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# ARE CONTAMINATED INTUITIONS BAD INTUITIONS?



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## **Are Contaminated Intuitions Bad Intuitions?**

### **Synopsis:**

The evidentiary status of moral intuitions has been a source of substantial debate in contemporary philosophical literature. In this paper, I will address this debate by considering the issue of intuition contamination. I will ask whether there are any viable philosophical methodologies we could potentially use to “clean up” our intuitions, and see if these hypothetical “clean” intuitions provide a solution for worries about reliability. Ultimately, I will argue that we need not abandon our moral intuitions, even if turns out that they are not always “clean”.

## **Are Contaminated Intuitions Bad Intuitions?**

The status of moral intuitions has been a source of substantial debate in contemporary philosophical literature. Firstly, there has been a great deal of disagreement as to what we ought to mean when we use the term “intuition”, and the divergence of views about its appropriate definition has led to a sense of confusion when debating the impact of intuitions on moral judgments and decision-making. This disagreement has been followed by further debate about the epistemic status of intuitions. Despite the definitional confusion, there does appear to be a general consensus that whatever intuitions are, we do seem to have them. However, what is the evidentiary status of such intuitions? Are they sufficiently reliable such that we can justify moral judgments simply on the grounds that we have an intuition one way or another?

In this paper, I will address this question by considering the issue of intuition contamination. First, I will offer the working definition of “intuition” that I will rely on throughout my paper. Then, I will consider whether intuitions can come to be “contaminated”, and what relevance this contamination could have for their evidentiary value. In so doing, I will ask whether there are any viable philosophical methodologies we could potentially use to “clean up” our intuitions, and see if these hypothetical “clean” intuitions provide a solution for worries about reliability. Finally, I will consider the consequences for moral intuitions more broadly speaking if it turns out that cleaning them up is not feasible. Would we be forced to abandon such moral intuitions altogether?

Ultimately, I will suggest that the abandonment of intuition due to contamination is not only unwarranted, but a greater source for concern than is necessary. In fact, there may even be situations in which so-called contaminated intuitions are preferable to their pre-theoretical counterparts (assuming such pre-theoretical intuitions are, in fact, possible, about which I have some doubt). In any event, I will argue that we need not abandon our moral intuitions, even if turns out that they are not always “clean”.