

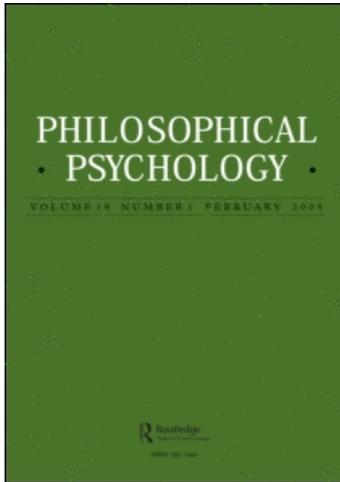
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Steve Clarke

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SIM and the City: Rationalism in Psychology and Philosophy and Haidt's Account of Moral Judgment

Steve Clarke

Jonathan Haidt (2001) advances the 'Social Intuitionist' account of moral judgment, which he presents as an alternative to rationalist accounts of moral judgment, hitherto dominant in psychology. Here I consider Haidt's anti-rationalism and the debate that it has provoked in moral psychology, as well as some anti-rationalist philosophical claims that Haidt and others have grounded in the empirical work of Haidt and his collaborators. I will argue that although the case for anti-rationalism in moral psychology based on the work of Haidt and his collaborators is plausible, a decisive case has yet to be made. It will require further experimental evidence before a decisive case could be made. My assessment of anti-rationalist philosophical arguments that are grounded in the empirical work of Haidt and his collaborators is much more negative than this. I will argue that this body of empirical work is a very unpromising basis for such arguments.

Keywords: Emotivism; Haidt; Moral Judgment; Rationalism; Social Intuitionism

1. Introduction

We make a great many moral judgments. We decide to perform particular actions on the basis of the judgment that these are morally appropriate and we decide to avoid performing particular actions on the basis of the judgment that these would be morally inappropriate. We also make moral judgments about the behaviour of third parties and we confirm or disconfirm the moral judgments of others who confer with us about the moral acceptability of this or that action. How do we go about making such moral judgments? One answer to this question is that, for the most part, we make such judgments consciously and deliberately, by applying explicit moral

Steve Clarke is James Martin Research Fellow, Program on the Ethics of the New Biosciences, James Martin 21st Century School and Faculty of Philosophy, University of Oxford, and Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, Charles Shurt University.

Correspondence to: Dr Steve Clarke, University of Oxford, Program on the Ethics of the New Biosciences, Littlegate House 16/17 St. Ebbses St, Oxford OX1 1PT, United Kingdom. Email: stephen.clarke@philosophy.ox.ac.uk

principles to particular circumstances. This is the rationalist account which, under the influence of Piaget (1932) and Kohlberg (1969), dominated psychological work on moral judgment for most of the Twentieth Century.

The most prominent alternative to the rationalist account is the emotivist account of moral judgment, according to which emotionally driven reactions to circumstances are the primary cause of moral judgments. Of course sophisticated rationalists do not deny that emotions can and do play a role in the formation of moral judgments and sophisticated emotivists do not deny that reasoning can play a role in the formation of moral judgments. In psychology, debates between rationalists and emotivists have typically been characterised in terms of the relative contribution of reason and emotion to overall moral judgment.¹

Philosophers also have a longstanding interest in moral judgment and indeed the distinction between emotivism and rationalism runs through modern and contemporary moral philosophy. Key figures in the empiricist tradition in philosophy, such as Hume (1777/1960), the most prominent sentimentalist, and Ayer (1946), the well-known logical positivist, come down on the emotivist side of the debate. The rationalist side is most famously represented by Kant (1785/1959) and is also represented by a steady stream of more contemporary philosophers.² However, there are important ways in which debates about the relative role of emotion and reason in the formation of moral judgment in philosophy differ from debates between rationalists and emotivists in psychology.

