

SOME ASPECTS OF EPISTEMIC VALUE AND ROLE OF MORAL INTUITIONS IN ETHICS EDUCATION

Vojko Strahovnik

Faculty of Theology, University of Ljubljana,
Slovenia
vojko.strahovnik@guest.arnes.si

Received: 31 January 2014

Moral philosophy has for quite some time practiced the use of thought experiments in argumentative strategies. Thought experiments can be understood as imagined scenarios with a certain level of complexity and novelty, which are usually designed and used to elicit our responses or moral intuitions in order to make our use of key moral concepts clearer or in order to support or reject a particular ethical theory, general moral principle, hypothesis, deeply held moral belief or presupposition. Such imagined cases also often offer us a new insight, illumination and perspective on a given problem. One of the open questions is what is the epistemic status and value of such generated intuitions given their variability and instability. The paper combines a moderate defence of moral intuitions with a discussion of selected aspects of the use of cases in ethics education.

Key words: moral intuition, reflection, thought experiments, imagined cases, ethics education

Introduction

The paper addresses some aspects of epistemic value of moral intuitions, particularly as related to thought experiments and imagined cases, and is part of a broader outline of the defence of moral intuitionism. In using the term 'intuitionism' it is useful to employ Bernard Williams' distinction between epistemological intuitionism and methodological intuitionism, according to which the latter relates to the thesis of plurality of mutually irreducible basic moral principles or grounds

(that cannot be ordered in advanced and put into some kind of meta-principle) and the former aiming at the thesis that moral intuition is a pathway towards (at least a portion) of our moral knowledge (Williams, 1995, 182–191). The paper is mainly focused on epistemic aspect of intuitionism.

A more specific problem within this view is the question about the epistemic role or value of our moral intuitions. Even more specifically there are a number of open issues in relation to the use of thought experiments in ethics, especially the difficulty of moral disagreement and the apparent instability of such intuitions. At least some thought experiments in ethics can be legitimately described as intuition pumps (as opposed to mere imagined cases that we reflect upon) that are specifically devised to elicit a particular intuitive response. Furthermore, some of those thought experiments as related to our responses can be understood as broadly analogous to perceptual illusions in the sense the two or more supposedly morally equivalent moral situations elicit radically different moral responses. The paper endeavours to address these issues by offering an outline of the view of moral intuition (and moral perception) and investigate how the notion of ‘seeming’ enters the picture and what role do seemings play in moral thought experiments. The lessons learned will have a bearing upon a more general question about the relation between ethical theory and practice and will also help to illuminate what the role of such intuitions is and what consequences these lessons have also for ethics education based on reflection on (imagined) cases.

The paper starts (section 1) by briefly introducing the notion of intuition and thought-experiment. Section 2 focuses more specifically on moral intuition, presents a wide variety of understandings of moral intuition and some of its methodological, epistemic and structural aspects. Next, several challenges for moral intuition, particularly concerning its epistemic value and role are raised. The main worries concern the apparent instability of our intuitions and disagreement that accompanies them. Section 4 puts forward a limited defence of moral intuition, appealing also to a more nuanced discrimination between moral intuition, moral perception and moral imagination. The paper concludes (section 5) with some of the consequences all this has for the role of moral intuition in ethics education where the so-called case-based approach cannot avoid the mentioned issues regarding moral intuition.

