

Public Abstract

First Name: Justin

Middle Name: Patrick

Last Name: McBrayer

Adviser's First Name: Peter

Adviser's Last Name: Markie

Co-Adviser's First Name:

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

Graduation Term: SP 2008

Department: Philosophy

Degree: PhD

Title: A Defense of Moral Perception

How do we come to have moral knowledge? Is our discovery of moral facts more like our discovery of logical facts or empirical facts? I defend the contentious view that at least some of our moral knowledge is perceptual knowledge. In at least some cases, we can literally see that things are right or wrong. There are two steps to this project. First I show that it is possible to have moral perception. Moral perception occurs when someone perceives that an act is wrong, a person is good, etc. To show that moral perception is possible, I argue that putative cases of moral perception meet all of the necessary requirements on perception more generally. For example, I argue that it is possible for a subject to have a mental state that represents a moral property and that we can be in the appropriate causal relation with moral facts. The second step of the project is to show that moral perception is enough to generate knowledge. I show that moral perception is sufficient for moral knowledge on a number of contemporary accounts of the epistemology of perception. I also show that certain problems for knowledge, such as the problem of disagreement, do not pose a serious threat to moral knowledge given the possibility of moral perception.