a good knife, or that it has aesthetic value like *Macbeth*.



would be nice to offer a conceptual analysis of moral value which entails the moral value of pleasure, but Moore's objections to doing normative ethics by conceptual analysis rule out such a straightforward answer. So I'll sketch a metaethical picture, consisting of synthetic reductive naturalism and an experientialist analysis of moral concepts, that helps hedonists argue that phenomenal introspection reveals genuine moral value.

Hedonists can accept synthetic *a posteriori* identity relations between moral properties and natural properties, following Peter Railton.<sup>34</sup> Just as electrolyzing water suggests that water is H<sub>2</sub>O, the argument from disagreement and phenomenal introspection together suggest that goodness is pleasure. In both cases, empirical evidence suggests property identities. While identity permits moral properties to be where phenomenal introspection could find them, it doesn't guarantee this. If X and Y are identical as a matter of synthetic *a posteriori* necessity, one can know that X is present without being in position to know that Y is present. The advantage of synthetic reductive naturalism is simply that it puts moral properties in the natural world where they might be empirically accessible. To empirically determine whether phenomenal introspection actually reveals moral properties to apply to pleasure, we should introspect and see, as some philosophers do. In "The Appeal of Utilitarianism," Robert Shaver writes that "The goodness or badness of pleasures or pains is evident from the point of view of anyone capable of experience" (248).<sup>35</sup> In *Normative Ethics*, Shelly Kagan similarly notes that "The value of pleasure and the disvalue of pain seem virtually self-evident to anyone experiencing them" (30).<sup>36</sup> These philosophers seem to be detecting moral properties in experience, one of the many places where synthetic reductionism allows them to be. I'll explain how the structure of moral concepts allows them to do this.

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<sup>34</sup> Peter Railton, "Moral Realism," *Philosophical Review*, 95:2 (1986), 163-207; and "Naturalism and Prescriptivity," *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 7:1 (1989), 151-174.

<sup>35</sup> Robert Shaver, "The Appeal of Utilitarianism," *Utilitas* 16:3 (2004): 235-250.

<sup>36</sup> Shelly Kagan, *Normative Ethics*, Boulder: Westview Press (1998).

Experientialism, which I defend in *Humean Nature*, is an analysis of moral concepts in terms of what moral feelings objectively represent. Feelings are the experienced effects of emotional dispositions, distinguished from the motivational and physiological effects. Moral feelings represent the world as having moral properties, much as color experience represents the world as having color properties. Experiencing guilt about something you did is feeling that it's wrong, much as experiencing blueness while looking at the sky is seeing it as blue. Here are some experientialist analyses of moral concepts:

GOOD	states of affairs objectively represented by hope and delight
RIGHT	actions objectively represented by pride and approval
VIRTUE	character traits objectively represented by admiration
BAD	states of affairs objectively represented by horror and sorrow
WRONG	actions objectively represented by guilt and indignation
VICE	character traits objectively represented by contempt and hatred

Experientialism doesn't connect moral concepts with motivation or reasons. This makes it fully externalist, like the views of Railton and many other naturalists. It gives moral concepts more content than externalism often does by connecting them with what feelings represent. Saying that war is bad is saying that horror and sorrow objectively represent its moral value.

What does experientialism say about moral properties and how we represent them? It demands that moral judgments have objective content, requiring that any moral properties be objective. Apart from that, it doesn't settle the nature of moral properties. They could be non-natural, natural, or nonexistent. It also leaves open how moral feelings might represent things. Perhaps we represent these properties via non-natural reference magnets, or via rigid designation and a causal theory of reference. The answers to these questions are synthetic, so they aren't in the experientialist conceptual analysis.

My own answer to these questions is that moral feelings represent natural properties in virtue of shared phenomenal character, much as empathy represents how others feel. If moral

feelings represent moral properties via this kind of empathic representation, the hedonic character of moral feelings lets them represent hedonic properties. Then the moral value of pleasure can be detected in introspection. A defense of this view would outlast my readers' patience. So the rest of this section just states the view, leaving a defense for another time.

Some empathic experiences represent the experiences of those we empathize with in virtue of shared phenomenal character. If my friend feels sad and I empathically feel sad as I see her, I represent her feelings accurately. Empathy lets me know how she feels. But if it she's actually happy and I feel sad for her, my experience misrepresents her feelings. Empathic accuracy is a matter of sharing the phenomenal character of her experience.

