

Chapter 1 : Search results for `moral skepticism` - PhilPapers

Moral Skepticism is the meta-ethical theory that no-one has any moral knowledge (or the stronger claim that no-one can have any moral knowledge). It holds that we are never justified in believing that, and never know whether, moral claims are true.

The Practical Implications of Moral Responsibility Skepticism Neil Levy Macquarie University Abstract Most philosophers believe that wrongdoers sometimes deserve to be punished by long prison sentences. They also believe that such punishments are justified by their consequences: In this article, I argue that both these claims are false. No one deserves to be punished, I argue, because our actions are shot through with direct or indirect luck. I also argue that there are good reasons to think that punishing fewer people and much less harshly will have better social consequences, at a reduced overall cost, than the long prison sentences that are usually seen as required for social protection. In every nation, a great deal of state money is spent on the punishment of criminals. The bulk of this expenditure is on prisons. There were more than one and half million people imprisoned in the United States at the end of , the great majority in state facilities Carson and Sabol This is enormously costly: Upon release into the community, former inmates have significantly worse employment prospects than those who have not been imprisoned. These facts have effects on majority black communities, in particular: Of course the US criminal justice system is widely acknowledged to have distinctive problems all of its own. In other countries, a far smaller percentage of people are imprisoned, and imprisonment does not seem to be as racially biased as it appears to be in the US. Whereas the United States imprisons people per , of its population, the median rate for Southern and Western European countries is a dramatically lower 95 Walmsley Costs, direct and indirect, are correspondingly lower. Nevertheless, even in these cases, the costsâ€”to the taxpayer including the cost of foregone tax incomes , to families, communities, and the prisoners themselvesâ€”are very significant. Imprisonment does not only have costs, of course: These benefits accrue to many different groups of people. Punishment is typically justified, in very important part, by its role in deterring crime, and by the fact that it incapacitates individuals some of whom would go on to commit more crime were they not imprisoned. To the extent that deterrence and incapacitation are genuine, imprisonment therefore brings benefits to potential victims of crime. Imprisonment can alsoâ€”in theory at any rateâ€”benefit the person imprisoned him or herself. It might provide an opportunity for the treatment of drug addictions or mental illness, the acquisition of skills, and so on. In practice, actual prisons tend to make the kinds of problems that lead to crime worse, not better to increase drug use and mental illness, and worsen life prospects, making crime relatively more attractive, and to cause the breakdown of communities, thereby indirectly contributing to high crimes rates , but in principle punishment could benefit the person punished; sometimes, prisons actually fulfill this function. Prisons also provide employment; the growth of the penal system in the US has made it an important contributor to economic activity. The costs and benefits of punishment are directly relevant to whether it is justified. But most philosophers think that these questions are secondary when it comes to justifying punishment. What matters most, they claim, is whether the incarcerated deserve to be punished. If they do not, then the question whether punishment is justified becomes a question not merely of weighing up its costs and benefits, but also of comparing its costs and benefits to alternative methods of responding to crime. In this article, I will argue that punishment is not justified on the basis of desert, and that therefore we should be assessing its costs and benefits relative to alternatives. I will suggest that less punitive responses to crime may in fact have benefits: Rejecting the notion that people deserve to be punished opens our eyes to possibilities of responding to crime that will be more effective, cheaper and more humane. Moral Responsibility People deserve to be treated better or worse because of the way they have acted alone only if they are morally responsible for their actions. Desert, at least with regard to actions and omissions, is backwards looking: Other kinds of justifications, that do not invoke moral responsibility, are forwards looking: In asking whether people deserve to be punished for breaking the law, we ask whether they are morally responsible; whether they deserve to be treated better or worse on backwards-looking grounds alone. Debates about moral responsibility have usually focused on whether the freedom required for

responsibility is compatible with causal determinism. Some philosophers have argued that if the universe is deterministic—that is, roughly, if the physical facts plus the laws of nature determine a unique future, for every instant of the universe—then no one can be morally responsible. The classical argument for this conclusion turned on access to alternative possibilities: More recent versions of the argument have turned on whether we are the source of our actions, in a certain sense, independent of worries about alternative possibilities. These debates, in the metaphysics of free will, deserve to be taken seriously. However I will not address them here. Instead, I will present independent arguments for the conclusion that agents are not morally responsible for their actions. Luck and Moral Responsibility Libertarians in the philosophy of free will are philosophers who hold that free will is incompatible with causal determination of action—that if conditions sufficient for my behavior are always in place well before I act, I do not act freely—but who also hold that we have free will note that this view is entirely independent of libertarianism as a view in political philosophy, which holds that the just state is one in which there is minimum interference with individual choice; it is quite possible to be a compatibilist about free will and a libertarian in political philosophy. According to most libertarians, we can choose between genuinely open alternative possibilities. Compatibilists have long accused libertarianism of being susceptible to an argument from luck. Absence of determinism does not increase our control over our actions, they argue: If the universe is indeterministic, such that when I contemplate whether to perform a good action or a bad, there is some chance that an indeterministic event might cause me to choose the first and some chance that an indeterministic event might make me choose the second, then I do not control which I do everything about me—my beliefs, desires, values, and so on—is consistent with me doing either. And that entails that how I choose is a matter of luck. Luck is incompatible with moral responsibility: This argument against libertarianism is a powerful one. However, the problem of luck is by no means confined to libertarianism. Luck is ubiquitous in our lives: Most physicists believe that the universe is indeterministic, but it is not because determinism is false that we are often lucky and unlucky it remains an open question how frequently the kind of indeterminism the physicists maintain is true affects events of the kind that matter to us. An account of luck should therefore not suppose that indeterminism is required for luck. In earlier work, I have defended a detailed account of luck building on the work of Pritchard and Coffman. Here I shall just give the outlines of the account. An event or state of affairs is lucky if it is chancy, significant and out of the control of the person who it is lucky for. To say it is chancy is to say something about the probability of its occurrence. Just how improbable an event must be to count as lucky is sensitive to how significant it is to the person. If it matters a great deal, then it need not be all that unlikely to be lucky or unlucky compare winning 50 cents by guessing heads, with surviving a single round of Russian roulette using a six-chambered revolver and one bullet: This account gives us a way of judging when an event is lucky or not. If I am hit by a car in a situation in which being hit is very unlikely say on the sidewalk of a quiet road, I may be very unlucky. But if I am hit by a car in a situation in which being hit by a car is rather likely say I have fallen asleep in the middle of the highway I am not unlucky. When Tiger Woods sinks a straightforward putt, he is not lucky, because his skill and control ensures that he sinks putts like that 99 times out of 100. If I were to sink that putt, I would be lucky because I rarely sink putts like that. In order to understand the significance of luck for human life, though, we need an account of luck that is able to explain effects beyond those it has directly on the events within a life. In particular, we need to be able to account for what Thomas Nagel called constitutive luck: Some people seem to be the victim of terrible constitutive luck: Other people seem to be the beneficiaries of wonderful constitutive luck: It is hard to model this kind of luck using the resources of the account of lucky events, because there are difficulties in making sense of how lucky an individual is to be born with a particular trait. However, it is easy enough to use the resources of the account of lucky events to construct an account of constitutive luck. Something is constitutively lucky for a person if it is significant for her, out of her control and it is relatively unlikely in the circumstances into which she is born. This account gives us a context-relative account of constitutive luck. For instance, if a person is born at a time in history when most people die at 40, she might be lucky to be so endowed as to live to 50, whereas if she were born into a developed country today with an expected lifespan of 50, she would be unlucky. The principle on which critics of libertarians rely when they argue that libertarianism makes actions unacceptably subject to luck is