1. Intuition and thought experiments

Philosophy has from its beginnings harboured attempts (from Plato's *nóesis* to Cartesian clear and distinct perception) to ground philosophical truths, ideas and theories on basic, intuitive judgments that are justified in themselves and in this sense foundational. Many of such attempts were abandoned in the light of the scientific revolution and beginnings of modern science, which have shaken the reliability and usefulness of our intuitions about the essences and nature of external, natural world. Furthermore, the development of philosophy continued in direction of doubt about intuitions regarding other aspects of the world, our experience and language (e.g. regarding introspection and conceptual schemes). Logical positivists rejected intuitions as a special kind of intellectual cognition and accepted only analytic conceptual truths and perceptual experience based knowledge. The critique of analyticity and the myth of the given has resurfaced the discussion on intuition, but this time not necessarily involving intuitions as self-evident necessary truth, but as the most fundamental beliefs, which can represent a basis or a starting point in our search for the answers to philosophical questions (the method of reflective equilibrium among others falls under this category) (Gutting, 1998, 3–13). The question about the role and status of philosophical intuitions thus in a sense became a question about the existence of philosophy as an autonomous discipline (DePaul, Ramsey, 1998). On the one hand, a more naturalistically inclined philosophers argue that philosophical intuitions do not represent a special access to knowledge or to philosophical truths and often refer to psychological research of intuition that reveal them as highly conditioned and unstable. Philosophy and its methods form a continuum with the methods of modern sciences that can shed light into every possible field of inquiry. Within this tradition the role of philosophy is to deal with the most general and universal questions of science(s). On the other hand, less naturalistically inclined philosophers argue that philosophical intuitions represent an essentially non-empirical domain of knowledge, but what still remains open is how exactly are we to understand intuition and its epistemic status.

One can distinguish between intuition in the propositional sense and intuition in the psychological, attitudinal sense; in the former sense we are speaking about intuitions as self-evident proposition or propositions that we are cognizing intuitively, in the latter sense intuitions are

a kind (or an element) of cognitions or beliefs, which are e.g. non-inferential and not easily disregarded (Audi, 2004). In this psychological sense, the most common conception of intuition is closely related to notions of propositional attitude, spontaneous judgment or non-inferential belief. In this paper, I will focus mostly on this latter understanding of intuition. But even if we focus merely on this understanding, one can differentiate and recognize a plethora of different kinds of cognitions ranging from intuitive hunches and seemings, intuitions of experts given the doming of their expertise, intuitions regarding basic mathematical and logical truths to philosophical intuitions (e.g. related to consideration in regards to paradoxes such as *Sorites* or *Sleeping Beauty*). For at least some of those cognitions or intuitions we are inclined to count them as knowledge; probably not many would deny that we know that $2 + 2 = 4$ or that nothing round could be a square at the same time (Sosa, 1998, 258).

Ernest Sosa developed a notion of minimal intuition, which we can use as a basis for further discussion. Sosa claims that we can start with an understanding of intuition as a kind of apprehension without reasoning, intuitive seeming coupled with inclination to believe its contents, and that this can be spelled out in the following way:

“At t , it is intuitive to S that p iff (a) if a t S were merely to understand fully enough the proposition that p (absent relevant perception, introspection, and reasoning), then S would believe that p ; (b) at t , S does understand the proposition that P ; and (c) the proposition that p is abstract.” (Sosa, 1998, 259)

Sosa has with this in mind typical cases of intuitions such as that $2 + 2 = 4$, that no triangle is a square, or intuition regarding the validity of *modus ponens*. One virtue of his approach is that it stresses the analogy between ostensible perception and intellectual appearance or seeming on which intuition is based. Just as it seems to us that the edge of the round glass in elliptical when viewed from an angle and that the two lines in the Müller-Lyer illusion are not of equal length, we can have an intuitive seeming or intellectual appearance (e.g. in cases of riddles and paradoxes like *Monty Hall*, *Newcomb's paradox* or *sorites*) without assenting to intuitive belief about them. This might be a good place to grasp the notion of intuition, especially as related of philosophical intuitions and thought experiments.

Next, I briefly consider the notion of a thought experiment before going on to deal with challenges for moral intuition. Thought experi-

ments can be understood as imagined scenarios or cases with at least a certain level of complexity and novelty. They are usually designed and used to elicit our responses or intuitions in relation to a given goal. The goals of thought experiments are characteristically to elicit such intuitions regarding our use of key concepts, to elicit intuitions in order to support or reject a given argument or a particular theory, general principle, hypothesis or presupposition or to offer us a new insight, illumination or perspective on a given problem or case (Gendler Szabo, 2002, 388). They are also useful for revealing particular implicit assumptions in our considered opinions that we tend to miss otherwise.