The moral feelings invoked by experientialism all have hedonic character. Moral feelings representing positively valenced moral properties like goodness, rightness, and virtue are pleasant. These include hope, delight, pride, approval, and admiration. Moral feelings representing negatively valenced moral properties like badness, wrongness, and vice are unpleasant. These feelings include horror, sorrow, guilt, indignation, contempt, and hatred.

Applying an empathic account of representation to moral feelings suggests a unified hedonistic account of what all moral feelings represent. Positive moral feelings represent increasing hedonic tone and relations to it, while negative moral feelings represent decreasing hedonic tone and relations to it. Moral feelings are isohedonic to what they represent, sharing its hedonic phenomenal character. If you're horrified that war is breaking out, your horror is isohedonic with the suffering that will result. Both include displeasure. Someone who was delighted that war was breaking out wouldn't have feelings isohedonic with this suffering. This is why delight misrepresents the moral character of war. (If it's one of the rare wars that increases the total hedonic tone of reality, delight represents it accurately while horror is inaccurate. Wars that one should feel good about are unusual.) If you admire a leader who makes peace, your pleasant feeling of admiration has a rising hedonic tone matching the

hedonic improvement that the leader desired, or perhaps matching the happy consequences that such peacemaking dispositions typically generate.<sup>37</sup> The hedonic match between admiration and such desired or typical consequences explain why peacemakers are admirable, or in other words, virtuous.

Experientialism and the empathic account of representation entail that we can introspectively detect the moral value of pleasure. Introspection reveals that pleasure objectively shares the pleasant character of hope and delight. According to the empathic account, hope and delight accurately represent things that share their pleasant character. And according to experientialism, things objectively represented by hope and delight have moral value. So introspection shows that pleasure has moral value.

### 3.0 Conclusion

First I argued that we should give up all our moral beliefs, as widespread moral disagreement reveals the general unreliability of the processes producing them. Then I argued that phenomenal introspection reliably informs us of pleasure's goodness. This is a counterexample to premise 4 of the argument from disagreement. Premises 1-3 of that argument still stand, entailing 6: "We should retain only those moral beliefs formed through reliable processes." If phenomenal introspection is the only reliable process for discovering synthetic moral truths, our only moral beliefs should be in the goodness of pleasure and whatever it entails. We should accept a version of ethical hedonism on which we doubt rather than deny nonhedonic moral facts.

This gives hedonists a powerful response to the intuitively compelling counterexamples  
<sup>37</sup> These different accounts of how virtue relates to good states of affairs are suggested by Thomas Hurka, *Virtue, Vice and Value*, Oxford University Press (2001); and Julia Driver, *Uneasy Virtue*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2001). Pluralism about how virtue relates to good states of affairs, encompassing both accounts, is plausible here.

that lead many to reject their view and believe in a wider range of moral facts. Hedonists can respond that while it intuitively seems that many kinds of moral goodness, badness, rightness, wrongness, virtue, and vice aren't grounded in pleasure's goodness, beliefs in such moral facts are unacceptably likely to be mistaken. Rejecting hedonism is intuitive to us only because we're afflicted by unreliable processes of belief formation. To avoid moral error, we should form moral beliefs only through reliable processes. Then pleasure is the only thing we'll believe is good. The conceptual connections between moral properties of things, states of affairs, actions, and characters provide only reliable route to a full moral theory.

This argument for hedonism won't make hedonism feel right. The epistemic processes that have led so many humans into error make the putative counterexamples to hedonism seem convincing. So hedonism will feel wrong even to hedonists, just as optical illusions look the same even after we know the truth. It feels like this to face our strongest cognitive biases. We should expect to feel this way, given how much moral error has historically existed and how deeply entrenched it is in our moral feelings. Whatever the moral truth is, it would feel wrong to most humans. So it's likely that the moral truth would feel wrong to us.

Methodological advances have contributed to human knowledge in many areas of inquiry. Nothing short of a methodological revolution could take us from the widespread moral error that has afflicted humankind to knowledge of the moral truth. If my arguments are sound, the truth is that pleasure is the only thing we can know to be good. Relying solely on phenomenal introspection to reveal the nature of goodness is the revolution.