this: The best way to bring this home is to compare two agents. Suppose that two marksmen are each shooting at a target. Each is equally skilled and has practiced equally hard. Each focuses all their attention on the target and fires. In that case, we would not think that A deserves praise that is not due to B, because luck and luck alone explained the difference between them. First, consider the influence of lucky events on how people may find themselves acting badly or well. When we deliberate about what to do, it is often true that small things can make a decisive difference. Now, the occurrence or nonoccurrence of thoughts like these may be a matter of luck for me: In cases like this, which I claim are quite common, how I end up deciding and therefore acting may be a matter of responsibility-undermining luck. If an appropriate thought occurs to me, I alert him; if it does not, I do not. Suppose I do not: The only difference between me in the case in which I alert him and me in the case in which I do not is a difference due to luck. But as we have seen, two agents cannot deserve different treatment if the only difference between them is due to luck. Cases like this one—cases in which an action has the moral character it has due to luck—are common. We often perform one kind of action rather than another because a chance thought happens to strike us at the right moment. The cause of that thought may often be a chance factor in our environment, often one of which we are not consciously aware. These features—a billboard, a snatch of conversation, or even the way the light glances off the window, triggering a possibly unconscious memory—serve to prime our behavior, in much the same kinds of ways in which the primes used in psychological experiments may cause us to act one way or another priming occurs when information of which we are not conscious, or which has effects on us of which we are not conscious, makes other ideas more accessible to us and thereby alters our behavior. Sometimes, there will be no illuminating explanation of why a thought happened to occur though there will be causal explanation, such an explanation may not really explain the occurrence in psychological terms. Given that there are some circumstances in which most of us are capable of performing laudable as well as somewhat shoddy actions, we are all sometimes vulnerable to this kind of responsibility-undermining luck. However, there are also a wide variety of circumstances in which we are typically not vulnerable to this kind of luck. There may be no circumstances in which, constituted as I am, I am capable of murder were the right thought happen to strike me. In any case, with regard to very many murders it would be bizarre to excuse the murderer on the grounds that such a thought happened to strike him. A would-be murderer may find himself contemplating such a course of action because the right thought happens to strike him, but many murders require some degree of planning and therefore take time. A chance thought may set us down a path, but when we have time to reflect on what we are doing, the influence of such chance thoughts may be reduced, as we bring our stable beliefs and values to bear to its assessment, and as new, sometimes conflicting, thoughts occur to us.

Chapter 2 : Moral Skepticism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Practical moral skepticism answers the common question, "Why be moral?" This question, like many philosophical questions, is too short to be clear. It can be expanded and explained in several different ways. The first word that needs to be clarified is "Why". This interrogative asks for a.

Varieties of Moral Skepticism Moral skeptics differ in many ways, but they share a common core that makes them all moral skeptics. What makes moral skepticism moral is that it concerns morality rather than other topics. Moral skeptics might go on to be skeptics about the external world or about other minds or about induction or about all beliefs or about all norms or normative beliefs, but these other skepticisms are not entailed by moral skepticism alone. What makes moral skeptics skeptics is that they raise doubts about common beliefs. Moral skeptics then differ in the kinds of common beliefs that they doubt. They might, for example, doubt categorical or absolute moral beliefs without doubting weaker kinds of moral beliefs. Moral skeptics also differ in the kinds of doubts that they raise. Since general skepticism is an epistemological view about the limits of knowledge or justified belief, the most central version of moral skepticism is the one that raises doubts about moral knowledge or justified moral belief. There are two main traditions in epistemological skepticism. One tradition makes the claim that nobody ever knows or can know anything. This claim is sometimes named Cartesian skepticism although Descartes argued against it or Academic skepticism despite other interpretations of skeptics in the ancient Academy. For lack of a better description, we can call it dogmatic skepticism, because such skeptics dogmatically assert a universal claim. In contrast, no such claim is made by Pyrrhonian skeptics. They have so much doubt that they refrain from taking any position one way or the other on whether anyone does or does not or can or cannot know anything. Moral skepticism comes in two corresponding varieties. Pyrrhonian skeptics about moral knowledge refuse to admit that some people sometimes know that some substantive moral belief is true. They doubt that moral knowledge is possible. Still, they do not go on to make the opposite claim that moral knowledge is impossible. They doubt that, too. Their doubts are so extreme that they do not make any claim one way or the other about the actuality or possibility of moral knowledge. Parallel views can be adopted regarding justified moral belief. Pyrrhonian skeptics about justified moral belief suspend or withhold belief about the actuality or possibility of any justified moral belief. In contrast, dogmatic moral skeptics make definite claims about the epistemic status of moral beliefs: Dogmatic skepticism about moral knowledge is the claim that nobody ever knows that any substantive moral belief is true cf. Some moral skeptics add this related claim: Dogmatic skepticism about justified moral belief is the claim that nobody is ever justified in holding any substantive moral belief. The relevant way of being justified is specified in Sinnott-Armstrong , chap. These two claims and Pyrrhonian moral skepticism all fall under the general heading of epistemological moral skepticism. The relation between these two claims depends on the nature of knowledge. If knowledge implies justified belief, as is traditionally supposed, then skepticism about justified moral belief implies skepticism about moral knowledge. However, even if knowledge does require justified belief, it does not require only justified belief, so skepticism about moral knowledge does not imply skepticism about justified moral belief. One reason is that knowledge implies truth, but justified belief does not. Thus, if moral beliefs cannot be true, they can never be known to be true, but they still might be justified in some way that is independent of truth. As a result, skepticism about moral knowledge is implied, but skepticism about justified moral belief is not implied, by yet another form of moral skepticism: Skepticism about moral truth is the claim that no substantive moral belief is true. This claim is usually based on one of three more specific claims: Skepticism about moral truth-aptness is the claim that no substantive moral belief is the kind of thing that could be either true or false. Skepticism about moral truth-value is the claim that no substantive moral belief is either true or false although some moral beliefs are the kind of thing that could be true or false. Skepticism with moral falsehood is the claim that every substantive moral belief is false. These last three kinds of moral skepticism are not epistemological, for they are not directly about knowledge or justification. Instead, they are about truth, so they are usually based on views of moral language or metaphysics. Such expressions and prescriptions are kinds of thing that cannot be