Usually thought experiments can be designed in part analogously to other types of experiments, that is in a way that offers us some control and possible variation of variables (Harris, 2011, 4). As such, they are sometimes described as intuition pumps, wonderful imagination grabbers and “jungle gyms for the imagination” (Dennett, 2013), that guide the way we tend to think about some problem or an issue and are thus themselves not arguments but stories that draw out intuitive responses that are then further used in arguments. Many of them can “pump” our intuitions in contrasting directions, especially when a relevant variable in them changes or with the change of context. They can also be understood as a sort of distillate of a kind of reasoning or position in its purest form, which allow us to “sharpen our perceptions” in regards to it (Harris, 2011, 5). Thought experiments pose several important question regarding the reliability and usefulness of intuitions based on them and feasibility of the underlying methodology. In what follows, the focus is on moral intuitions, in particular as arising out of imaginary cases and thought experiments.

2. Moral intuition, moral perception and judgment

Many times philosophers dismiss moral intuitions and judgments based on them as merely a kind of “shooting from the hip” (Singer, 2005, 331), i.e. as snap judgments made in absence of considered and careful reflection. There has been a body of evidence and related discussions pointing towards evolutionary and social conditioning of moral intuitions, their arbitrariness, groundlessness and instability (Haidt, 2011, 814–834; Singer, 2005, 331–352). But on the other hand, when developing a moral theory it seems that one cannot simply avoid them;

furthermore many agree that in developing a moral theory “we must start from somewhere in current folk morality, otherwise we start from somewhere unintuitive, and that can hardly be a good place to start” (Jackson, 2000, 135). In the broadest sense this gets sometimes reflected in the general claim that moral theories are better “to the extent that they accord with moral claims that are attractive on their own right – i.e. apart from any inferential support they receive from other moral claims” (Hooker, 2002, 161).

Such diversity among moral philosophers regarding the utilization or usefulness of moral intuitions can be at least partially attributed to a very wide-ranging and vague use and understanding of the concept. In many ways the term moral intuition is a kind of umbrella term covering phenomena ranging from (i) any kind of common, widely shared and firm moral judgment, that is made without a specific commitment to a particular moral theory; and going through (ii) immediate, spontaneous, relatively strong, compelling and at least experientially non-inferential moral judgments; (iii) pre-theoretical, direct, non-inferential moral judgment that can be accepted on the basis of an adequate understanding of their contents accompanied with firmness; (iv) deliverances of a special moral sense that detect moral reality; to (v) apparently or genuinely self-evident truths or principles (Lillehammer, 2011, 175–200, in: Audi, 2004).

In what follows I propose a more finely tuned understanding of moral intuition (following mostly the view developed by Robert Audi), and distinguish this generic notion of intuition from a kind of moral perception and moral imagination, which can also be inherent in moral thought experiments and reflection on imagined cases.

Audi distinguishes four basic characteristics of moral intuition. Moral intuition is non-inferential or direct in a sense that when we believe a proposition based on an intuition we have made no inference towards it (this does not mean that it cannot also be arrived to by inferential way). Moral intuitions are also characterized by firmness, in the sense that they are accompanied by phenomenology of fittingness and we usually hold judgments based on them with firm conviction and not dismiss them easily. Moral intuitions may require deeper understanding and a suitable comprehension of their propositional objects (that can vary with their complexity). Lastly, moral intuitions are pretheoretical in the sense that they are not directly related to specific theoretical

posits (Audi, 2004, 32–36). We can further clear the air around the notion of moral intuitions by denying that they must be infallible, directly immediate, provide indefeasible justification or be grounded in special cognitive faculty akin to a moral sense as it is sometimes suggested. Sources of such moral intuition are diverse and encompass moral reflection (the most usual case, when we form a moral intuition, e.g. upon careful reflection of an aspect of action), moral perception, moral imagination and moral emotion (Audi, 2013).

Structural aspects of moral intuitions mostly concern the level of their generality. There are several positions possible here. Perceptual intuitionism (following Sidgwick's terminology; Sidgwick, 1981) argues for intuitiveness of particular moral judgments, i.e. is simple, non-inferential and immediate moral intuitions that can justify our judgments about the concrete cases without any substantive import of moral generalizations; sometimes such judgments are even made in contrast to some of the accepted principles. Dogmatic intuitionism tries to identify generally morally relevant types of action and claims that moral intuition reveals this general moral relevance. Dogmatic intuitionist like H. A. Prichard focus on types of actions and endeavour to arrive at a list of basic duties (middle-level moral axioms) that would cover morality. Philosophical intuitionism that Sidgwick is defending tries to go beyond such attempts and reveal the basic axioms of morality that would be self-evident and would systematize our moral thought and practice. Our notion of moral intuition would probably differ regarding on which level we tend to focus. A moral theory can thus begin with moral intuitions at any level of moral inquiry.

