

David Kaspar's *Intuitionism*: A Foundationalist-Empiricist Response

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1. Introduction

In this article, I offer what I think of as a “foundationalist-empiricist” response to David Kaspar’s very clear and illuminating book *Intuitionism*.¹ By “foundationalism” I mean the doctrine that regresses of epistemic justification come to an end in a single determinate terminus (“foundation”) that asymmetrically confers justification on the items within it. By “empiricism” I mean the doctrine that all knowledge has its ultimate source in the evidence of the (five) senses. “Foundationalist-empiricism,” then, is the doctrine that all regresses of epistemic justification are ultimately justified by appeal to empirical evidence, where “empirical evidence” is understood to have its ultimate source in the evidence of the senses.

Applied to moral knowledge and belief, foundationalist-empiricism entails that all moral propositions are, as a matter of descriptive fact, based on forms of experience that derive from sensory evidence. As a matter of normative fact, the view holds that we’re warranted or justified in making moral claims insofar as we can trace the evidential basis of those claims back to that evidence. It follows that to the extent that we’re *unable* to trace our claims back, they lack warrant, and fall short of full-fledged claims to moral knowledge. So construed, a foundationalist-empiricist moral epistemology is not precisely skeptical, but has skeptical implications for moral claims whose warrant is wholly detached from sensory experience. It therefore has skeptical implications for the claims of a theory like intuitionism or divine-command theory, which radically bifurcate the experiential process by which we come to acquire moral knowledge from the norms by which we justify our claims to knowledge.

In what follows, I don’t pretend to defend or even adequately explicate foundationalist-empiricism.² I simply offer it as a foil for Kaspar’s

¹ David Kaspar, *Intuitionism* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012). All references to the book in this symposium are by page numbers in parentheses.

² Nor, I should add, do I think that the view itself has been adequately explicated or defended in the existing literature. In that respect, whichever doctrine ends up being

intuitionism, recording the reactions a foundationalist-empiricist would have to a view of the sort Kaspar so ably defends. My aim, then, is to sketch the points of affinity and contrast between the two views, and to indicate lines of further inquiry.

2. An Empiricist Objection in a Nutshell

Though I wasn't ultimately convinced by Kaspar's argument for intuitionism, I find a great deal in the book to admire. It's clear, well-written, well-argued, and very much lives up to its conception of philosophy as "the search for the whole truth" (p. 7).

I also agree with a lot of it. Like Kaspar, I'm a realist about ethics. Like Kaspar, I think that moral knowledge is possible. While I wouldn't go as far as to espouse Kaspar's stout (Moorean) nonnaturalism, I agree at least with the spirit of his rejection of physicalist forms of naturalism. I was also pleasantly surprised to agree with much of what he has to say about the right and the good, and with much that he says in criticism of utilitarianism, Kantianism, and virtue exemplarism, along with much of what he has to say about first-order moral judgments. Finally, I've come as a result of reading the book to agree that intuitions have an important role to play in moral inquiry, though not the expansive role they ultimately get in Kaspar's intuitionism.

My criticism of Kaspar's intuitionism is essentially what you'd expect of a moral realist of foundationalist and empiricist epistemological leanings. Central to Kaspar's account is the claim that there are moral facts and truths, and that these moral facts/truths are at least partly independent of our minds. Also central is Michael Huemer's principle of phenomenal conservatism: "Other things being equal, it is reasonable to assume that things are the way they appear" (p. 62). Intuitions, in turn, are ways things appear, and moral intuitions are ways things appear in the moral domain. Moral intuitions are thus truth-tracking. Our task as inquirers is to get clear on what we really think about morality. That in turn will put us in contact with our intuitions, which in turn enables us to track moral truth. Once we track it, we can act on it, and so be moral.

Suppose that one agrees, at least roughly, with Kaspar's account of the metaphysical "grounds of morality" described in Chapter 5 of the book, as (in broad outline) I do.³ My objection is that "getting clear on what we really

true, intuitionism certainly has the advantage, to date, of having been more adequately explicated and defended. For an account of the sort of foundationalist empiricism I have in mind, see David Kelley, *The Evidence of the Senses: A Realist Theory of Perception* (Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1986); Irfan Khawaja, *Foundationalism and the Foundations of Ethics* (University of Notre Dame PhD dissertation, 2008), chap. 2; and the first four articles in Allan Gotthelf and James G. Lennox, eds., *Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge: Reflections on Objectivist Epistemology* (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2013).