either true or false. Thus, if these analogies hold in all relevant respects, then substantive moral beliefs are also not the right kind of thing to be either true or false. They are not apt for evaluation in terms of truth. For this reason, such linguistic theories are often taken to imply skepticism about moral truth-aptness. Views of this general sort are defended by Ayer , Stevenson , Hare , Gibbard ; cf. Such views are often described as non-cognitivism. That label is misleading, because etymology suggests that cognitivism is about cognition, which is knowledge. Since knowledge implies truth, skepticism about moral truth-aptness has implications for moral knowledge, but it is directly about truth-aptness and not about moral knowledge. Whatever you call it, skepticism about moral truth-aptness runs into several problems. If moral assertions have no truth-value, then it is hard to see how they can fit into truth-functional contexts, such as negation, disjunction, and conditionals. Such contexts are also unassertive, so they do not express the same emotions or prescriptions as when moral claims are asserted. Expressivists and prescriptivists respond to such objections, but their responses remain controversial cf. Many moral theorists conclude that moral assertions express not only emotions or prescriptions but also beliefs. In particular, they express beliefs that certain acts, institutions, or people have certain moral properties such as moral rightness or wrongness or beliefs in moral facts such as the fact that a certain act is morally right or wrong. This non-skeptical linguistic analysis still does not show that such moral claims can be true, since assertions can express beliefs that are false or neither true nor false. Indeed, all substantive moral assertions and beliefs are false or neither true nor false if they claim or semantically presuppose moral facts or properties, and if this metaphysical thesis holds: Skepticism about moral reality is the claim that no moral facts or properties exist. Skepticism about moral reality is, thus, a reason for skepticism with moral falsehood, as developed by Mackie , or skepticism about moral truth-value, as developed by Joyce Opponents of such error theories often object that some moral beliefs must be true because some moral beliefs deny the truth of other moral beliefs. However, error theorists can allow a negative moral belief such as that eating meat is not morally wrong to be true, but only if it merely denies the truth of the corresponding positive moral belief that eating meat is morally wrong. If such denials of moral beliefs are not substantive moral beliefs as denials of astrological beliefs are not astrology , then error theorists can maintain that all substantive moral beliefs are false or neither true nor false. Error theorists and skeptics about moral truth-aptness disagree about the content of moral assertions, but they still agree that no substantive moral claim or belief is true, so they are both skeptics about moral truth. None of these skeptical theses is implied by either skepticism about moral knowledge or skepticism about justified moral belief. Some moral claims might be true, even if we cannot know or have justified beliefs about which ones are true. However, a converse implication seems to hold: If knowledge implies truth, and if moral claims are never true, then there is no knowledge of what is moral or immoral assuming that skeptics deny the same kind of truth that knowledge requires. Nonetheless, since the implication holds in only one direction, skepticism about moral truth is still distinct from all kinds of epistemological moral skepticism. Almost everyone admits that there is sometimes some kind of reason to be moral. These distinct denials can be seen as separate forms of practical moral skepticism, which are discussed in more detail in the following supplementary document: Supplement on Practical Moral Skepticism Practical moral skepticism resembles epistemological moral skepticism in that both kinds of skepticism deny a role to reasons in morality. However, epistemological moral skepticism is about reasons for belief, whereas practical moral skepticism is about reasons for action. Moreover, practical moral skeptics usually deny that there is always enough reason for moral action, whereas epistemological moral skeptics usually deny that there is ever an adequate reason for moral belief. Consequently, practical moral skepticism does not imply epistemological moral skepticism. Some moral theorists do assume that a reason to believe that an act is immoral cannot be adequate unless it also provides a reason not to do that act. However, even if the two kinds of reasons are related in this way, they are still distinct, so practical moral skepticism must not be confused with epistemological moral skepticism. Overall, then, we need to distinguish the following kinds of epistemological moral skepticism: Pyrrhonian skepticism about moral knowledge withholds assent from both dogmatic skepticism about moral knowledge and its denial. Pyrrhonian skepticism about justified moral belief withholds assent from both dogmatic skepticism about justified moral belief and its denial. We also need to distinguish these epistemological moral skepticisms from several

non-epistemological kinds of moral skepticism: These kinds of moral skepticism can be diagrammed as follows: Skepticism about justified moral belief will be the primary topic for the rest of this entry, and I will refer to it henceforth simply as moral skepticism. A Presumption against Moral Skepticism? Opponents often accuse moral skepticism of leading to immorality. However, skeptics about justified moral belief can act well and be nice people. They need not be any less motivated to be moral, nor need they have or believe in any less reason to be moral than non-skeptics have or believe in. Moral skeptics can hold substantive moral beliefs just as strongly as non-skeptics. Their substantive moral beliefs can be common and plausible ones. Moral skeptics can even believe that their moral beliefs are true by virtue of corresponding to an independent moral reality. Critics still argue that moral skepticism conflicts with common sense. Most people think that they are justified in holding many moral beliefs, such as that it is morally wrong to beat your opponent senseless with a baseball bat just because she beat you in a baseball game. Dogmatic moral skepticism is, moreover, a universal and abstruse claim. It is the claim that all moral beliefs have a certain epistemic status. Normally one should not make such a strong claim without some reason. One should not, for example, claim that all astronomical beliefs are unjustified unless one has some reason for this claim. Analogously, it seems that one should not claim that all moral beliefs are unjustified unless one has some positive argument. Thus, its form, like its conflict with common sense, seems to create a presumption against moral skepticism. Moral skeptics, in response, sometimes try to shift the burden of proof to their opponents. Anyone who makes the positive moral claim that sodomy is morally wrong seems to need some reason for that claim, just as someone who claims that there is life on Mars seems to need evidence for that claim.

Chapter 3 : Search results for `Hugo Grotius. Moral. Scepticism. Justice.` - PhilPapers

"Moral Skepticism" names a diverse collection of views that deny or raise doubts about various roles of reason in morality. Different versions of moral skepticism deny or doubt moral knowledge, justified moral belief, moral truth, moral facts or properties, and reasons to be moral.

