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Intuiting Intuition: The Seeming Account of Moral Intuition

HOSSEIN DABBAGH*

*Doha Institute for Graduate Studies, Doha, Qatar
Institute for Cognitive Science Studies, Tehran, Iran*

In this paper, I introduce and elucidate what seems to me the best understanding of moral intuition with reference to the intellectual seeming account. First, I will explain Bengson's (and Bealer's) quasi-perceptualist account of philosophical intuition in terms of intellectual seeming. I then shift from philosophical intuition to moral intuition and will delineate Audi's doxastic account of moral intuition to argue that the intellectual seeming account of intuition is superior to the doxastic account of intuition. Next, I argue that we can apply our understanding of the intellectual seeming account of philosophical intuition to the moral intuition. To the extent that we can argue for the intellectual seeming account of philosophical intuition, we can have the intellectual seeming account of moral intuition.

Keywords: Philosophical intuition, moral intuition, intellectual seeming, Bealer, Bengson.

1. *Introduction*

Epistemological moral intuitionism is ordinarily thought of as an account of non-inferentially justified *moral* intuitions. In this paper, I deal with intuitionists' mental ontology. I defend the quasi-perceptualist account of *philosophical* intuition, which understands intuitions as *intellectual seemings*. According to this account, to have an intuition that *p* is to see the intellectual seeming that *p*. I will say more about intellectual seemings and certain shared phenomenological features between intuitions and perceptual experiences. In order to do so, I appeal to John Bengson's view about intuition. Following Bengson (2010),

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I explain intellectual seemings in terms of “presentation” and “translucency”. Although Bengson echoes almost all that George Bealer (1998) believes, Bengson labels his account of intuition “Quasi-Perceptualism”. Bengson puts more weight on the shared phenomenological features between intuition and perceptual experience than Bealer did and Bengson claims that intuition is fundamentally just *like* perceptual experience but is still not *sensory* experience.

In the next section, I rely on Bengson’s view to outline a quasi-perceptualist account of philosophical intuition to explain intuition in terms of intellectual seemings. However, he recently argues in his paper, “The Intellectual Given” (2015), that his perceptualist account differs from a seeming account of intuitions, e.g. Bealer’s seeming account. For example, Bengson says that seemings are not non-voluntary, compare to presentations discussed in core quasi-perceptualist thesis. Or while a seeming is explicit, i.e. its content is available when the content seems true, presentations in core quasi-perceptualist thesis can be inexplicit. In this paper, however, I assume that what Bengson considers as core quasi-perceptualist thesis can be applicable to intellectual seemings. For the sake of argument, the distinction between core quasi-perceptualist thesis and seeming view is not at stake. I believe Bealer’s seeming account and Bengson’s quasi-perceptualist thesis can give us important features to explain how moral intuitions work in terms of seeming.

After having understood what philosophical intuition is in terms of seeming, I then shift from philosophical intuition to moral intuition. I will say about Audi’s doxastic account of moral intuition and alternatively explain moral intuitions in terms of quasi-perceptualist account which understands moral intuitions as intellectual seemings. In the meantime, I argue that the intellectual seeming account of intuition is superior to the doxastic account of intuition.

2. *Quasi-Perceptualist Account of Philosophical Intuition*¹

There are some similarities between intuition and perceptual experiences. By perceptual experiences, I assume the standard representational theory of perception. According to this view, to have a perception of an object *O* as having a property *F* is to be in a perceptual mental state with a phenomenal character which represents *O* as having the property *F*, i.e. it has representational content that *O* is *F*.

Perceptual experiences should be distinguished from *inference*. In making inferences, we often actively practice a number of steps of explicit reasoning, whereas in perceptual experiences something simply comes to us passively. Yet, we can use some inferences to explain why we have a particular perceptual experience. Thus, perceptual experiences, in this sense, give us a sense of directness, “givenness” and viv-

¹ In writing this section, I was influenced by the works of Dancy (2014) and Bengson’s doctoral thesis (2010), “The Intellectual Given”.

idness. Perceptual experiences are examples of non-doxastic states, so essentially can involve grounding non-inferential justification for our beliefs (see Chappell 2008).