³ This formulation may overstate the agreement, but I lack the space to get at the details of agreement and disagreement here. My essential agreement with Kaspar is

think” cannot be a discovery-procedure for accessing the mind-independent facts/truths described there, and its not being one is a defect of the theory. At best, “getting clear on what we think” clarifies our *thoughts*, but the knowledge we get by clarifying our thoughts is knowledge about our cognitive states, not knowledge about facts that exist independently of those cognitive states. Ultimately (as I see it), Kaspar gives us no reason for thinking that intuitions are *knowledge*, as opposed to being beliefs that we *take* to be self-evident, that we *take* to be true, that have a certain degree of *prima facie* plausibility, and that may very well end up being true. The problem is that a belief can have all of those features and yet fail to be knowledge, which is what I think turns out to be true of Kaspar’s moral intuitions (e.g., p. 12).

In telegraphic form, my argument is this:

- (1) None of the moral intuitions that Kaspar regards as self-evident truths is self-evident.
- (2) Since (or if or because) moral intuitions are not self-evident, they don’t qualify as knowledge.
- (3) So moral intuitions don’t qualify as knowledge, and their not qualifying as knowledge entails the falsity of intuitionism.
- (4) Moral intuitions’ failure to qualify as knowledge is what explains the so-called “disagreement problem,” and in particular explains what is problematic about it.

Claim (1) involves a complicated and difficult rationalist-empiricist dispute about the nature of self-evidence that I can only sketch here.

Once claim (1) is in place, claim (2) is relatively (but not totally) obvious. It involves disputing the epistemic utility of what Kaspar calls epistemic appraisal, along with the expression of a bit of skepticism about (the evidential value of) moral intuitions.

Claim (3) follows from (1) and (2), and from Kaspar’s definition of “intuitionism.”

what I take to be our common ground over at least a “minimal moral realism,” along with his rejection of physicalism; along with most of what he says about moral relations, transactions, and kinds in chap. 5, secs. 3-7, and much of what he says about promises in chap. 5, secs. 8-9. I part company with his identification of naturalism with physicalism, with some of the specifically Moorean elements of his nonnaturalism, and with the metaphysically realist account of kinds. On minimal moral realism, see Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, “The Many Moral Realisms,” in Geoffrey Sayre-McCord, ed., *Essays on Moral Realism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 1-23.

Claim (4) relies on the preceding and disputes Kaspar's response to A. J. Ayer's objection about intuitionism's failure to provide "some criterion by which one may decide between conflicting intuitions" (p. 44).

I discuss these claims below in turn, and end with what I take to be a qualified agreement with Kaspar about the utility of what he calls the "methods of intuitionism."

3. Moral Intuitions and Self-Evidence

Early in Chapter 3, Kaspar points out that the dispute between intuitionists and their critics is usefully seen as the moral exemplification of a broader epistemic dispute between rationalists and empiricists:

Empiricism holds that all of our knowledge has its source in our [sensory] experience of the world. Rationalism disagrees, claiming that though a great deal of our knowledge is gotten through experience, we have significant a priori knowledge about the world. (p. 51)

I agree with the characterization of both views and also with the claim that the rationalist-empiricist divide explains much (though not necessarily all) of the divide between intuitionists and anti-intuitionists. Intuitionists claim that moral intuitions qualify as knowledge because moral intuitions are self-evident truths, and when *S* understands a self-evident truth and affirms it, *S* has knowledge. Foundationalist empiricists like myself agree that some things are self-evident, and agree that what is self-evident is knowledge. What they dispute is that moral intuitions satisfy this description. They also dispute the rationalist conception of self-evidence and of knowledge itself. The dispute between the two sides is thus a complicated one. Kaspar admits that he lacks the space to make a proper case for rationalism (p. 51), and I myself lack the space to make a proper case for empiricism. My aim here, then, is to sketch the nature of the disagreement in order to clarify what's at issue.