Philosophical skepticism[edit] Philosophical skepticism is often associated with radical skepticism, which denies the possibility of knowledge. The school of thought traces back to antiquity, most notably in Pyrrhonism. A weaker form of philosophical skepticism that evaluates knowledge in a probabilistic fashion has been endorsed by numerous philosophers and scientists. This form of skepticism denies absolute certainty of knowledge, but holds that the evidence for certain ideas is "good enough" to act on them as if they were true, even though they may be later overturned. This is often associated with or espoused in the form of Bayesian statistics. Moral skepticism[edit] Moral skepticism holds that there is no objective morality or "natural law. While moral skepticism is often associated with nihilism and moral relativism , moral skeptics like Hume may also hold that moral and ethical systems may be justified, but not by reason alone. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories , instead of theories to suit facts. Methodological skepticism seeks to determine true and false claims by apportioning strength of belief to the amount of evidence supporting a certain claim. Scientific skepticism is the application of this to the scientific arena. This form of skepticism is also associated with atheism and secular humanist ethics as espoused by figures like Paul Kurtz. It usually accompanies philosophical naturalism and may incorporate weaker forms of philosophical skepticism as well. This means challenging those who merely assert their beliefs about nature , and demanding that they show how they have derived their ideas. Theories and suggestions that can be, and are, backed by evidence and are deemed logically coherent are kept, while those that fail this test are rejected - but, very importantly, nothing is ever held above this challenge. Regardless of how often an idea or theory passes the test of evidence, skepticism holds that there is always a possibility, however slight, that it might be wrong. As a result, skepticism is the true meaning of having an open mind , and in many respects is synonymous with the scientific method. The skeptical method provides numerous protections against cons and intentional malice by refusing to accept ideas until they have been demonstrated true. It is difficult to con someone who is skeptical about the situation because they will push for more evidence until they are convinced it is genuine. Someone claiming to have gone shopping earlier in the morning is subject to less intense scrutiny than someone claiming a dragon is living in their garage. Oftentimes something will be half right or situationally right or even just pointing to something genuinely amiss. While broad theses like that of the Austrian school , strict behaviorism , Marxism , strong nanotechnology , etc. Hopefully people will build off what was right rather than ignoring everything in the claim. It caused the extinction of the faeries. This leads to stereotypes of skeptics being humourless killjoys who hate people with "open minds" and want to spoil all of the harmless fun that can be had in believing comforting things for their own sake. Skepticism makes ideas difficult to spread and is thus the antithesis of authoritarianism. The increasing popularity of labeling oneself a "skeptic" has led to a surge in people who have a clear misunderstanding of the difference between healthy skepticism and denialism. Such denialists mislabel themselves as skeptics, but skepticism by definition requires questioning and taking part in a constructive debate over the topic at hand. Refusing to accept any evidence put forward is not skepticism, but is a form of bias based on fear:

Chapter 4 : Moral Relativism | Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy

Moral relativists, on the other hand, hold that there are moral facts, but that they are either relative to (a) the individual (this is known as personal moral relativism) or they are relative to (b) the moral norms, or conventions, of the culture from which they came (this is known as cultural moral relativism).

Sentences Sentence examples Scepticism Sentence Examples But more important was the influence of philosophy, which led soon enough to a general scepticism among the upper classes. Ancient scepticism was frankly opposed to religious belief. But scepticism of this kind was not universal. There was a new scepticism - at the very least a doctrine of limitation in human knowledge; but in its extremest forms an absolute agnosticism. The extremest form of antagonism is pure scepticism or pure agnosticism, the assertion that nothing can be known. It is explained by Cicero as being due to his theory that the scepticism of Carneades was merely a means of attacking the Stoics on their own ground. Heathens felt in the religion of Israel an escape from their growing scepticism, and a solution to the problem of life. Pascal had already shown how philosophical scepticism might be employed as a bulwark for faith, and Glanvill follows in the same track. The Centilogium theologicum has often been cited as an example of thoroughgoing scepticism under a mask of solemn irony. This scepticism took form in the school, most active between and , known as the school of "Expectant Medicine. By these and similar arguments he arrives at the fundamental principle of Scepticism, the radical and universal opposition of causes; *panti logo logos antikeitai*. The completion of the second Temple B. Naturally the early investigators did not fathom all the niceties of the language, and the work of grammatical investigation has gone on continuously under the auspices of a constantly growing band of workers. It remained for the more robust faith of a Schliemann to show that such scepticism was all too faint-hearted, by proving that at such sites as Tiryns, Mycenae and Hissarlik evidences of a very early period of Greek civilization awaited the spade of the excavator. He had before this published *Some Words for God*, in which, with great power and eloquence, he combated the scepticism of the day. They are also the direct antitheses to the scepticism of Montaigne and Pascal, to the materialism of Gassendi and Hobbes, and to the superstitious anthropomorphism which defaced the reawakening sciences of nature. The application of "common sense" to the problem of substance supplied a more satisfactory analytic for him than the scepticism of Hume which reached him through a study of Kant. But he does not follow his idea into the details of human duty, though he passes in review fatalism, mysticism, pantheism, scepticism, egotism, sentimentalism and rationalism. So far as a remedy for scepticism is found at all, Kant places it, not within theoretic knowledge, but in moral or " practical " experience. The great critic of scepticism has diverged from idealism toward scepticism again, or has given his idealism a sceptical colour, mitigated - but only mitigated - by faith in the moral consciousness. Used by Kant sceptically of the limitations of reason, dialectic in Hegel becomes constructive; and scepticism itself becomes a stage in knowledge. Scepticism, with which P. Bayle had played as a historian - he amused himself, too, with praising the Manichaeian solution of the riddle of the universe - became a serious power in the history of philosophy with the advent of David Hume. Nay, it may be questioned how far it is either psychologically or logically possible to turn general scepticism into a coherent doctrine. Divine revelation and of a great institution like the Christian church suggested the possibility of enlisting scepticism in the service of dogmatic faith. The fact - assumed without any attempt at justification by argument - that, in spite of the multitude of logical reasons for scepticism, we do know, truth and beauty, makes Balfour a theist. But such a temper of mind is much more akin to scepticism than to mysticism; it is characteristic of those who either do not feel the need of philosophizing their beliefs, or who have failed in doing so and take refuge in sheer acceptance. That some of the later work on insect embryology has justified the It is now ascertained that the procephalic lobes consist of three growing scepticism in the universal applicability of the " germ-layer divisions, so that the head must certainly be formed from at least theory. With the establishment of the belief in ethical immortality this phase of scepticism vanished from the Jewish world, not, however, without leaving behind it works of enduring value. Among the drawbacks of this temper, which on the whole made for progress, was the rise of a school of excessive scepticism, which, forgetting the value

of the accumulated stores of empiricism, despised those degrees of moral certainty that, in so complex a study and so tentative a practice as medicine, must be our portion for the present, and even for a long future, however great the triumphs of medicine may become. His philosophy consisted of four main parts, the reasons for scepticism and doubt, the attack on causality and truth, a physical theory and a theory of morality. By Descartes the principle was used as an instrument of scepticism, the beneficent scepticism of pulling down medieval philosophy to make room for modern science; by Berkeley it was used to combat the materialists; by Hume in the cause of scepticism once more against the intellectual dogmatists; by Kant to prepare a justification for a noumenal sphere to be apprehended by faith; by J. As regards scepticism concerning the faculty we may quote what Mr Galton says about the faculty of visualization: Yet the feat pronounced impossible by mid-century scepticism was accomplished by contemporary scholarship, amidst the clamour of opposition and incredulity. In the dedication of the Enquiry, he says: Newman, whose mind Martineau said was "critical, not prophetic, since without immediateness of religious vision," and whose faith is "an escape from an alternative scepticism, which receives the veto not of his reason but of his will,"⁶ as men for whose teachings and methods he had a potent and stimulating antipathy. The doubts thus cast upon the age when the Homeric poems first assumed the fixed form of writing were closely associated with the universal scepticism as to the historical accuracy of any traditions whatever regarding the early history of Greece.