One thing that arises from this is that it is useful to distinguish between intuitive judgment about particular cases and judgment about moral principles, e.g. in terms of W. D. Ross' distinction between overall moral judgment pertaining to the importance and balance of *prima facie* duties in particular cases and intuitive judgments about *prima facie* duties, i.e. seeing their grounds as universally morally relevant and thus functioning as basic, indefeasible moral reasons whenever they are present. Ross was famously very sceptical about overall judgments and claimed that while we can attain knowledge about *prima facie* duties, in concrete situations when we form an overall moral judgment about a particular action we are restricted to merely probable opinion (Ross, 1939, 188), since the moral importance of different *prima facie* duties

and the way they interact in a particular case is not self-evident. This shows moral intuitionism does not have to necessarily regard moral judgments about particular cases as paradigmatic form of moral intuition. Moral intuition or intuitive judgments are also often accompanied by characteristic phenomenology; we tend to experience them both as felt inclinations to believe and as responsive to reasons and fitting to a situation or an aspect of a situation we are considering as ground for judgment.

3. Challenges for moral intuition

If we move to moral thought experiments we can reiterate the characterizations made above for thought experiments in general. Moral thought experiments are usually designed to elicit some intuitions regarding the imagined scenario such that they either conform with or oppose some moral belief, moral principle or moral theory. Well-known moral thought experiments such as *Trolley Problem*, *Violinist*, *Survival Lottery* or *Rescue Case* use such generated intuitions in further arguments in developing or opposing some ethical theory. There is a plethora of familiar counter arguments against a use of moral thought experiments in general, but the paper will avoid this more general discussion and instead try to investigate what sort of problems and challenges they generate for the above presented picture of moral intuition.

Among these challenges I want to address the following. If most thought experiments function as intuition pumps and we can control them in a way that pumps our intuitions in opposite directions (even using some presumably morally irrelevant factors), how can we rely on intuitive responses gathered from them to demonstrate anything and how can they figure in further argumentative steps? Secondly, given that most of the cases of moral thought experiments reveal noticeable disagreement or even inconsistency, that is both within our own intuitive responses and responses of our peers, how can we account for that in defence of moral intuitions? We can label the first one instability and irrelevance challenge and the second one disagreement challenge.

Instability and irrelevance challenge. If intuitions are not stable in the sense that a minor, presumably morally irrelevant change of the presented case or situation can change or even reverse our moral judgment, how then we can reliably rely to moral intuition as a source of moral knowledge?

“This problem is illustrated by the ease with which many of us are prone to get stuck when trying to ethically distinguish between variants of the same thought experiment, such as killing one person in order to save five by, alternatively, pushing them onto a train, pushing the train onto them, wobbling a handrail on which they are leaning, flipping a switch that turns on their roller skates, or flipping a switch that changes a train’s direction from one track to another.” (Lillehammer, 2011, 176)

Disagreement challenge. Moral thought experiments reveal important disagreement between our moral intuitions, both regarding different respondents and within a single respondent. This moral disagreement can also resist the exclusion possible sources of error such bias, framing issues, factual mistakes, etc. Is there a way to mitigate these two worries?

4. Defending the epistemic value and role of moral intuition

There are several lines of defence that a proponent of intuitionism can bring forward. Let us start with the most general one and then move to more specific ones.