I need to start with what may turn out to be a non-issue, but which nonetheless strikes me as a bit of a puzzle right at the start. Kaspar asserts that there is a set of moral intuitions that is self-evidently true, and that if we figure out what we really think about morality, we can discover its members (or many of them) (pp. 12-18). Occasionally, he offers examples of this set intended to illustrate their self-evident truth, for example, "harming others is wrong." Here is the puzzle: (a) All of Kaspar's examples of self-evident intuitions are examples of unqualified moral judgments (whether evaluative or prescriptive), like "harming others is wrong." (b) However, as Kaspar's discussion of Immanuel Kant makes clear, Kaspar is not a moral absolutist (p. 39); he thinks that many, if not most, moral claims are contextual or defeasible. (c) And yet, none of the claims he offers as candidate intuitions is described in its contextualized or defeasible form.

The problem here is that if (b) is the case, then none of the moral intuitions that Kaspar offers as examples of self-evident truths is in fact true as

stated. Surely, harming others is not wrong *per se*; what's wrong is harming them in some contexts rather than others. In fact, the principle that determines when it's legitimate to harm someone strikes me as very far from self-evident (in the technical sense) or even obvious or clear (in the colloquial sense). And the scope or definition of the concept "harm" is a notoriously difficult question. As it stands, then, "harming others is wrong" is neither always true (as Kaspar himself recognizes), nor even a claim of particularly clear content. Since (c) is the case, it's not clear whether the content of our moral intuitions maps onto the (vague or false) moral judgment in the text, or to the contextualized version that is not made explicit in the text.

The dilemma here is that every example of a self-evident moral truth that Kaspar offers in the book is vague, false, or inexplicit. When we combine this with the conflicting lists of moral intuitions given by W. D. Ross, Robert Audi, Russ Shafer-Landau, and Huemer near the end of the book (p. 172), we confront an initial difficulty: If moral intuitions are self-evident, and we all have knowledge of them, why is it so difficult to come up with a single uncontroversial case of one that guides action, even in the hands of intuitionists?

In fairness, Kaspar says that the duties he defends in the book are all *prima facie* duties in Ross's sense, where the "*prima facie*" proviso is omitted throughout the text of his book for brevity's sake (pp. 20-22). Fair enough, but in that case, I wonder whether Kaspar would agree that none of the following is self-evident:

- Our *actual* duties (p. 21)⁴;
- The *weights* of our *prima facie* duties (p. 22);
- The *fact* that moral duties take the form of "ineradicable but overridable *prima facie* duties" (p. 21).

If he *would* admit all of that, then it seems to me that intuitions end up doing relatively little of the work of guiding action, so that there is an element of truth in the common objection that intuitionism merely yields moral truisms (pp. 67-69). An enormous amount of our moral life, possibly the bulk of it, requires the epistemic and deliberative resources of something other than self-evident intuitions.

The more fundamental issue, however, concerns the nature of self-evidence itself. Kaspar quotes Audi as offering the following "two condition account of self-evident cognition":

A self-evident proposition is (roughly) a truth such that understanding it will meet two conditions: that understanding is (a)

⁴ In other words, the "moral discernment" required to determine which duty is our actual duty is *not* self-evident (p. 21).

sufficient for one's being justified in believing it . . . and (b) sufficient for knowing the proposition provided one believes it on the basis of understanding it. (p. 52)⁵

Kaspar adds that given the standard "justified true belief" (JTB) account of knowledge, the proposition has to be believed by *S* to count as knowledge for *S*. He later points out that Audi's account of self-evidence involves a "unary justification structure": "knowledge that has a unary justification structure involves the proposition that is known, or believed to be known, providing evidence for itself. So the knowledge content and the evidence for that knowledge are one and the same" (p. 57). The essential distinction is one between knowledge content and the evidence by which the knowledge content is known. Another important point is that what is self-evident is not, on Kaspar's account, evident in the way that the deliverances of the senses are evident (pp. 19-20). Something can be self-evident for *S*, but not evident to *S*. Its self-evidence may not be evident to *S*, either.