Chapter 5 : Skepticism - RationalWiki

Skepticism (American English) or scepticism (British English, Australian English) is generally any questioning attitude or doubt towards one or more items of putative knowledge or belief. [1] [2] It is often directed at domains, such as the supernatural, morality (moral skepticism), religion (skepticism about the existence of God), or.

It can be expanded and explained in several different ways. This interrogative asks for a reason, but reasons are understood in different ways. Some philosophers suggest that all reasons are self-interested. Instead, it asks what, if anything, makes it irrational to be immoral or at least keeps it from being irrational to be moral. Only such wider tendencies or character traits make someone immoral as a person, but it seems harder to imagine how there could be no reason to avoid such widespread tendencies. If immoral tendencies always directly or indirectly hurt other people, and if some reasons are facts about interests of other people, then there will always be reason not to be an immoral person. Whether or not a realistic example can be found, the focus on immoral people or character traits at least makes it easier to argue that real agents always have some reason to be moral people. If I have no reason to do such an act, then I do not always have a reason to do what is morally good, but I still might always have a reason to do what is morally required. For simplicity, the rest of this supplement will focus on practical moral skepticism about what is morally required. What such practical moral skeptics deny is that I always have reason to do what is morally required. In other words, they deny that I always have reason not to do what is morally wrong. These claims are equivalent because it is morally wrong not to do what is morally required. Practical moral skeptics do not deny that there is sometimes reason not to do what is morally wrong. After all, some wrongdoers are caught and punished. However, practical moral skeptics can still deny that there is always reason to do what is morally required or to avoid what is morally wrong. Some practical moral skeptics claim that sometimes there is no reason at all to do what is morally required. That extreme position would be refuted if doing what is morally wrong always creates even a slight risk of some negative repercussion. A more plausible and common version of practical moral skepticism denies, instead, that there is always an adequate or non-overridden reason to do what is morally required. To establish this position, practical moral skeptics need only one case where there is overriding reason not to do what is morally required. It is not hard to imagine such a case if reasons are restricted to self-interest. Just consider an agent who would receive great satisfaction from killing another person whom he hates and whom he can kill without cost because the killer will die soon anyway. Other cases would work as well. If overall self-interest ever conflicts with moral requirements, then there will be overriding reason not to do what is morally required, on the assumption that all reasons are self-interested. Without that assumption, however, such practical moral skepticism becomes much less plausible. If harms to others give agents reasons for and against actions, then this agent has some reason not to kill the victim. The reasons might be equal or incomparable in some way, in which case each is adequate, but neither is overriding. This position is closely related to the claim that, when self-interest conflicts with moral requirements, neither alternative is irrational. If so, it is not always irrational to do what is morally wrong, but it still might never be irrational to do what is morally required. It does not matter much whether this position is classified as a version of practical moral skepticism. It is skeptical insofar as it denies that immoral actions are always irrational. It is anti-skeptical insofar as it claims that moral actions are never irrational.

Chapter 6 : Moral Skepticism > Practical Moral Skepticism (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy)

Folke Tersman's "Moral Skepticism and the Benacerraf Challenge" traces the development of one of the most interesting issues in moral epistemology today, the moral Benacerraf Challenge. The Benacerraf Challenge was originally formulated as a challenge to the possibility of mathematical knowledge for mathematical Platonists, first by Paul.

In philosophy, skepticism can refer to: Philosophical skepticism As a philosophical school or movement, skepticism originated in ancient Greece. A number of Greek Sophists held skeptical views. One was Pyrrhonian skepticism, which was founded by Pyrrho of Elis c. The other was Academic skepticism, so-called because its two leading defenders, Arcesilaus c. Both schools of skepticism denied that knowledge is possible and urged suspension of judgment *epoché* for the sake of mental tranquility *ataraxia*. The major difference between the schools seems to have been that Academic skeptics claimed that some beliefs are more reasonable or probable than others, whereas Pyrrhonian skeptics argued that equally compelling arguments can be given for or against any disputed view. Most of what we know about ancient skepticism is due to Sextus Empiricus, a Pyrrhonian skeptic who lived in the second or third century A. His major work, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, contains a lucid summary of stock skeptical arguments. There was little knowledge of, or interest in, ancient skepticism in Christian Europe during the Middle Ages. Interest revived during the Renaissance and Reformation, particularly after the complete writings of Sextus Empiricus were translated into Latin in A number of Catholic writers, including Francisco Sanchez c. Similar arguments were offered later perhaps ironically by the Protestant thinker Pierre Bayle in his influential *Historical and Critical Dictionary* – In his classic work, *Meditations of First Philosophy*, Descartes sought to refute skepticism, but only after he had formulated the case for skepticism as powerfully as possible. Descartes argued that no matter what radical skeptical possibilities we imagine there are certain truths e. Thus, the ancient skeptics were wrong to claim that knowledge is impossible. Descartes also attempted to refute skeptical doubts about the reliability of our senses, our memory, and other cognitive faculties. To do this, Descartes tried to prove that God exists and that God would not allow us to be systematically deceived about the nature of reality. Hume was an empiricist, claiming that all genuine ideas can be traced back to original impressions of sensation or introspective consciousness. Hume argued forcefully that on empiricist grounds there are no sound reasons for belief in God, an enduring self or soul, an external world, causal necessity, objective morality, or inductive reasoning. We are hard-wired by nature to trust, say, our memories or inductive reasoning, and no skeptical arguments, however powerful, can dislodge those beliefs. According to Kant, while Hume was right to claim that we cannot strictly know any of these things, our moral experience entitles us to believe in them. Religious skepticism Religious skepticism generally refers to doubting given religious beliefs or claims. Historically, religious skepticism can be traced back to Socrates, who doubted many religious claims of the time. Modern religious skepticism typically emphasizes scientific and historical methods or evidence, with Michael Shermer writing that skepticism is a process for discovering the truth rather than general non-acceptance[clarification needed]. For example, a religious skeptic might believe that Jesus existed while questioning claims that he was the messiah or performed miracles see historicity of Jesus. Religious skepticism is not the same as atheism or agnosticism, though these often do involve skeptical attitudes toward religion and philosophical theology for example, towards divine omnipotence. Religious people are generally skeptical about claims of other religions, at least when the two denominations conflict concerning some stated belief. Additionally, they may also be skeptical of the claims made by atheists. Scientific skepticism may discard beliefs pertaining to purported phenomena not subject to reliable observation and thus not systematic or testable empirically. Most scientists, being scientific skeptics, test the reliability of certain kinds of claims by subjecting them to a systematic investigation using some type of the scientific method. Professional skepticism[edit] Professional skepticism is an important concept in auditing. It requires an auditor to have a "questioning mind," to make a critical assessment of evidence, and to consider the sufficiency of the evidence.

Chapter 7 : Skepticism - Wikipedia

Another reason for today's religious skepticism has to do with the practitioners of religion. Sadly, some religious people are immoral, dishonest, or just plain mean. Some skeptics have had bad experiences with religion in the past.