The overriding interest of moral psychologists has been in providing descriptive theories of the formation of ordinary moral judgment. Philosophers are interested in the processes that underpin the formation of moral judgments, but in moral philosophy this is only one of a cluster of central concerns. Another concern that has always been crucial to philosophers is the question of how descriptive theories of moral judgment can be connected to prescriptive accounts of moral judgment. Hume famously claimed that “Reason is, and *ought only to be* the slave of the passions . . .” (1739/1969, p. 462). Similarly, Kant was not content to merely describe ordinary morality as being predominantly rational in origin. He insisted that we ought to formulate moral judgments by a process of applying fundamental principles of morality that are derived from principles of rationality (Johnson, 2004). In contemporary philosophical metaethics, debates between rationalists and emotivists cut across debates between cognitivists and non-cognitivists. Cognitivists, who include traditional rationalists, as well as error theorists, hold that truth conditions can properly be ascribed to moral statements. Non-cognitivists, who include emotivists, as well as prescriptivists, deny that this is so (Van Roojen, 2004).

Very recently the emotivist camp has been in the ascendancy in psychology (Monin, Pizarro, & Beer, 2007, in press). This is due, in no small part, to the influence of experimental work demonstrating the importance of emotional processes in moral judgment. For example, Koenigs et al. (2007) show that damage to the ventromedial prefrontal cortex—a brain region needed for the normal generation of emotions—causes systematic changes in the pattern of an individual’s moral judgments. Valdesolo and DeSteno (2006) demonstrate that variations in the

emotional context in which a moral judgment is made causes changes in the content of that moral judgment. Also Greene, Nystrom, Engell, Darley, and Cohen (2004) provide evidence—in the form of fMRI data—to support the claim that conscious reasoning and emotional processes play distinct and indispensable roles in moral judgment, and that these can come into conflict with one another under some circumstances.³

As well as empirical work demonstrating the role played by emotion in moral judgment, there is a mounting body of evidence which suggests that the role of conscious reasoning is less important to moral psychology, and more complicated, than rationalists in the Kohlbergian tradition had assumed. The explicit application of moral principles to particular circumstances has traditionally been understood to be a core component of most instances of moral judgment and, unsurprisingly, rationalists have traditionally understood this to be an activity that is conducted in a conscious deliberate manner. However, Hauser, Cushman, Young, Kang-Xing, and Mikhail (2007) and Cushman, Young, and Hauser (2006) present evidence for the conclusion that at least some moral principles that appear to guide moral judgments are unavailable to consciousness. Pizarro, Uhlmann, Tannenbaum, and Ditto (2007) present evidence for the conclusion that people are apt to shift their moral principles to rationalize judgments that they have formed, in advance of the deliberate application of those moral principles, and which they are motivated to hold on grounds other than adherence to those moral principles.

New theoretical approaches are emerging to explain recent experimental results. Mikhail (2007) and Hauser (2006) both attempt to explain many such results by postulating the existence of a largely non-conscious ‘universal moral grammar’ underpinning ordinary moral judgment. Moll, Zahn, de Oliveira-Souza, Krueger, and Grafman (2005) attempt to explain many such results using their ‘event-feature-emotion complex framework’, which is primarily grounded in work in cognitive neuroscience, but which also integrates results from psychology, evolutionary biology and anthropology.⁴ Another theoretical approach to the explanation of such results that has been extremely influential, and which is the subject of this discussion, is the approach developed by Jonathan Haidt (2001, 2003, 2004) and collaborators (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008a, 2008b; Haidt, Bjorklund, & Murphy, 2000; Haidt & Graham, 2007).⁵ Haidt is the chief advocate of the social intuitionist account of moral judgment, encapsulated in his ‘Social Intuitionist Model’ (SIM) of moral judgment (Haidt, 2001). Haidt’s work is primarily grounded in social psychology, however Haidt (2001) argues for the compatibility of the SIM with results in neuroscience and other disciplinary areas.⁶

As its name suggests, social intuitionism is a view that stresses the intuitive nature of most moral judgments and the importance of social factors in shaping the intuitions that elicit moral judgments. The principal difference between social intuitionism and rationalism in psychology is that social intuitionists hold that moral judgments are primarily the result of automatic intuitive processes, whereas on the rationalist view, moral judgments are primarily the result of deliberative conscious reasoning. A secondary difference is that while rationalists have typically assumed

that moral reasoning is a mostly individual affair, social intuitionists emphasise the importance of social factors in forming the intuitions that primarily generate moral judgments.