As a foundationalist, I agree that some things are self-evident. As an empiricist, however, my view is that what is self-evident (and the only thing that is) is the evidence of the senses on a direct-realist account of perception.⁶ On a view like this, claims approximate self-evidence the closer they are to the perceptual level, and are both less evident and less clearly candidates for approximation to self-evidence the farther they are from the perceptual level. In other words, what is self-evident is what is *transparently evident* to cognition, and the only thing that fits the bill is sensory perception. Since moral knowledge is not literally perceptual, none of it is self-evident. In fact, since most of it is relatively distant from the perceptual level, very little of it (if any of it) even approximates self-evidence.

An empiricism of this variety has some radical implications. On a view like this, not even " $1 + 1 = 2$ " is as transparently evident to cognition as the fact that the equation is written there on the page. Where a rationalist would insist on the self-evidence of " $1 + 1 = 2$," an empiricist would insist (with John Stuart Mill) that the equation is a generalization from our perceptual experience with countable things, and that what is self-evident is our perceptual experience of such things. As for the rest of mathematics, it awaits the fortunes of a yet-to-be-worked-out empiricist theory of mathematics.⁷ As for claims like "nothing is all red and all green all over," it's

⁵ Robert Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundations of Ethics," in Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Mark Timmons, eds., *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁶ See Kelley, *Evidence of the Senses*; and Gotthelf and Lennox, eds., *Concepts and Their Role in Knowledge*.

⁷ For an overview, see Donald Gillies, "An Empiricist Philosophy of Mathematics and Its Implications for the History of Mathematics," in E. Grosholz and H. Breger, eds.,

a generalization from our experience with colored objects, and what is self-evident is experience of that kind. Anyway, even if mathematical or quasi-logical claims *were* self-evident, this would neither imply nor make plausible the claim that moral claims were.⁸ We would need a further account explaining why the content of self-evident claims in the one case resembled that in the other.

This sketch makes clear where the empiricist differs with the Audi-Kaspar intuitionist on self-evidence. On the empiricist view, our perceptual contact with the world is self-evident, but that contact is non-doxastic and non-propositional. Yet it counts as knowledge if anything does. So the JTB analysis of knowledge is misleading: The most *evident* cases of knowledge are not a matter of *belief* at all, but of our perceptual connection to the world that presents itself to our senses. As far as belief is concerned, all justification is binary: When *S* believes that *p*, the evidence for *p* somehow ultimately reduces to perceptual evidence. Contrary to the implication of Audi's definition, merely believing that *p* and understanding its content can never be sufficient for being justified in the belief that *p*. What justifies the agent is tying the belief back to its basis in perception. Since all (or almost all) moral knowledge is doxastic, all justification about morality ends up being binary.

The contrast with intuitionism should be obvious. Take any of the intuitionist's candidates for self-evidence. None of them will satisfy, or even approximate, the empiricist's criteria for self-evidence. If the candidate is "harming others is wrong," the empiricist first begins by pointing out that there are qualified and unqualified versions of this proposition. Intuitively, the unqualified versions seem wrong, but the qualified versions seem far too complicated to be self-evident. Suppose that we fix on some candidate version of the principle, qualified or unqualified. In either case, the resulting principle will have a complex conceptual structure requiring a fair bit of analysis; in other words, we'll need to do serious analytic work just to clarify our concepts of "harm" and "wrongness." On an empiricist view, though, the serious analytic work in question consists in finding the *perceptual* basis of those concepts, an arduous (and, by rationalist lights, perhaps quixotic) task.⁹

The Growth of Mathematical Knowledge (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishing, 2000), pp. 41-57.

⁸ I thus reject Kaspar's assumption that if intuitions have a role to play in metaphysics, epistemology, or science, the burden of proof lies with those who are skeptical about their use in ethics (p. 65). The burden of proof always lies with whoever makes an assertion in a given context. I see no reason to assume that if intuitions work in one domain, they must work in some other or every other domain, and there is in any case plenty of disagreement to be had about the kind of work they do in metaphysics, epistemology, or science. Since Kaspar himself insists that ethics is *sui generis*, he himself limits the sorts of inferences that one can legitimately make from non-ethical to ethical method.

⁹ For one version of this project, see Jesse Prinz, *Furnishing the Mind: Concepts and*

Precisely because we can begin a regress of justification that demands this perceptual basis for an intuition like “harming others is wrong,” our understanding and avowal of the proposition cannot constitute its evidential basis or justification. The justification requires a further step.