Bengson is impressed by certain phenomenological features shared between intuition and perceptual experiences (see Bengson 2015). Of course, there are several differences between perceptual experience and intuition. For instance, intuition lacks the rich sensory phenomenology which most perceptual experiences have (see Williamson 2007: 217 and Sosa 2007: 48). Also, perceptual experiences are workable only in particular cases, while intuition deals both with the particular and the general cases (see Hintikka 1999: 137 ff.).

However, there are some abstract similarities between them that might be helpful in giving an account of the nature of intuition. For example, both perceptual experiences and *some* intuitions are direct, contentful and non-factive states. Suppose I have a sensory experience that there is a pen on the table in front of me. So, I am in a state with the direct content that there is a pen on the table. But, the experience might be non-veridical, i.e. not coincide with reality. Even more so, some of our intuitions, especially in moral cases, often fail to be correct. This must be true, since they so often contradict one another. And when one person's moral intuitions contradict another person's, at least one of these people must have incorrect moral intuitions.

What more can be said about abstract similarities between intuitions and perceptual experiences? If intuitions and perceptual experiences are, in a certain way, similar, what sort of mental state is intuition?

We can make a distinction among different contentful states in terms of representationality and presentationality. Some states such as beliefs, perceptual experiences and intuitions are representational in the sense that they represent the world in a certain way as if their content were true. For example, the belief that "Everest is the highest mountain in the world" *represents* the world in a certain way that its content is true. Or one's moral belief that p, e.g. "surrogate motherhood is wrong", *represents* the world as being such that p is true, i.e. it is not permissible to obtain or to be a surrogate mother. However, some states such as hopes, desires and wishes do not represent the world in a certain way as if their content were true, although they are contentful, since they do not aim to describe the world. For example, my hope that "World War III does not happen" does not represent the world in a way that its content describes the world. Spelling it out in terms of "direction of fit", we can say that beliefs aim to fit the world, but desires, hopes, intentions, and so on aim for the world to fit them (see Searle 1979).

There are also some contentful representational states that are also presentational, in the sense that not only do they represent the world in a certain way, but also they *present* the world in a certain way.² For

² We can also think of mere presentational states when we are in pain. Presentational states such as pain come to us non-voluntarily and without our conscious intention.

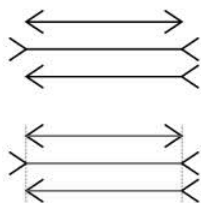
example, when I have a perceptual experience that there is a book in front of me, the world is represented to me in a certain way that it is true that there is a book in front of me. Furthermore, while I have this perceptual experience, it is presented to me (non-inferentially) that there is a book in front of me. In fact, I have the (non-inferred) impression or feeling that there is a book in front of me. Of course, we can have this (non-inferred) sense that there is a book in front of me even if it turns out that this is not so. For example, Jim Pryor writes about the presentationality of perceptual experience as

the peculiar “phenomenal force” or way our experiences have of presenting propositions to us. Our experience represents propositions in such a way that it “feels as if” we could tell that those propositions are true—and that we’re perceiving them to be true—just by virtue of having them so represented (Pryor 2000: 547).

William Tolhurst (1998: 298–299) also has the same idea in his mind when he writes about seeming states as “felt givenness”:

The real difference between seemings and other states that can incline one to believe their content is that seemings have the feel of truth, the feel of a state whose content reveals how things really are. Their felt givenness typically leads one to experience believing that things are as they seem as an objectively fitting or proper response to the seeming.

Consider now the famous picture of Mueller Lyer (below). Although the unequalness of the two lines is non-voluntarily *presented* to us, we still believe that they are equal as they *represent* to us in another way. In such cases where it is as if something has come to us, we are actually in a state that is presentational. This entails that unlike representational states, presentational states do not simply represent the world as being a certain way. Yet they present the world as being that way as if things are so.



Presentational states have at least three characteristics: they are gradable, non-voluntary and compelling (see Dancy 2014). They are gradable in the sense that their quality may vary from one situation to another situation, depending upon the way in which they are presenting. They are non-voluntary in the sense that, unlike decisions (which are active), presentational states are passive and happen to us (see Wittgenstein 1976: 632). They are compelling in the sense that it is hard to resist assenting to their contents when they are presented.