Ethics 1 I do not see that the "Argument from Queerness" merits a separate page; it should be included in this article or perhaps in moral nihilism under a heading e. The same as it means to anyone else, I think. As the range of possible positions became clearer, certain terms were abandoned and others embraced. At this point, there is some agreement on terms and I think Wikipedia ought to reflect it. Also, each page needs to make clear what other uses of the terms there are. Even as a philosophy PhD student working in a fairly closely related area, I often find the usage confusing. You might be able to help me, at least, both as a wikipedia editor, working on this and similar articles, and as a philosopher. I think the project is well under way now. Hopefully, you will find it useful! Postmodern Beatnik talk Does one imply the other? Harman, who is probably the leading moral relativist at the moment, has a position so close to moral scepticism of the Mackie variety that I frankly find it difficult to see what their substantive disagreement really is. Both deny that morality is objective in any ultimate sense, but Harman wants to avoid saying that his is an error theory of commonsense morality. My two recommendations to whomever continues to revise are as follows: It is helpful to distinguish between Moral Error Theory which holds that moral claims are false, and so unjustified and Dogmatic Moral Skepticism which holds that moral claims are unjustified, but does not commit itself to the additional, error theoretic, proposition that moral claims are false. This distinction maps onto the marked and age-old difference between ontology and epistemology , and the arguments deployed by these two moral skeptical schools are, accordingly, significantly dissimilar. Which brings me to my second point: I and others have advocated the use of "metaethical nihilism" for the second order application, but this is not yet the norm. That way we get both sets of terminology but also understand the distinction that drives the words. Indeed, current convention has metaethics divided into four maybe four and a half , fairly distinct, groups of theories: All of these entries could do with some major expansion, BTW. This makes subjectivists and relativists anti-realists, rather than realists which makes sense to me. And so the major problem to me seems to be that we need to agree on the particular taxonomy of moral philosophy we are going to use before we can know exactly how to flesh out each page. Please take a moment to review my edit. If you have any questions, or need the bot to ignore the links, or the page altogether, please visit this simple FaQ for additional information. I made the following changes: As of February , "External links modified" talk page sections are no longer generated or monitored by InternetArchiveBot. No special action is required regarding these talk page notices, other than regular verification using the archive tool instructions below. Editors have permission to delete the "External links modified" sections if they want, but see the RfC before doing mass systematic removals. If you have discovered URLs which were erroneously considered dead by the bot, you can report them with this tool. If you found an error with any archives or the URLs themselves, you can fix them with this tool.

Chapter 8 : Why is skepticism of religion so prevalent today?

(1) if you include moral nihilism as a theory under the aegis of moral skepticism, remember to modify the first sentence of this entry to make it communicate that moral skepticism is a class of metaethical and normative ethical theories -- moral nihilism is a normative ethic.

Ancient Greece In the view of most people throughout history, moral questions have objectively correct answers. There are obvious moral truths just as there are obvious facts about the world. Cowardice is a bad quality. A man should not have sex with his mother. Such statements would be viewed as obviously and objectively true, no more open to dispute than the claim that seawater is salty. This assumption was first challenged in fifth century B. The idea was that moral beliefs and practices are bound up with customs and conventions, and these vary greatly between societies. The Greeks said nothing could induce them to do this. The Callatiae were horrified at the suggestion. The sophists— notably Protagoras, Gorgias, and some of their followers— were also associated with relativistic thinking. As itinerant intellectuals and teachers, the sophists were cosmopolitan, impressed by and prompted to reflect upon the diversity in religions, political systems, laws, manners, and tastes they encountered in different societies. So, relativistic thinking seems to have been in the air at the time. Strictly speaking, it is a form of moral nihilism rather than moral relativism, but in rejecting the whole idea of objective moral truth it clears the ground for relativism. Even though moral relativism makes its first appearance in ancient times, it hardly flourished. Plato vigorously defended the idea of an objective moral order linked to a transcendent reality while Aristotle sought to ground morality on objective facts about human nature and well-being. A few centuries later, Sextus Empiricus appears to have embraced a form of moral relativism, partly on the basis of the diversity of laws and conventions, and partly as a consequence of his Pyrrhonian skepticism that sought to eschew dogmatism. But Hellenistic skepticism gave way to philosophy informed by Christianity, and moral relativism effectively became dormant and remained so throughout the period of Christian hegemony in Europe. Relativism thus ceased to be an option until the advent of modernity. In the 17th century, Hobbes argued for a social contract view of morality that sees moral rules, like laws, as something human beings agree upon in order to make social living possible. An implication of this view is that moral tenets are not right or wrong according to whether they correspond to some transcendent blueprint; rather, they should be appraised pragmatically according to how well they serve their purpose. Hume, like Montaigne, was heavily influenced by ancient skepticism, and this colors his view of morality. His argument, that prescriptions saying how we should act cannot be logically derived from factual claims about the way things are, raised doubts about the possibility of proving the correctness of any particular moral point of view. So, too, did his insistence that morality is based ultimately on feelings rather than on reason. Hume was not a relativist, but his arguments helped support elements of relativism. With the remarkable progress of science in the 19th and 20th centuries, the fact-value distinction became entrenched in mainstream philosophy and social science. Science came to be seen as offering value-neutral descriptions of an independently existing reality; moral claims, by contrast, came to be viewed by many as mere expressions of emotional attitudes. This view of morality suggests that all moral outlooks are on the same logical plane, with none capable of being proved correct or superior to all the rest. According to one interpretation, Marx holds that there is no objectively true moral system, only interest-serving ideologies that use moral language. But Marx wrote little about ethics, so it is hard to pin down his philosophical views about the nature of morality and the status of moral claims. Nietzsche, on the other hand, wrote extensively and influentially about morality. Scholars disagree about whether he should be classified as a relativist, but his thought certainly has a pronounced relativistic thrust. It is true that Nietzsche likes to rank moralities according to whether they are expressions of strength or weakness, health or sickness; but he does not insist that the criteria of rank he favors constitute an objectively privileged vantage point from which different moralities can be appraised. These philosophical ideas prepared the ground for moral relativism mainly by raising doubts about the possibility of demonstrating that any particular moral code is objectively correct. But anthropological research in the 19th and 20th centuries also encouraged relativism. Indeed, many of its leading contemporary