Obviously, what I’ve done here is simply to assert what empiricism entails rather than argue for it, but I hope we can now see how and why a commitment to empiricism conflicts with a commitment to rationalist intuitionism (and also, I hope, how the two commitments resemble one another). Rationalists and empiricists disagree on the nature of self-evidence and on the cognitive items that qualify as self-evident. In order to resolve the disagreement, we’d need to adjudicate that issue at the outset.

4. Skepticism about the Probative Value of Moral Intuitions

In the previous section, I contrasted the empiricist account of self-evidence with the intuitionist one and suggested why, by empiricist strictures, moral intuitions are not self-evident truths. Here, I want to suggest that if they’re not self-evident truths, they can’t be knowledge, and that merely believing them doesn’t make them knowledge.

Now, obviously, the central intuitionist claim is that moral intuitions *are* self-evident truths, so that the dispute over that claim is where the action is. It might therefore seem pointless to consider the probative value of moral intuitions while bracketing claims about their self-evidence; that seems like *Hamlet* without the prince. However, I think that doing so draws attention to ways in which, even apart from technical issues about self-evidence, like most intuitionists, Kaspar subtly upgrades the epistemic status of moral intuitions in the very act of describing them, thereby giving them a positive epistemic status that would strike the non-intuitionist reader as mysterious. In each of these cases, I think the stark questions arise: How is the epistemic agent doing any more than clarifying the content of his beliefs? And why think that doing so tracks the truth?

In an early characterization of intuitionism, Kaspar writes:

As we examine our moral beliefs some assumptions must be avoided [A]t several points we are likely to doubt that we know a particular moral proposition that seems correct to us. Doubting whether we know a given proposition is almost always salutary in philosophical inquiry. But the important thing now is merely what seems correct to us. So doubts should be registered, then let go. (pp. 15-16)

This procedure seems to me to stack the deck. Why can’t what seems correct to us *include* doubts? After all, it can seem correct to doubt, and doubt

Their Perceptual Basis (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 2004).

can itself be part of the inquiry that tells us what, on reflection, one really believes. I don't see any *a priori* reason why doubt must be "let go" in moral inquiry when it arises. Doing so, it seems to me, gives the epistemic agent a false sense of certainty, and artificially upgrades what he takes himself to "know."

Later, in a discussion of epistemic appraisal, Kaspar discusses a similar issue at length:

The pioneers of analytic philosophy effectively used epistemic appraisal to route realism's adversaries. Why did it work? Epistemic appraisal helps us determine what we really think about any subject. In the process, it often brings into focus what we really know Often our best reason for believing something is simply that it is epistemically preferable to the alternatives. For any two beliefs about a given subject we will have different degrees of epistemic confidence. That we have more confidence that *p* than that *q*, after considering them, is itself a reason to believe *p* over *q*. It gives us strong *prima facie* justification for believing that *p*. So contrasting our options concerning lying in the proper context will justify our judgment. Likewise, by contrasting "It is wrong to harm others," with "It will not maximize the good," when harming someone is a real temptation, the intuitionist moral principle provides strong *prima facie* justification for why we should not harm them. The principle of utility does not.

Not everyone will accept this way of examining theories. Some will question the claim that just because we are more confident in one proposition *p* over another *q*, it constitutes evidence for the former over the latter. Merely being inclined to believe *p* over *q*, they will say, contributes absolutely no evidence for *p*. Rather it only informs us of our psychological bent at some time. Psychological confidence is not epistemic confidence, and epistemic appraisal seems based on confusing the two.

In response, I must stress that epistemic appraisal does not provide conclusive evidence for a proposition. Instead, it provides strong *prima facie* justification that can be overturned in a number of ways. (pp. 60-61, footnotes omitted)

First, I think it begs the question to say that determining what we really think about a subject "brings into focus what we really *know*": it merely brings into focus what we really *believe*. Second, the passage seems to equate degrees of epistemic confidence with degrees of epistemic preferability. Kaspar himself recognizes (at the end) that the conflation is problematic, but I'm unsatisfied by his response. In particular, I wonder: How does the "overturnability" of one intuition by another suggest that epistemic confidence can be equated with epistemic preferability in any sense at all?