Having understood what the difference between presentationality and representationality is, we are able to agree that the presentation-

ality of perceptual experience is not a very challenging idea. We should accept that perceptual experiences are presentational states.

However, what about intuitions? Are they presentational states? There are some reasons, I believe, to think that intuition is a presentational state—a state that presents its content as being so. For instance, suppose that we have an intuition that it is not possible that both *p* and not-*p*. When we have this intuition, it is not simply to say that we are in a state that *represents* the world as if the principle of non-contradiction is true. We can have just the *sense* or *impression* that this principle is so. And just like perceptual error that an object *x* can present itself as a *y*, in case of intuitional error *p* can present itself as not-*p* or vice versa. For example, we might have an intuition that *p* because it seems to us that *p*. But after further reflection or getting confirmation from a third party, we find that we were wrong.

Thus, although intuition and perceptual experience are different and have different properties, they have some similarities and can be the same kind of state in terms of *presentations*. Following Dancy (2014) and Bengson (2010), I call this

*The First Quasi-Perceptualist Thesis: (i) Intuitions are **akin** to perceptual experiences in being **presentational**.*

Formulating intuitions in terms of presentationality has different virtues. First of all, this thesis simply makes a distinction between intuition and some other mental states such as guesses, hunches, hypotheses, conjectures or beliefs that are merely *representational*. Just as perceptual experiences are typically non-voluntary, intuition is a non-voluntary state and can oppose what we believe or are inclined to believe. Hence, insofar as intuitions are akin to perceptions in being presentations, they are *belief-independent*.

Moreover, by appealing to the first quasi-perceptualist thesis, we reveal another difference. We can make a distinction between intuition and *dispositions* or *inclinations* such as attractions and temptations. Intuitions are presentations, but inclinations are not. As happens in the case of wishful thinking, it is possible to have a feeling of being inclined to believe that *p*; however, *p* is not presented to one as true. Thus, the first quasi-perceptualist thesis identifies a difference between intuitions and other phenomena in terms of non-presentationality and presentationality.

As a second virtue, the first quasi-perceptualist thesis is able to provide us an account for *psychological* roles of intuition. In fact, the thesis *explains* how intuitions help us to come to believe something or form our beliefs. For example, in Jackson's thought experiment, we may form our *belief* that Mary does learn by having the *intuition* that she does learn. In this sense, intuition has the *explanatory* power with respect to beliefs, i.e. intuitions explain beliefs. For in different situations we can say "I believe that *p* on the basis of the intuition that *p*". Why do we believe that, for example, Mary does learn? Simply because

it *strikes* us that Mary does know or we have the intuition that Mary does learn. Therefore, the thesis may explain why we have the corresponding intuitive belief. That intuitions are presentations helps us to explain why intuitions are explanatory of belief.

Perceptual experiences also have another characteristic shared with intuition, namely, *translucency*. Bengson explains the idea of translucency in this way:

Let us call a presentational state σ of x *translucent* iff, in having σ , it is presented to x that p is so, and there is no content q (where $q \neq p$) such that it seems to x that p is presented as being so by q 's being presented as being so (2010: 38).

Yet, what does it mean when we say a mental state is translucent? According to Bengson, calling intuitions translucent is a way of saying that intuitions are direct (or non-inferred). However, there is a distinction in philosophy of perception between “translucent” and “transparent”. The distinction picks out as translucent a class of experiences that are not completely direct or non-inferred. Contrast this with transparent experiences, where this is not so. For example, when I look at a tree or when I introspect my visual experience, my experience is transparent to me (see Smith 2008). What Bengson must mean by translucent experiences is transparent, direct (or non-inferred) experiences.³ Let me explain.