Although Haidt (2001, 2003, 2004, 2007, 2008) has persistently advocated an emotivist position and has persistently opposed rationalism in moral psychology, emotion is not actually represented in the SIM, the abstract model that Haidt builds his account of moral judgment around (2001, p. 815). Haidt does claim that “the social intuitionist model . . . fully integrates reasoning, emotion, intuition and social influence,” (2001, p. 828) and, more specifically, that “in the social intuitionist model, one feels a quick flash of revulsion at the thought of incest and one knows intuitively that something is wrong” (2001, p. 814). However, these comments indicate that Haidt is prone to a loose way of writing, in which the distinction between his general position and the specific model that his general position is organized around is sometimes blurred. When we are presented with the bare SIM (2001, p. 815), there is no specific component of the model that requires the presence of any form of affect.⁷ Intuitions are represented in the SIM, and Haidt endorses an account of the generation of intuitions as typically involving affective processing (2001, p. 825). However, it seems at least possible that one could accept the bare SIM and accept a different view of the generation of intuitions, one that did not involve affect. It seems at least possible therefore, that one could be an advocate of social intuitionism, while not being an advocate of emotivism.⁸ One question that is raised by Haidt’s work is whether or not social intuitionism could be developed into a credible new alternative to both emotivist and rationalist accounts of moral judgment. Here I set this question aside and focus on debate between rationalists and the opponents of rationalism.

The main concern of this paper is to assess the prospects for anti-rationalist arguments that have been grounded in Haidt’s work. I will consider Haidt’s anti-rationalism and the debate that it has provoked in moral psychology, as well as some anti-rationalist philosophical arguments that Haidt and others have based on the empirical work of Haidt and his collaborators. I will argue that although the case for anti-rationalism in moral psychology based on the work of Haidt had his collaborators is plausible, a decisive case has yet to be made. It will require further experimental evidence before a decisive case could be made. My assessment of anti-rationalist philosophical arguments that are grounded in the empirical work of Haidt and his collaborators is much more negative than this. I will argue that this body of empirical work is a very unpromising basis for such arguments.

The discussion will proceed as follows: in the next section of the paper I introduce the SIM and in section three I describe Haidt’s case against rationalism in moral psychology. In section four I consider several rationalist responses to Haidt and provide an assessment of the current psychological debate. In section five of the paper I attend to arguments against rationalism in moral philosophy that are grounded in Haidt’s work. In section six I develop a counterargument to these arguments that is

built on consideration of the social dimension of the SIM. Section seven contains concluding remarks.

Before we move on, some terminological issues. I will use the term ‘reason’, as Haidt does, to refer to deliberate conscious processing. I will use term ‘intuition’ to refer to automatic intuitive processing. In his earlier work Haidt did not distinguish between intuitive processing itself and the conclusion of an instance of intuitive processing, a message that intuitive processing may release to the conscious mind. He referred to both as ‘intuitions’. More recently Haidt has come to recognise the existence of such a distinction (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008a).⁹ I’ll follow him in referring to the processing as ‘intuition’ and to the message produced as a ‘moral intuition’. I’ll refer to mental activity, including both reason and intuition, as ‘cognition’.

2. The SIM

According to Haidt, most moral judgments are the initial product of non-conscious automatic intuitive processing. Conscious reasoning about moral intuitions—the moral judgments presented to consciousness by automatic intuitive processing—then takes place and can sometimes be used to modify initial intuitive judgments, bringing these into line with whatever theoretical moral constructs an individual may be committed to—as a rationalist might suppose. So, Haidt allows that it is possible for moral reasoning to modify moral intuitions in light of such reasoned judgments, but according to him this only occurs occasionally. For the most part, moral reasoning is occupied by the task of justifying whatever intuitions happen to be presented to consciousness. In Haidt’s words:

Moral reasoning is usually an *ex post facto* process used to influence the intuitions (and hence judgments) of other people. In the social intuitionist model, one feels a quick flash of revulsion at the thought of incest and one knows intuitively that something is wrong. Then when faced with a social demand for a verbal justification, one becomes a lawyer trying to build a case rather than a judge searching for the truth. (2001, p. 814)

An apparent example of moral reasoning taking place in pure post hoc ‘lawyer mode’ can be observed when instances of the phenomenon that Haidt refers to as ‘moral dumbfounding’ occur. Morally dumbfounded people are people who have moral convictions that they are completely incapable of justifying, but which they nevertheless continue to hold. When most people are given a description of a scenario in which a brother and a sister have sexual intercourse on a single occasion, they will typically judge this to be a highly immoral action and when asked to explain the reasoning justifying their judgment they will refer to the danger of possible psychological harm to the siblings and to the possibility of an inbred child being born. However, when research subjects are presented with a version of the scenario where it is stipulated that no such psychological harm has occurred and that two forms of birth control are used, most research subjects continue to insist that the activity of the siblings is morally wrong, even when they concede that they cannot

provide any reasons to justify this claim (Haidt et al., 2000). The subjects reasoned about their intuitions, but it appears that all of their reasoning has been directed at justifying their intuitions post hoc. Because rationalist accounts of moral judgment have it that moral judgments are generated by deliberate moral reasoning they seem completely unable to account for the phenomena of moral dumbfounding. If research subjects are not capable of forming any reasoned judgments in support of particular moral convictions, then it does not seem plausible to hold that those particular moral convictions were generated by reasoned judgment.

As well as 'reasoned judgment' and post hoc or 'lawyer mode' reasoning, Haidt allows that deliberate conscious reasoning can sometimes have an effect in shaping future moral intuitions. He refers to this possibility as 'private reflection'. However, Haidt believes that both reasoned judgment and private reflection are rare in comparison to post hoc reasoning. The diagram below, reproduced from Haidt (2001, p. 815) represents the different ways in which reason, intuition and judgment can affect one another in the SIM. The social dimensions of moral judgment are also represented in the model. Links 5 and 6 are depicted by dotted lines to indicate their relative rarity and lack of causal influence, in comparison with the various links in the model represented by solid lines.

The SIM is a model that represents the processes of moral judgment of ordinary humans. It is an abstract structure that is intended to describe, in outline, the causal processes that take place which lead to moral judgment. Models typically abstract away from the messiness of reality and the SIM is not intended to capture the fine detail of any particular moral decision. Instead it is intended to capture, in outline, the relations between the most important factors that contribute to an overall moral judgment.¹⁰ The SIM is intended to model the processes leading to moral judgment in ordinary instances of moral judgment.¹¹

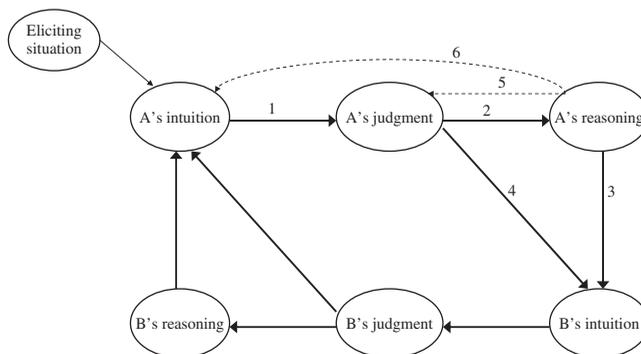


Figure 1. The Social intuitionist model of moral judgment. The numbered links, drawn for Person A only, are (1) the intuitive judgment link, (2) the post-hoc reasoning link, (3) the reasoned persuasion link, and (4) the social persuasion link. Two additional links are hypothesized to occur less frequently; (5) the reasoned judgment link, and (6) the private reflection link. (Reprinted from Haidt, 2001). Reproduction with permission from the author and in accordance with APA permissions policy.