The first thing, not related merely to moral intuition, relates to the so-called ideological polarity of interesting philosophical concepts (like free will, knowledge, belief, responsibility, obligation), that are often object of philosophical investigation and intuitions. Horgan and Graham in their paper apocalyptically titled “Southern Fundamentalism and the End of Philosophy” (Graham, Horgan, 1998, 271–292) put forward a suggestion to understand philosophy primarily as “ideology” or ideological research, i.e. research and investigation of the nature and functioning of ideas and concepts like freedom, justification, etc. Such “ideology” is the heart of philosophy, but in the post-analytical age we should no longer understand it within the framework of traditional, aprioristic analytical method, but by combining these aspects with a posteriori and interdisciplinary methodology. A philosopher contributes to the investigation intuitions that he or she makes “from the armchair” and which are partially determined by our conceptual competence. These intuitions can then further serve as “empirical data”, which are in principle defeasible and fallible, but must nonetheless enjoy a high level of epistemic reliability and justification, which means that the majority of them will for a given ideological theory reveal as true or correct. One obstacle in this is the so-called ideological polarity, which has

a as consequence that intuitions about a given concept can draw us into opposing directions (e.g. as it is in the case of free will and determinism in various scenarios that we put forward to investigate free will). What can provide help in these cases is broadly a method of wide reflective equilibrium, accompanied with two more specific principles, namely the *principle of accommodation* (a chosen theory must in general accommodate intuitive judgments in a way that preserves them as correct) and the *principle of respect* (intuitive judgment that get rejected as mistaken due to ideological polarity must be treated respectfully, that is in a way that acknowledges and explains their intuitive plausibility) (Graham, Horgan, 1998, 277–278). This proposal can also be seen as echoing a thought already made by Aristotle:

“But, just as in other cases as well, after positing the phenomena and first raising perplexities about them, one ought in this way to bring to light especially all the received opinions about these experiences or, failing that, the greatest number and most authoritative of those opinions. For if the vexing questions are solved and the received opinions remain standing, then the matter would be adequately explained.” (Aristotle, 2011, *NE* 1145a2–8)

With these two principles and under the assumption that we can ascribe at least some evidential value to moral intuitions and judgments based upon them, then one of the most plausible options for practical ethics is to follow the method of wide reflective equilibrium, allowing intuitive judgment to enter it at different levels of generality and with different importance. Method of wide reflective equilibrium can thus be seen as a holistic, fallible and open-ended method seeking to establish coherence among sets of considered moral beliefs at different levels of generality, moral principles and set of relevant background theories and other relevant beliefs (Daniels, 1979, 256–282), including “reflective coherence between ethical intuitions and evidence about their causes and functional role” (Lillehammer, 2011, 186) and this will then include background theories about our existing ethical commitments and intuitions. Thus, such intuitions are revisable

“... in light of inquiry if ethical intuitions fail to cohere with a better informed conception of their causal pedigree. In other words, we are not victims of a compulsive or fatalistic attachment to our ethical commitments.” (Lillehammer, 2011, 187)

The methodology of wide reflective equilibrium requires such an inclusion of evidence and theories about our intuitions. What emerges is a view that these

“... intuitions are presumptively credible, not because they have some special property of ‘intuitiveness’ but because there is good evidence to believe that they would survive in a state of wide reflective equilibrium where their potential reliance on ethically irrelevant or otherwise discreditable criteria of evaluation would be exposed and washed out.” (Lillehammer, 2011, 189)

Such understanding and recognition of wide reflective equilibrium can even upgrade traditional intuitionism, since both Sidgwick and Ross allowed for some sort of reflective equilibrium process to unify our intuitions.

The second line of defence of intuitionism and intuitions is the above mentioned differentiation between intuitive judgment about morally relevant aspects of situations and overall moral judgments about them. A large portion of disagreement regarding moral thought experiments and imagined cases is not related to the recognition of which features of those situations have moral relevance, but what is the overall balance of their ethical importance or stringency (e.g. in the Trolley case or Five Patients case there is usually agreement on the basic morally relevant features present; disagreement steams mostly on their weight they contribute to the overall moral status of possible actions).