Fundamentally, I don't see why the sheer *having* of a belief and/or the sheer regarding it as preferable to others (even all others) gives it "strong *prima facie* justification." I think it just gives the epistemic agent a strong propensity to believe it, which doesn't seem to me to be justificatory. Surely, the question is *why p* is preferable to the alternatives, but Kaspar's account implies that the confident believer need not ask why or have any answer in order to be justified (apart from regarding *p* as self-evident). Furthermore, if I were a utilitarian, I wouldn't grant that "It is wrong to harm others" provides strong *prima facie* justification that "It will not maximize the good" does not. It seems more obvious to me that that's a case of begging the question than that "It is wrong to harm others" is self-evident.

If we put the two preceding points together, I think we get a new objection to intuitionism. Intuitionism tells us that "biases, wishful thinking, hidden antipathies and affections all must be acknowledged and temporarily put aside as we proceed" (p. 15). As I see it, though, the suppression of doubt flouts this very advice. It expresses a bias in favor of (or affection for) confidence, an antipathy for uncertainty, and tolerance for the wishful thinking involved in conflating degrees of confidence with degrees of epistemic preferability.

5. Moral Disagreement

In the preceding sections, I've raised some doubts about Kaspar's account of the epistemic merits of moral intuitions, but hardly refuted it. Suppose *ex hypothesi* that I'm right: moral intuitions are neither self-evident nor knowledge. If that's so, I think we can see the point of A. J. Ayer's version of the argument from moral disagreement, an objection that I don't think Kaspar adequately characterizes in his discussions of moral disagreement. Ayer puts the point as follows. Intuitionism, he says,

makes statements of value unverifiable. For it is notorious that what seems intuitively certain to one person may seem doubtful, even false, to another. So that unless it is possible to provide some criterion by which one may decide between conflicting intuitions, a mere appeal to intuition is worthless as a test of a proposition's validity. (p. 44)¹⁰

In discussing Ayer's and J. L. Mackie's versions of the argument from disagreement, Kaspar focuses on the claim that if we have intuitive moral knowledge, there ought not to be moral disagreement, but I think this misconstrues the point of Ayer's criticism. As the first clause of the last sentence in the quotation makes clear, however, Ayer's criticism is not one about the *explanation* of moral disagreement, but a request for a procedure to *resolve* disagreement. Ayer's point is that intuitionists lack such a procedure,

¹⁰ Citing A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (Mineola, NY: Dover, 1952), p. 106.

and that lacking a procedure is a defect of the theory. I think that the objection is a good one, and is made plausible by Ayer's implicit (and my explicit) prior assumption that moral intuitions are not knowledge. If no moral intuitions were knowledge, then it's clear why intuitionists would lack a procedure for resolving disputes. Resolution of a dispute presupposes knowledge of the issues involved in the dispute (or so Ayer seems to be assuming, as I would). All that intuitionism does, however, is to induce us to clarify the intuitions we have. If no intuition counts as knowledge, intuitionism lacks the resources to resolve even the kinds of disputes that intuitionists have among themselves. If so, adoption of intuitionism would *itself* be among the factors explaining moral error. It would give the appearance of knowledge to epistemic agents who in fact lacked the resources of knowledge, and thereby yield interminable disagreement about how to resolve irresolvable conflicts of intuition.

There's another way of putting Ayer's point. Ayer thinks that we need a criterion to decide between conflicting intuitions. It might at first seem that the intuitionist should deny that we need this, but in fact Kaspar provides at least one criterion of his own. If two individuals have conflicting intuitions, Kaspar implies, the intuitions of the "normal adult" should be preferred to (or possibly trump) the intuitions of the non-normal non-adult (p. 72). At this point, I suspect that Ayer (or an Ayerian fellow traveler) would have two points to make in response.

The first is that it's not necessarily true that the intuitions of "normal" people are always to be preferred to those of the psychologically or psychiatrically abnormal. Counter-intuitive as it may seem, it could be that certifiably abnormal people at least sometimes have unique (and true) moral insights to offer the rest of us—a fact suggested in my view by the examples of Jesus, Friedrich Nietzsche, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Ayn Rand, among others.¹¹ All five are, in my view, psychologically abnormal, but all five had profound moral insights.