Suppose one is sitting in front of a table and there is a pen on the table. One's vision of the pen directly presents the fact that there is a pen on the table. Contrast this with the situation that one suddenly notices that the pen's ink is empty by seeing that the pen does not work. It may be presented to such a person that the ink is empty even though she lacks perceptual experience of the ink (suppose the ink tank is covered up). That the pen is not working serves as her “perceptual guide” (see Bengson 2010). Most likely, in such a case, one infers that the ink is empty from the fact that the pen is not working. One thinks that the best explanation of the pen's not working is that the ink has run out, and so one makes the inference about the ink. This entails that the presentation of the pen as being out of ink is not direct (translucent).⁴

We can think of this distinction between direct or translucent presentation and indirect presentation, in the *intellectual* cases, as well. Consider the intuition that “identity is transitive”. This intuition is *translucent* in the sense that it is *presented* to one as being the case that identity is transitive. It does not present to one as being so by something else (other propositions) being presented so. It seems that one can “just see”, *directly*, that it is so. However, there are intuitions which do not have this *directness* or are not *translucent*, especially cases in which one may be presented with multiple contents, some of which hold in virtue

³ For the sake of argument, this distinction is not at stake here. I treat “translucent” as if it means “transparent” in this paper and use them interchangeably.

⁴ For another example, see Dretske (1969: 153 ff.).

of the others. In effect, translucency has two components: *presentation* and *directness*, which bring the *epistemic* status of being *un-inferred*.⁵ Note: that some presentation is translucent and thus un-inferred does not imply that its content *cannot* be inferred as well.

In the light of the discussion of translucency, we can now add another constituent to the quasi-perceptualist thesis. I call this

The Second Quasi-Perceptualist Thesis: (ii) Intuitions are intellectual translucent states.

But how is this “intellectual” state generated? Why do not we postulate intuitions as sensory or perceptual states? One might even object that intellectual states are *completely non-sensory* because they do not involve sense data. If this is the case, it seems that all we have said so far about the certain shared phenomenological features between intellectual seemings and perceptual experiences is redundant.

The answer is that, although intuitions are similar to perception in terms of translucency and presentation, intuitions *cannot* be just sensory perceptual states. We can also think of two negative and positive readings of an intellectual state: a negative reading of an intellectual state equates “intellectual” with *completely non-sensory*. However, a positive conception reads an intellectual state as a state that involves the *deployment* or *exercise* of *concepts*. The quasi-perceptualist does not need to choose between these two readings. Therefore, the quasi-perceptualist thesis is “neutral” on this issue (see Bengson 2010).⁶

Hence, combining the two constituents of the quasi-perceptualist thesis, i.e. (i) and (ii), yields the core idea of quasi-perceptualism about intuition. This can be formulated as

The Quasi-Perceptualist Theory of Intuition: Intuitions are translucent intellectual presentations.

Although quasi-perceptualism explains intuition with terminology different from that used by Bealer (2000), I think they are both saying the same thing. In other words, Bengson tries to elaborate what Bealer means when he uses intellectual seemings. And by seemings, in Bengson’s terminology, Bealer means something direct or translucent and presentational.

We should bear in mind that nothing we have said implies that intuitions must be *unreflective* or *gut feelings*.⁷ Rather, a translucent intellectual presentation with certain content may occur in the case of *substantial reflection*. But through this reflection, intuitions do not

⁵ I elsewhere argued for the epistemology of moral intuitionism on the basis of “non-inferred epistemological intuitionism”. See Dabbagh (2017).

⁶ I do not deny that there is a tradition of philosophers such as Kant, Sellars, and McDowell etc. who think that perceptual states involve the deployment of concepts. For example, when I see a tree in front of me I have deployed the concept of a tree. My claim here is compatible with what they said.

⁷ See Prinz (2006) for an alternative view.

need to make a *transition* from one proposition to the second one, because they are translucent.⁸

So far, I have given an explanation—and to some extent justification—of what a philosophical intuition is. It is now time to examine whether quasi-perceptualist account of philosophical intuition in terms of seeming is applicable to moral intuition. I argue we can have a seeming account of moral intuition as well.