champions from Franz Boas to Clifford Gertz have been anthropologists. One of the first to argue at length for moral relativism was William Sumner. To those living within that society, the concept of moral rightness can only mean conformity to the local mores. Sumner acknowledges that if members of a culture generalize its mores into abstract principles, they will probably regard these as correct in an absolute sense. This may even be psychologically unavoidable. But it is not philosophically legitimate; the mores themselves cannot be an object of moral appraisal since there is no higher tribunal to which appeals can be made. The work of Franz Boas was also tremendously influential. Boas viewed cultural relativism as a commitment to understanding a society in its own terms as methodologically essential to scientific anthropology. From an objective, scientific standpoint one may not pass moral judgment on the beliefs and practices that inhere within a culture, although one may objectively assess the extent to which they help that society achieve its overarching goals. The debate over moral relativism in modern times has thus not been an abstract discussion of interest only to professional philosophers. It is thought to have implications for the social sciences, for international relations, and for relations between communities within a society. In 1947, the American Anthropological Association submitted a statement to the UN Commission on Human Rights criticizing what some viewed as an attempt by the West to impose its particular values on other societies in the name of universal rights. The statement declared that: Standards and values are relative to the culture from which they derive so that any attempt to formulate postulates that grow out of the beliefs or moral codes of one culture must to that extent detract from the applicability of any Declaration of Human Rights to mankind as a whole American Anthropologist, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1947. Needless to say, the statement caused some controversy since many members of the AAA did not agree with the position it laid out. More recently, discussions of relativism have been at the center of debates about how societies with large immigrant populations should deal with the problem of multiculturalism. To what extent should the practices of minorities be accepted, even if they seem to conflict with the values of the majority culture? In France, a law was passed in banning face veils that some Muslim women view as required by Islam. Those supporting the ban appeal to values they consider universal such as sexual equality and freedom of expression which the face veil is said to violate since it inhibits expressive interaction. But critics of the policy see it as expressing a kind of cultural intolerance, just the sort of thing that relativism claims to counter. Clarifying What Moral Relativism Is and Is Not Defining moral relativism is difficult because different writers use the term in slightly different ways; in particular, friends and foes of relativism often diverge considerably in their characterization of it. Therefore, it is important to first distinguish between some of the positions that have been identified or closely associated with moral relativism before setting out a definition that captures the main idea its adherents seek to put forward. Descriptive Relativism Descriptive relativism is a thesis about cultural diversity. It holds that, as a matter of fact, moral beliefs and practices vary between cultures and sometimes between groups within a single society. For instance, some societies condemn homosexuality, others accept it; in some cultures a student who corrects a teacher would be thought disrespectful; elsewhere such behavior might be encouraged. Descriptive relativism is put forward as an empirical claim based on evidence provided by anthropological research; hence it is most strongly associated with the work of anthropologists such as William Sumner, Ruth Benedict and Meville Herskovits. There is a spectrum of possible versions of this thesis. In its strongest, most controversial form, it denies that there are any moral universals—norms or values that every human culture endorses. This extreme view is rarely, if ever, defended, since it seems reasonable to suppose that the affirmation of certain values—for instance, a concern for the wellbeing of the young—is necessary for any society to survive. But Benedict seems to approach it when she writes of the three societies she describes in *Patterns of Culture* that "[t]hey are oriented as wholes in different directions". In its weakest, least controversial form, descriptive relativism merely denies that all cultures share the same moral outlook. Another objection is that many apparent moral differences between cultures are not really fundamental disagreements about questions of value—that is, disagreements that would persist even if both parties were in full agreement about all the pertinent facts. For instance, the taboo against homosexuality in some cultures may rest on the belief that homosexuality is a sin against God that will result in the sinner suffering eternal damnation. The point of conflict between these cultures and those that tolerate homosexuality may thus be viewed as being, fundamentally, not about the intrinsic rightness or

wrongness of homosexuality but the different factual beliefs they hold concerning the consequences of homosexuality. In light of such difficulties, contemporary defenders of descriptive relativism usually prefer a fairly modest, tempered version of the doctrine. Cultural Relativism Cultural relativism asserts that the beliefs and practices of human beings are best understood by grasping them in relation to the cultural context in which they occur. It was originally put forward as, and remains today, a basic methodological principle of modern anthropology. It was championed by anthropologists like Sumner and Boas who saw it as an antidote of the unconscious ethnocentrism that may lead social scientists to misunderstand the phenomena they are observing. For instance, ritualistic infliction of pain may look, on the surface, like a punishment aimed at deterring others from wrongdoing; but it may in fact be viewed by those involved in the practice as serving a quite different function, such as purging the community of an impurity. Thus, Gestalt psychologist Karl Duncker, argued that the action by an Eskimo of killing his aged parent, where this is socially sanctioned as a way to spare their suffering, is not the same act as the killing of a parent in a society where such an action would generally be condemned as murder. Since the meaning of each act differs, we should not infer that the values of the two societies are necessarily in conflict. The term cultural relativism is sometimes also used to denote the corollary methodological principle that social scientists, if they wish their work to have scientific status, should describe and analyze what goes on in the cultures they are studying, carefully eschewing any normative appraisal of what they observe. Ethical Non-Realism Ethical non-realism is the view that there is no objective moral order that makes our moral beliefs true or false and our actions right or wrong. It continues to be widely held, and leading contemporary defenders of ethical realism include Thomas Nagel, John McDowell, and Richard Boyd. Ethical non-realists obviously reject ethical realism, but not all for the same reasons; consequently there are several types of ethical non-realism. The most head-on rejection of ethical realism is perhaps the sort of moral error theory defended by J. A skeptical attitude toward moral realism can be more tentative than this. Hume is often interpreted as a moral skeptic who denies the possibility of proving by reason or by empirical evidence the truth of moral statements since our moral views rest entirely on our feelings. More recently, Michael Ruse, has defended an updated version of Hume, arguing that we are conditioned by evolution to hold fast to certain moral beliefs, regardless of the evidence for or against them; consequently, we should not view such beliefs as rationally justified. And Walter Sinnott-Armstrong has shown how difficult it is to refute moral skepticism, especially the sort of non-dogmatic Pyrrhonian skepticism which holds that one may be justified within a restricted context in affirming a certain moral belief—for instance, in court it is wrong to lie as opposed to telling the truth—yet not be able to justify the claim that lying, or even perjury, is wrong in some absolute, objective sense. Ethical non-realism is typically presupposed by moral relativists, but it is not the whole of moral relativism. Clearly, no one who believes in the absolute authority of divine law or the intrinsic value of a rational will would be likely to embrace relativism. But merely denying that morality has an objective foundation of this sort does not make one a relativist; for moral relativism also asserts that moral claims may be true or false relative to some particular standpoint such as that of a specific culture or historical period. An especially influential version of this view, first put forward by Ogden and Richards, and later elaborated upon by A. Prescriptivism, for instance, the view developed by R. Hare, acknowledges that moral statements can express emotional attitudes but sees their primary function as that of prescribing how people should behave. Most forms of ethical non-cognitivism, like moral relativism, have been fueled by acceptance of a fact-value gap. But unlike ethical non-cognitivism, moral relativism does not deny that moral claims can be true; it only denies that they can be made true by some objective, trans-cultural moral order. It allows them to be true in the humbler, relativistic sense of being rationally acceptable from a particular cultural vantage point. Meta-Ethical Relativism Meta-ethical relativism holds that moral judgments are not true or false in any absolute sense, but only relative to particular standpoints. This idea is essential to just about any version of moral relativism. Relativizing truth to standpoints is a way of answering in advance the objection that relativism implies that the same sentence can be both true and false. But if they are speaking at different times or from different locations standpoints this is possible. Saying that the truth of a moral claim is relative to some standpoint should not be confused with the idea that it is relative to the situation in which it is made. Only the most extreme rigorists would deny that in

assessing a moral judgment we should take the particular circumstances into account.