The second is that even if we insist on a "normality criterion" for intuitions (so that only the intuitions of normal people count), intuitionism needs a criterion for normality itself. However, producing a criterion for normality is neither a trivial task, nor (as far as I can see) a matter of self-evident intuitions. This isn't a knock-down objection to intuitionism, but it does suggest (as I did in the previous section) that intuitions are less *fundamental* to moral inquiry than intuitionists want to suggest. The real

¹¹ I mean the claim in the text literally, not facetiously: My point is that the named individuals all seem psychologically or psychiatrically abnormal, and yet have profoundly important philosophical insights to offer, despite their abnormality. For a systematic discussion of a similar issue (as regards autism), see Temple Grandin and Richard Panek, *The Autistic Brain: Helping Different Kinds of Mind Succeed* (New York: Mariner Books, 2014). Thanks to Kate Herrick for helpful discussion on this topic.

explanatory work is being done by a non-intuition-based criterion of normality.¹²

6. Intuitions and Moral Inquiry

I want to end on an agreement with Kaspar that came as something of a surprise to me. I've been focusing here on what I take to be the defects of intuitionism, which are in turn the epistemic defects of intuitions. The fundamental problem is that intuitionism involves a mismatch between mind and world. It insists on a world independent of mind, then saddles us with an epistemology that lacks the resources to access that world.

Although I finished the book unconvinced by the claims of intuitionism, I also left it with renewed respect for the power for the intuitionist method. Suppose that empiricism is true, and that all of my empiricist criticisms of Kaspar's intuitionism hit their mark. If that's so, Kaspar's intuitionism implicitly brings out a defect in empiricism that requires acknowledgement and confrontation: Empiricist strictures on knowledge are so severe as to leave all of moral knowledge in doubt, and leave all of it in abeyance, as we wait for empiricists to "put on their boots and jackets" and trace moral knowledge back to perception. Since we have to live our lives, and most of us aspire to live moral lives, we can hardly wait for the success of the empiricist project before we form moral beliefs or engage in moral deliberation or action. If so, then an austere empiricism of the sort I've described here threatens to make moral life unlivable, at least if moral life involves an aspiration to moral knowledge, as I think it does.

That suggests one or both of two possibilities. Either empiricists have to find an empiricist way of narrowing the gap between their sky-high epistemic strictures and the practical demands of everyday moral life, or they have to adopt a suitably empiricized version of something like Kaspar's intuitionism as an intermediate or stop-gap epistemology *en route* to the Grand Empiricist Project of reducing moral knowledge to its perceptual basis. (Or both.) What that suggests to me is that something like the "incorporation project" that Kaspar describes near the end of the book is very much on target (and incidentally, very well stated) not just for intuitionists, but also for non-intuitionists (pp. 167-69). Even foundationalist empiricists have to figure out how much of Kasparian intuitionism they ought to bring on board in order to remedy the lacunae in their own theorizing. Of course, they'd have to do this while making sure to avoid waking up in the Kafkaesque predicament of discovering that they have themselves become Kasparian intuitionists *tout court*. The disagreement, then, turns on the *specific* role that intuitions play in moral inquiry. I've now come more clearly to see that an empiricist has to grant that intuitions play some role, and has to specify that role compatibly with empiricist strictures.

¹² See Alan Gewirth's interesting comments on mental health in *Reason and Morality* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1978), pp. 8-9.

You can't convince all of the philosophers all of the time, or even many of them any of the time, but convincing a hard-boiled foundationalist empiricist like me to befriend his inner intuitions is no mean feat. Intuitively speaking, it seems to deserve gratitude. I suppose we can agree to disagree about whether or not that particular intuition counts as knowledge.¹³

¹³ Many thanks to David Kaspar for suggesting that we hold the symposium on his book at the Jacques Marchais Museum of Tibetan Art, and to Meg Ventrudo, the Museum's Executive Director, for help in organizing the event. Thanks, of course, to both of my fellow symposium contributors, Moti Mizrahi and Matthew Pianalto, for their contributions to the symposium, and to Kate Herrick and Michael Young for valuable discussion.