3. *Shifting from Philosophical Intuition to Moral Intuition: The Seeming Account of Moral Intuition*

Having discussed what *philosophical* intuition is, we now direct our focus to what *moral* intuition is. Jennifer Nado (2012) distinguishes between *epistemological* intuition and *moral* intuition and argues that the mental states falling under the category of intuition are quite heterogeneous. In almost the same manner, I assume here that it is plausible to think of two separate types of intuition with different content as “philosophical intuition” and “moral intuition”. However, I do not believe that philosophical intuition and moral intuition are not two different types of mental state. For having different content does not make something a different mental state. The nature of moral intuitions and philosophical intuitions and how they work to justify our beliefs are the same. Thus, the characteristics that we attribute to philosophical intuitions can also be attributed to moral intuitions. Yet, we can make a distinction between philosophical and moral intuition, in terms of their different content, and this distinction between philosophical and moral intuition helps us to focus solely on moral intuition.

The term “ethical intuition” or “moral intuition” has often raised difficulties in the history of moral philosophy. Some moral philosophers think that the term “moral intuition” refers to a moral judgement shared by philosophers and scholars. Some of these philosophers think that moral intuition is just immediate or non-inferential moral judgements. Some others think of moral intuition as a pre-theoretical judgement. Another understanding refers to philosophers who think about moral intuitions as apparent and self-evident truths.⁹ For example, notably, Robert Audi describes moral intuition as a doxastic state about a self-evident proposition.¹⁰

Below, I will delineate Audi’s doxastic account of moral intuition to argue that the seeming account of intuition is better than the doxastic account of intuition. I will partly argue against Audi’s account of moral

⁸ This translucency is like non-inferentiality in the case of propositional belief.

⁹ I have used Lillehammer’s (2011) various “conceptions of ethical intuition” here.

¹⁰ This does not entail that, Audi believes, we cannot have intuitions about non-self-evident propositions. We can have intuitions that are not intuitions of self-evident propositions. See Audi (1996: 109–110).

intuition that the seeming account of moral intuition can do better a job than his doxastic account. I then discuss an alternative.

3.1. *Audi on the Nature of Moral Intuition*

According to Audi, a moral intuition should have at least four conditions (listed below). Although Audi talks about four conditions, it seems that the “pre-theoretical” condition entails the “directness” condition. For, in Audi’s view, if an intuition is not held or believed on the basis of a premise or theoretical hypothesis, it must be non-inferential.

(1) First, a moral intuition must be non-inferential (*directness requirement*). This means that “the intuited proposition in question is not—at the time it is intuitively held—believed on the basis of a premise” (2004: 33). (2) Second, moral intuitions must be firm cognitions (*firmness requirement*). This means that “intuitions are typically *beliefs*, including cases of knowing”; however, “[a] mere inclination to believe is not an intuition” (2004: 34). A moral intuition must have some degree of epistemic weight, i.e. conviction. (3) Third, a moral intuition must be shaped by an adequate understanding of its propositional object (*comprehension requirement*). An adequate understanding for a belief “tends both to produce cognitive firmness and to enhance evidential value” (2004: 34–35). (4) Fourth, moral intuitions must be pre-theoretical (*pre-theoretical requirement*). Moral intuitions are not like theoretical hypotheses, nor do they depend being inferred from theories. So, “... an intuition *as such*... is held neither on the basis of a premise nor as a theoretical hypothesis” (2004: 35).¹¹

Nevertheless, moral intuitions are defeasible. They can be defeated by some theoretical results that are incompatible with the moral intuition (see Audi 1996: 110). By accepting the defeasibility of moral intuitions, Audi tries to distinguish between *reliable* and *unreliable* moral intuitions through entering the notion of *justification*. According to him, reliable moral intuitions are those that “we can rationally hope will remain credible as we continue to reflect on them” (1996: 121). Of course, Audi does not suggest that what makes certain moral intuitions reliable is that we rationally hope they will remain credible as we reflect on them. What he must have meant is that we rationally hope that the moral intuitions that are reliable will remain credible as we reflect on them. For a moral intuition to remain credible as we reflect on it is for it to be “stable under reflection”. Reliability and stability under reflection are different things. What makes a moral intuition reliable, in Audi’s view, is that it normally or nearly always leads to the *truth*. In fact, some moral intuitions are reliable, as having initial credibility and as themselves being *prima facie* justified. Audi says that insofar as moral intuitions