A third aspect of thought experiments and imagined cases we can point to is their “thin” nature. With this I have in mind that they are usually under-described, i.e. described in a few sentences and mostly focused on the conflict between the general duties. As such they can be easily determined by the previous assumptions of moral theory (agency, moral decision-making, etc.) and other presuppositions. This leads to an impoverished picture of moral conflict, which can lead to unfounded conclusions and varied intuitions. Real life moral dilemmas that we are faced with are much thicker and can emerge within a much richer network connections, attachments, care, relationships, etc., and as such not only concern duties but also other dimensions of responsibility. Further, cases in thought experiments are presented without a broader context and lack the dimension of time, i.e. their placement in moral history, while the agent in them is presented as ideal, perfect, neutral, atemporal agent (McDonald, 1993, 255–237). Given this, at least some instability of intuitions and disagreement is to be expected.

Lastly, we can point out several dimensions of moral thought involved in moral intuition.

“Intuition is best understood not simply as a grasp of the obvious, but rather as a cognition of the kind that, often because a complex pattern is in view, can be the core of, or at least provide evidence for judgment.” (Audi, 2013, 135)

Among the sources of moral intuition we can include moral reflection, moral perception (or quasi-perception), moral emotion and moral imagination. Moral reflection often yields moral intuition about types of acts or basic morally relevant features of them, while moral perception usually concerns concrete cases and overall moral status of concrete actions. Moral emotion can be understood as a multi-faceted psychological response to experience (real or imagined) and can also be involved in shaping moral intuition. Moral imagination can provide us insight and transcends what we can perceive; it can combine various elements and alter them freely; all this then evokes our intuitive responses to such imagined acts, cases or situations.

5. Moral intuitions, imagined cases and ethics education

Before going on to relationship between imagined cases, thought experiments and ethics education, we can further clarify and systematize several roles of thought experiments and relate them to educational dimension. As described above, one we can roughly delineate four different uses of thought experiments (Walsh, 2011, 467–481). In moral theory they are often used as counter-examples or reduction *ad absurdum* of a particular moral theory or moral position. In the context of ethics education this means the use of *aporia* in teaching, where teacher and student can clear a way for further thinking and reflection. Secondly, they can function as intuition pumps in the sense that they elicit responses from us in such a way that we are then inclined to draw a particular conclusion on the basis of them. Again, in the context of education this relates closely to creation of reflective, engaged and stimulating involvement and critical reflection. Thirdly, they can be used as clarification devices, which function in the way that enhances our understanding by enabling us to differentiate distinct – but till now e.g. conflated or vague – concepts and principles. This is also crucial in the process of education, since it paves the way for proper explanation of the subject matter and organization of knowledge. And lastly, they can serve as re-imaginings, which enable us to foster the debate or a given dispute in some novel way, surpassing our fixed presuppositions and

commitments. This fosters students' imagination and enables them to go beyond their deeply-seated beliefs.

In ethics education thought experiments can thus fruitfully be used for a number of purposes, but even more common and widely practiced method is the use of cases (real or imagined), which can be seen in part analogous to thought experiments, especially regarding moral intuitions that are generated given the presented cases. The difference between both mostly concerns the control and variability of parameters, while aspect of moral intuition and related phenomena function similarly.

The use of cases, whether real, modified or imagined in ethics education at all levels has been prominent in recent decades, especially in fields like business ethics education. The underlying assumptions for the use of cases or case studies can be summarized in the following way. A teacher or educator introduces a case, usually in the form of a dilemma and students are then asked to analyze it and take a perspective of the person supposedly presented with this dilemma. Two goals are inherently presupposed in this. First, in this way students can more easily bridge the gap between ethical theory and practice in the sense that they can try out different approaches to the situation and see which one is more fitting, with an assumption that they will be able to imitate or build on that in future cases that might present to them in real life. Secondly, such use of cases increases engagement and gives pupils or students

“... an opportunity to more fully invest themselves in the situation and the dispute contained within it. Students are more likely to do this, it is argued, when they can gain a level of vicarious experience of the dilemma.” (Burns et al., 2012, 2)

It seems that in this way the use of cases enables us to promote and cultivate moral reasoning that is sensitive to context and related to actual experience, thus making this approach a sensible method for ethics education.

