

A HARD LOOK AT MORAL PERCEPTION

David Faraci

Abstract

This paper concerns what I take to be the primary epistemological motivation for defending moral perception. Offering a plausible account of how we gain moral knowledge is one of the central challenges of metaethics. It seems moral perception might help us meet this challenge. The possibility that we know about the instantiation of moral properties in something like the way we know that there is a bus passing in front of us raises the alluring prospect of subsuming moral epistemology under the (relatively) comfortable umbrella of perceptual or, more broadly, empirical knowledge. The good news on this front is that various combinations of metaethical positions and theories of perception arguably have the potential to vindicate moral perception (though I won't do much to defend this claim here). The bad news, I'll argue, is that moral perception would be dependent for its epistemic merit on background knowledge of bridge principles linking moral and non-moral properties. Thus, in order to defend a purely perceptual moral epistemology, one would have to argue that knowledge of those principles is likewise perceptual. I further argue it is not.