¹¹ Audi elsewhere states that his focus on intuitions is on empirical quasi-perceptual intuitions: “My concern will be only empirical intuitions and mainly quasi-perceptual intuitive moral judgments” (2007: 201). But how are moral intuitions empirical ones? I am not sure what Audi means by this, especially when he thinks intuitions are identified with *a priori* ones!

are like certain perceptual beliefs (e.g. in being non-inferential, “natural,” and pre-theoretical)—and perhaps more important—insofar as they are based on an understanding of their propositional objects, there is reason to consider them *prima facie* justified (Audi 1996: 116).

So understood, in Audi’s view, moral intuition *simpliciter* can be reliable, has initial credibility, and can be considered as *prima facie* justified, but on one condition: moral intuitions must be formed in light of an adequate understanding. If they are not based on sufficient reflection, we lack reason to consider them *prima facie* justified.

Moreover, pre-theoreticality of moral intuitions does not imply that the propositional content of a moral intuition is not capable of proof and inferential justification. It is not true that a non-inferential cognition cannot be believed as a theoretical hypothesis (see Audi 2004: 35–36; 1996: 112 and 1998: 23).

In Audi’s view, to give a plausible account of moral intuition, we need the idea of “reflection”. In order to do that, he distinguishes between a *conclusion of inference* and *conclusion of reflection*. A conclusion of inference is “premised on propositions one has noted as evidence” (1998: 19). Simply put, a conclusion from one or more evidential premises is a conclusion of inference. In contrast, a conclusion of reflection “emerges from thinking ...but not from one or more evidential premises” (1998: 19). To give a better idea of what the conclusion of reflection is, Audi compares it to looking at a painting or seeing a facial expression. When a conclusion of reflection emerges, one can obtain a view of the whole and characterise it (see Audi 2004: 45–47). Moral intuitions, Audi holds, should be known as conclusions of reflection. The conception of moral intuition, then, is that moral intuition is a non-inferential cognitive capacity, not a non-reflective one (see Audi 1996: 112 and 1998: 20). However, as Audi rightly observes, this does not imply that “every intuitive moral judgment need be a conclusion of reflection” (2007: 204).

It is clear from Audi’s definition that moral intuitions have an epistemological feature as well as a normative one. A moral intuition is something that is totally dependent on the level of understanding of each person and is not necessarily obvious to all. Rather, it may be rejected or become clearer in the course of theorising. Also, as Audi puts it, moral intuitions must be understood here in a cognitive sense (see Audi 2004: 32). Moral intuitions have an epistemic role in our judgments and they have effects on our beliefs, i.e. they lead us to know some moral principles and believe in them.

Audi sees a sort of connection between moral intuition and self-evident propositions. He believes that moral intuitions are typically our beliefs about some self-evident moral principles, and there are some moral self-evident principles that we have moral intuitions (beliefs) about (see Audi, 1996; 1998; and 2004). For example, in Audi’s view, the moral intuition that “promise-keeping is permissible” is typically our belief about the self-evident principle that “promise-keeping is *pro*

tanto right”. Furthermore, we have a moral intuition about the self-evident proposition “promise-keeping is *pro tanto* right”, which is intuitively true. Of course, this does not entail that all moral intuitions are self-evident propositions.

Although adopting the doxastic account of intuition has different advantages, I believe, the seeming account is superior. The seeming account of moral intuition can help us to distinguish intuition from certain similar mental states, such as guesses, gut reactions, hunches and common-sense beliefs. The reason that I advocate the seeming account is that it looks more fundamental than the doxastic account. We can explain why we believe various things by saying that they *seem* true to us. In other words, even in cases where we believe something, we actually believe it because it *seems* true to us. Although seeming *p* true to me is a decent reason for my believing *p*, believing *p* is not an enough reason for me to believe *p*.