One of the proponents of such an approach is Kenneth Strike, who stresses that it is essential to focus on

“... acquiring facility with the concepts that regulate our public life. It involves mastery of a form of discourse that integrates moral intuitions, moral principles, and background conceptions into a dialogically achieved reflective equilibrium.” (Strike, 1993, 111)

So the primary task of ethics education is not conveying particular moral stances as it is to foster moral reflection, moral sensitivity and moral dialogue on the given ethical issues. This general goal is in tension with one aspect of his theory (and similar case-based theories) that highlights that a good case is somehow constructed around a particular moral principle in a way that foresees the desired discussion, since

“... too much detail can be confusing and distracting. Material that is not relevant to the moral principle involved should not be included. Cases are more like diagrams in a science text than literary works. Their point is to simplify the world so as to focus attention on relevant facts and issues.” (Strike, 1993, in: Burns et al., 2012, 3)

This seems to take us away from the initial presupposition about the goal of ethics education being dialogical and open, into the direction of giving students a set of rules or decision-making guides, which determine the outcome of ethical questions. Practical ethics cannot be reduced to

“... a system rules that we could follow (...) The crucial thing is reflection and judgment on how to – despite many ethical challenges and dilemmas – think ethically and rely on possible guidelines in our judgment.” (Juhant, Strahovnik, 2010, 353)

But

“... [i]f a case is constructed by ‘hinting’ at how to examine a set of predetermined principles, the student is being handed a context that is built to reduce the disagreement to such a fundamental level that no actual situation could ever resemble it. Most of the serious moral work is already done.” (Burns et al., 2012, 5)

This means that an important part of ethical reflection and decision-making is left out, namely the part of recognition of moral relevance or salience out of a complete situation. For this we would need to use cases with features of ambiguous relevance. Of course, the complexity and indistinctness of the used imagined cases should reflect the age, level and moral maturity of students. We must take into account that the recognition of moral relevance must often precede the application of a principle to a case;

“... intuiting the case as falling under a certain description is often logically prior to intuiting the principle under which it falls. This makes it preferable to take situations, rather than principles, as the object of intuitions.” (Kekes, 1986, 84)

We can now turn back to thought experiments, especially to the different roles we have identify they can play. Out of these the role of enabling us to re-imagine the situation or a debate on some specific issue is important here, also bearing in mind that in this stance not only our moral or rational intuition get employed, but also that is it conjoined by related phenomena such as moral reflection, moral (quasi)perception, moral emotion and moral imagination. To employ all these aspect of moral intuition, then such limited view on the use of cases must be surpassed in order to involve even more ethical complexity and the ability of student to face it. Martha Nussbaum summarizes this nicely when she says that good philosophy often gets us to represented situation from a critical practical perspective with ourselves and our own lives and that ethical theory can allow us to see relationships that “have eluded us in our daily thinking” (Nussbaum, 2000, 253). This enables students to develop personalistic and solidary stance, which means to be able to “take part on the lives of others in their various aspects of life, including experiential life of others” (Žalec, 2011, 98). This can be achieved precisely with the use of “thick” cases, which include several aspects of moral relevance. What all this shows is a clear need for integrative and dialogical approach to ethics education, which is also not afraid of ethical theory together with inclusion of thought experiments and moral intuition appropriately understood.

References

- Aristotle (2011), *Nicomachean Ethics*, transl. by Robert C. Bartlett and Susan D. Collins, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Robert Audi (2004), *The Good in the Right*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Robert Audi (2013), *Moral Perception*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- David P. Burns, C. Leung, L. Parsons, G. Singh, & B. Yeung (2012), “Limitations of the Case Study Approach to Pedagogical Ethics Education”, *Transformative Dialogues: Teaching & Learning Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 1–10.
- Norman Daniels (1979), “Wide Reflective Equilibrium and Theory Acceptance in Ethics”, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 76, No. 5, pp. 256–282.
- Daniel C. Dennett (2013), *Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Tamar Gendler Szabo (2002), “Thought Experiments”, in: *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science*, London: Routledge.