Skepticism (or scepticism) is the art of constantly questioning and doubting claims and assertions, and holding that the accumulation of evidence is of fundamental importance. It forms part of the scientific method, which requires relentless testing and reviewing of claimed facts and theories.

Report this Argument Con I accept the rules and definitions of this debate. I look forward to discussing this issue and sharing dialogue with you. If any person T is justified in believing any moral claim, then T must be justified either inferentially or noninferentially. This is akin to saying that an apple will either be red or a color other than red. It is simply descriptive of the two logical options that arise when dealing with justification of knowledge. No person T is ever noninferentially justified in believing any moral claim. It says that a belief is justified when it is warranted or well grounded, that is if it is based on some reason inferentially. If any person T is justified in believing any moral claim, then T must be justified inferentially. To put it simpler, if the solution is not A than it must be B. I have shown why it is not A. Therefore it must be B. If any person T is inferentially justified in believing any moral claim, then T must be justified either by inference with some moral premises or by inference without any moral premises. The reason for this principle is the same as my first premise. Since to be justified means needing to be inferentially justified and since to be inferentially justified one must derive logical consequences from some sort of premise, we are left with the options of either a moral or a non-moral premise. No person T is ever justified in believing any moral claim by an inference without any moral premise. This premise can be seen as coming from David Hume. It is better known as the is-ought problem. If any person T is justified in believing any moral claim, then T must be justified by an inference with some moral premise. Again, if the solution is not A, it must be B. I have shown that the solution is not A is-ought problem and so therefore it must be B. No person T is ever justified in believing a moral claim by an inference with a moral premise unless T is also justified in believing that moral premise itself. Simply put, you should not believe your five year old sister when she says the tooth fairy exists unless there is a reasonable reason to believe her. If any person T is justified in believing any moral claim, then T must be justified by a chain of inferences that either goes on infinitely or includes T itself as an essential premise. This is simply a continuation of P5. Why should you believe your sister? Because she is a genius. How do you know she is a genius? She took an IQ test. How do you know the IQ test is accurate Hence the name of the argument. No person T is ever justified in believing any moral claim by a chain of inferences that includes T as an essential premise. This commits the fallacy of begging the question. A simple example would be if I said I was a genius and you asked me how I knew this. No person T is ever justified in believing any moral claim by a chain of inferences that goes on infinitely. This is probably the most self explanatory premise in this argument. No person is ever justified in believing any moral claim. Again, if not A or B, then C. We cannot be justified in believing moral claims based on a chain of inferences with T as an essential premise or believe moral claims based on an infinite regress. Therefore we are left with only one option, that we cannot be justified in believing moral claims. Report this Argument Con I would like to thank my opponent for finding the time to offer me the opportunity to respond to such an informative argument. I really hope that the discussion which follows has the audience clinging to their keyboards. Undeniably, my challenger has borrowed and fashioned an argument created by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong's "an argument which diminishes ethical knowledge to nothing more than unjustified skepticism derived from non-inferential epistemology. I find this argument unconditionally unpersuasive and relatively distressing. Accordingly, I would like to lure attention to premise 2. Thus, I find this premise to be demonstrably fallacious for a multitude of reasons. But then again, is this proposition comprehensive? An idiosyncrasy may be drawn about what precisely makes this action immoral and how we know this action is immoral; consequently, there is still no discrepancy that it is, in principle, immoral. Fundamentally, my opponent must create an argument that one way or another demonstrates the reasonableness of doubting knowledge of gratuitously immoral behaviour as unwarranted, i. Conversely, knowledge of what is moral can justifiably rest on perceptive premisses; rather, than inferential premises. For example, one need not know atomic theory to be able to perceive water while

one need not know how an internal combustion engine works in order to know that your car is running while you are driving it. But this is clearly false. Medieval men could recognize by taste a cup of water as well as any modern person despite not knowing anything about H₂O. Yet, as noted, for thousands of years people could perceive water, drink it, detect it, and use it etc without knowing anything about atomic theory. Hence, our knowledge of water is independent of our knowledge of H₂O. Yet this fact does not mean that water is not constituted by H₂O. Any argument against the reliability of moral experience can be applied equally to sense experience. Suppose that one day you are taking a walk and you clearly perceive a tree to be in front of you. Are you justified in believing that there likely is a tree in front of you? Yes, for your sense experiences are *prima facie* justified. The exact same scenario is true with moral experience. Suppose one forms the belief that it is wrong to lynch somebody based on their skin color. Yes, for your moral experiences, like your sensory experiences, are *prima facie* justified. Any argument that one could use against trusting our moral experiences can be equally used against sense experience. There is no essential difference between the two. The idea, of course, is that our experiences are *prima facie* justified. That is, they have a defeasible epistemic status. While our sense or moral experiences could be wrong. Say, it was a dark and foggy day, the proper thing to do is to assume them to be reliable until we have an adequate defeater for their reliability. We should not do is approach them with an *ipso facto* standard of skepticism, lest we regress into complete agnosticism. It seems to me that my challenger has generated a thought-provoking argument that draws a very stark inference, i. To suppose otherwise, as my opponent has done, is to participate in committing a category error, whereby, one conflates and misappropriates ontology with epistemology. Report this Argument Pro "Undeniably, my challenger has borrowed and fashioned an argument created by Walter Sinnott-Armstrong" an argument which diminishes ethical knowledge to nothing more than unjustified skepticism derived from non-inferential epistemology. Here is what I said in R2. My opponent argues that most people are able to noninferentially know that torturing babies is wrong. He writes specifically that: As in the case of torturing babies, one may fallaciously believe that they are right and that it is immoral, one is not justified in believing it without reason. So even though the act of torturing babies for fun might seem wrong to anyone without the ability to reason, one is not justified in believing it without some sort of reason. My opponent then makes an argument that one can be justified in believing something noninferentially based solely on sensory experience. But this makes the fallacy of assuming that moral properties are the same as natural properties. The way someone would be justified in believing that they are drinking water is completely different from the way that one would be justified in believing that lynching one based on skin color is wrong. The reason sensory experiences are *prima facie* justified is because of the nature of sensory experience. It is the basis of empirical knowledge. However humans do not possess any sort of "moral sense" that taps into natural moral properties in the world and tells us what is right and wrong. My opponent then goes on to make a small argument of his own. In this argument, my opponent makes a category error by equating moral facts with sense experience. Again, sense experience alarms us of the outside world. We can feel real properties such as softness, hardness or bumpiness. While I may be referring to the ontological existence of moral facts here, I have a legitimate reason. You see we can actually be noninferentially justified in believing that our sensory experiences give us mostly warranted information as to natural properties of the world. However, with the case of moral properties, my opponent makes a presuppositional problem in assuming their existence. If he is to equate moral intuition with sensory experience then he must bring justification. The last thing my opponent writes was actually very interesting. At no point did I say that there were no moral facts. This is strictly an argument dealing with justification of believing that we can know moral facts if they exist.