3.2. *Moral Intuitions as Seeming States: Can Bengson’s Account be Applied to the Moral Domain?*

Moral intuitionists like Michael Huemer understand intuition in terms of *seeming* states or as an “initial intellectual appearance” (2005: 101–105). Moral intuition, on the basis of this understanding, is an initial intellectual appearance with moral content.¹² In what follows, I will focus on the psychology of moral intuition generally and try to answer the question of “what are moral intuitions like” specifically.

Three main questions about moral intuitions can be distinguished, Sidgwick believes. One is a question about existence (psychology). The second is a question about validity (epistemology). The third is a question about origin (see Sidgwick 1967: Book 3, Ch. 1, at 211). The question about existence is a psychological question asking whether it is possible for people to ever have a moral intuition. The question about validity is an epistemological question seeking truth in such moral intuitions. The question about origin, finally, is a question of what the nature of moral intuition is and how moral intuition is developed.

Although an answer to the question about existence can be affected by what we think a moral intuition is, Sidgwick rightly thought that the question about existence and the question about moral intuition’s nature should be kept separate. By listing some states of mind that can be confused with intuitions, Sidgwick directs our attention to the question of what exactly intuition, and specifically moral intuition, is. He starts off by asking what the difference between moral intuition and blind impulses or vague preferences is. And he finally ends up talking about moral intuition as “judgment or apparent perception that an act is in itself right or good” (1967: Book 3, Ch. 1, §4). However, he cannot endorse that this is the definition of moral intuition. For there are some

¹² See also McMahan (2000: 93–4). For a discussion of two views on moral intuitions, see Bedke (2008).

examples that even Sidgwick knows of as fundamental intuitions, but they do not have such content! Consider his intuition that it cannot be right for person A to treat others in a certain way and not right for person B to treat others in that same way unless there is some relevant difference between A and B or their situations, beyond the bare fact that A is A and B is B. Another is his intuition that from the point of view of the universe no one person's good can matter any more or less than any other person's good, apart from their effects on others. Neither of these intuitions holds that an act is in itself right or good.¹³

But, if it is true that moral intuitions are not judgement or apparent perception that an act is in itself right or good, what phenomenon, event or state is moral intuition? As I discussed before, recent work in philosophical intuition by Bengson (and Bealer) understands philosophical intuitions as intellectual seemings. Intellectual seemings are similar to perceptual experiences, though important differences should be taken into account. For instance, perceptual experiences are conscious, contentful, non-factive and presentational. And since they are presentational, they differ from belief or judgement. In being presentational states, they are baseless, gradable, fundamentally non-voluntary and compelling. Bealer, whose works in this area are seminal, discusses philosophical intuitions only in four domains: the conceptual, the logical, the mathematical and the modal. Perhaps we do not need to determine whether Bealer's account of intuition is suitable for the four domains of philosophical intuitions he is interested in. Our question is whether his discussions are appropriate for intuitions in ethics. Bealer does not apply his account explicitly to ethics. Nevertheless, Bealer's four domains can be used as an argument for the view that moral intuitions can be treated as evidence, as I will explain below.

Bengson's work, which is a development of Bealer's ideas, also does not clearly discuss moral intuition's mental ontology. Although both Bealer and Bengson do not clearly apply their theory to ethics, I think Bealer's or Bengson's account of intuition can make space for the ontology of moral intuitions. In the next paragraphs, I run through Bealer's and Bengson's accounts of the ontology of philosophical intuitions to provide an account of moral intuition.

Let us start with the psychological question about moral intuition. Borrowing Bengson's account of philosophical intuition, we can ask whether we have conscious, contentful, non-factive and presentational states with moral content. Do we have such mental states in ethics? The answer to these questions, I think, is simple. It is clear for us that at some point we have conscious, contentful, non-factive and presentational states with moral content (e.g. promise breaking is wrong). These are states with moral content that fit the general account of the presentational state.

¹³ Sidgwick believes that at least some intuitions can occur, in principle, without being true. He, for example, admits "the possibility that any such "intuition" may turn out to have an element of error" (1967, Book 3, Ch. 1, §4).

Now if moral intuitions so defined exist, what is the nature of moral intuition? According to Bengson's view, intuitions are intellectual seemings, or to put it more accurately, intuitions are translucent presentational states. But are moral intuitions intellectual seemings?