- George Graham & Terry Horgan (1998), “Southern Fundamentalism and the End of Philosophy”, in: Michael R. DePaul & William Ramsey (eds.), *Rethinking Intuition – The Psychology of Intuition and Its Role in Philosophical Inquiry*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 271–292.
- Gary Gutting (1998), “‘Rethinking Intuition’: A Historical and Metaphilosophical Introduction”, in: Michael R. DePaul & William Ramsey (eds.), *Rethinking Intuition – The Psychology of Intuition and Its Role in Philosophical Inquiry*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 3–13.
- Jonathan Haidt (2001), “The Emotional Dog and Its Rational Tail: A Social Intuitionist Approach to Moral Judgment”, *Psychological Review*, Vol. 108, pp. 814–834.
- John Harris (2011), “On the Survival Lottery. An Interview”, *Theoretical and Applied Ethics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 4–6.
- Brad Hooker (2002), “Intuitions and Moral Theorizing”, in: Phillip Stratton-Lake (ed.), *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Frank Jackson (2000), *From Metaphysics to Ethics: A Defence of Conceptual Analysis*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Janez Juhant & Vojko Strahovnik (2010), “Pristno delovanje je vzajemnost in sodelovanje”, *Bogoslovni vestnik*, Vol. 70, No. 3, pp. 351–364.
- John Kekes (1986), “Moral Intuition”, *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 83–96.
- Hallvard Lillehammer (2011), “The Epistemology of Ethical Intuitions”, *Philosophy*, Vol. 86, No. 2, pp. 175–200.
- Julie McDonald (1993), “Thin Examples of Moral Dilemmas”, *Social Theory and Practice*, Vol. 19, No. 2, pp. 255–237.
- Martha C. Nussbaum (2000), “Why Practice Needs Ethical Theory: Particularism, Principle, and Bad Behaviour”, in: Brad Hooker & Margaret O. Little (eds.), *Moral Particularism*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- William David Ross (1939), *Foundations of Ethics*, Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Henry Sidgwick (1981), *Methods of Ethics*, 7th edition [1907], Indianapolis: Hackett.
- Peter Singer (2005), “Ethics and Intuitions”, *The Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 9, pp. 331–352.
- Ernst Sosa (1988), “Minimal Intuition”, in: Michael R. DePaul & William Ramsey (eds.), *Rethinking Intuition – The Psychology of Intuition and Its Role in Philosophical Inquiry*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, pp. 257–269.
- Kenneth A. Strike (1993), “Teaching Ethical Reasoning Using Cases”, in: Kenneth A. Strike & Lance P. Terner (eds.), *Ethics for Professionals in Education: Perspective for Preparation and Practice*, New York: Teachers College Press.

- Adrian Walsh (2011), “A Moderate Defence of the Use of Thought Experiments in Applied Ethics”, *Ethic Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 14, pp. 467–481.
- Bernard A. O. Williams (1995), “What Does Intuitionism Imply”, in: Bernard Williams, *Making Sense of Humanity and Other Essays*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 182–191.
- Bojan Žalec (2011), “Religija, demokracija i solidarni personalizam: na putu ka svjetskoj kulturi i civilizaciji”, *Filozofska istraživanja*, Vol. 31, No. 1, pp. 85–100.

NEKI ASPEKTI EPISTEMIČKE VRIJEDNOSTI I ULOGA MORALNIH INTUICIJA U PODUČAVANJU ETIKE

Vojko Strahovnik

Filozofija morala već neko vrijeme koristi misaone eksperimente u argumentativnim strategijama. Misaoni eksperimenti mogu se shvatiti kao zamišljeni scenariji s određenom razinom kompleksnosti i novine, koji su obično osmišljeni i korišteni za poticanje naših odgovora ili moralnih intuicija kako bismo jasnije koristili ključne moralne koncepte te poduprli ili odbacili određenu etičku teoriju, opći moralni princip, hipotezu, duboko ukorijenjeno moralno vjerovanje ili pretpostavku. Zamišljeni slučajevi često nam nude nove uvide, osvjetljenje problema ili novu perspektivu za njegovo promatranje. Jedno od otvorenih pitanja je koji je epistemički status i vrijednost tako potaknutih intuicija, s obzirom na njihovu varijabilnost i nestabilnost. Tekst kombinira umjerenu obranu moralnih intuicija s raspravom o odabranim aspektima uporabe slučajeva u podučavanju etike.

Ključne riječi: *moralna intuicija, refleksija, misaoni eksperiment, zamišljeni slučajevi, podučavanje etike*