There is a decisive reason for believing in seemings with moral content, I believe.¹⁴ We should admit that at least some moral intuitions are intellectual seemings. Consider, for example, the following propositions: "it seems that killing innocent people for no reason is absolutely wrong"; "it is wrong to torture someone for one's own amusement"; "that an act would hurt an innocent person must count morally against it"; "that an act would reduce the pain an innocent being is suffering counts morally in favour of it". Insofar as one adequately understands the conceptual constituents, one can be struck by the seeming rightness of these propositions. Consideration of these propositions produces intellectual seemings with moral content. In effect, what makes an intuition a moral one is an intellectual seeming with moral content.

Yet, one might object that what get produced are beliefs not intellectual seemings. The reply should be that these propositions match the contents of the intellectual seemings. For example, suppose we have a proposition (P) and suppose further that the proposition seems to us to be true. Then the proposition matches the content of our intellectual seeming.

Moral intuitions are similar to philosophical intuitions in that they are seeming states but with different contents. And in so being, one might believe that moral intuitions can present a consideration as evidence (which provides reason). And to present a consideration as evidence (which provides reason) is to present it as favouring a response of a certain sort.¹⁵ On this account, some moral intuitions or intellectual seemings present propositions as true (facts) and generate evidences for this or that sort of response. The seemingness of moral intuition, which is associated with some phenomenological features such as a feeling or appropriateness, can provide evidence for us.

How intuitions, generally, can be treated as evidence? Bealer (1992) famously writes about the three Cs to answer the question of whether intuition can be a source of evidence. Here are the three criteria: Consistency, Corroboration and Confirmation. The consistency test explores whether one intuition is consistent with other intuitions. The corroboration test asks whether one person's intuition is corroborated by others' intuitions. And the confirmation test seeks to establish whether those intuitions are confirmed by observation or experience.

But if the seemingness of moral intuition can provide evidence, a plausible objection could be raised. The objection is that there is no difference between moral intuitions and emotions in presenting evidence

¹⁴ Huemer (2007: 30–35), for instance, believes that any epistemological theory which denies the justificatory power of seemings with moral content is self-defeating.

¹⁵ See Dancy (2014).

(which provides reason), since at least certain emotions do this. So, if emotions seem to present the person who has them with evidence (which provides reason), are at least some moral emotions in fact moral intuitions? The answer is that moral intuitions are not emotions at all. This is because intuitions are purely intellectual seemings and hence truth-apt, yet emotions are not. Although further investigation is needed to have an account of emotion, my conjecture would be that some emotions can be like seeming states, and in being so they are similar to moral intuitions; and among those, the moral ones are similar to moral intuitions.

Understanding moral intuition with reference to seeming states, I think, can easily bring us at least some degree of justification. For example, if you have seemings about *p* and there is no defeater against *p*, you are to some degree justified in believing *p* based on that seeming.¹⁶ And if there is an explanation of how moral intuitions can serve as evidence in philosophy, this at least can give us a *prima facie* justification for using them.

4. Conclusion

I have investigated about the nature of moral intuition. I started with explaining the quasi-perceptualist account of philosophical intuition in terms of seeming. I focused on Bengson's (and Bealer's) intellectual seeming account and elaborated what the intellectual seeming is by appealing to Bengson's theory of quasi-perceptualism. Following Bengson, I considered presentational states as "immediate apprehensions" and allowed the notion of translucence to serve as an explanation of the notion of "directness". Consequently, I now have a conception of philosophical intuition as a kind of direct, immediate apprehension *akin* to perceptual experience, though it includes intellectual concepts. I also showed that intellectual seemings are translucent intellectual presentations. I then argued for reading moral intuitions in terms of Bengson's (and Bealer's) account of intellectual seemings. I showed that the quasi-perceptualist account of philosophical intuition which understands intuitions as seemings can be applicable to moral intuition. Therefore, we now can have a conception of moral intuition in terms of intellectual seemings similar to perceptual experiences.

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¹⁶ Michael Huemer calls this "the principle of phenomenal conservatism". See Huemer (2007).

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