Social intuitionism is a theory describing moral judgment. It is not a theory describing the processes by which moral judgment leads to action. Observations of human actions can provide evidence regarding the content of the judgments that motivated these actions, but there is no guarantee that particular moral judgments will lead to any particular moral actions. It is possible for someone to judge that a particular course of action is the morally appropriate course of action and for them to fail to pursue that course of action. Theories that describe the process by which moral judgment leads to action might be constructed that are congenial to the social intuitionist account of moral judgment, but these are not themselves part of the social intuitionist theory of moral judgment.

The SIM is a dual-processing model of moral judgment. Dual-processing theories of cognition are very influential in a range of areas of psychology (Chaiken & Trope, 1999; Kahneman & Frederick, 2002; Stanovich & West, 2002). According to dual-processing theories, our cognitive activities are of two basic types, effortful deliberative conscious reasoning processes and automatic, non-conscious intuitive processes (Kahneman & Frederick, 2002).¹² The two processes described by dual-processing models of cognition occur largely independently of one another, however intuition is an adaptive system and intuitions can be influenced by reason over the course of time. So, for example, an experienced chess player acquires, over time, the ability to intuitively 'read' a position. This ability is of considerable advantage to the chess player who can then focus attention on the most promising lines of attack instead of exhaustively considering all possible moves. The ability to intuitively read a position might be acquired by deliberate conscious attention to strategic considerations in chess, but it can also be acquired by implicit non-conscious learning (Lieberman, 2000).¹³

It may be that typical proponents of moral rationalism have wanted to downplay the role of intuitions in the formation of moral judgment because, *inter alia*, they have associated intuitions with affect and have supposed that the affective nature of intuitions renders them unreliable. Association with affect is not the only way to understand the potential shortcomings of moral intuitions. Another way is to see them, as Sunstein (2005) does, as implicit heuristics, mental shortcuts or rules of thumb that work well in most circumstances, but which can involve systematic biases. On this view the heuristic 'it is morally wrong to have sexual intercourse with your close relatives' functions to protect us from producing inbred children. However, if our reasoning on this subject is tightly governed by the operation of an intuitive heuristic, we may be unable to recognise that there is no compelling reason for it to apply in exceptional circumstances where sexual intercourse with one's close relatives has no likelihood of leading to the production of inbred children, and we continue to be convinced that it is morally wrong to have sexual intercourse with one's close relatives even in such exceptional circumstances.

So far we have said very little about the social dimension of the SIM, and it might be wondered why the model is described as the SIM rather than just the 'intuitive model'. The main reason for the inclusion of this dimension in his model of moral

judgment is that Haidt holds that most moral reasoning takes place in the context of discussions between moral agents. As the title of a recent paper by Haidt and Bjorklund (2008b) suggests, ‘Social Intuitionists Reason in Conversation’, our intuitions and judgments can be modified by the effect of our own reasoning, but most modifications of our intuitions and judgments occur as a result of the influence of others (Haidt, 2001; Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008a, 2008b).

Haidt and his collaborators characterize the public domain in an interesting way, which, if true, should have far reaching consequences for the understanding of public policy debates. Most public reasoning about moral debates occurs in ‘lawyer mode’ according to Haidt. Constructive reasoning occurs, but it is frequently ‘drowned out’ by the rhetorical priming of this or that moral intuition. According to Haidt, Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech was effective because it successfully primed intuitions regarding fairness and justice and not because of the superior reasoning contained within the speech. But Haidt does not deny that we can sometimes influence the reasoning of others directly via the force of reasoning. Perhaps the SIM should be amended to include links from A’s reasoning to B’s reasoning and from B’s reasoning back to A’s reasoning. Even if the majority of public reasoning succeeds by priming the intuitions of others, if a significant minority of moral reasoning directly influences the reasoning of others, then there is a case for representing such possibilities in the model.

3. Why Should We Prefer Social Intuitionism to Rationalism?

At issue between social intuitionists and rationalists in psychology is the relative importance of reason and intuition in the formation of moral judgments. Social intuitionists do not deny that reason can play a contributing role in the formation of typical moral judgments. What they deny is that it plays the most significant role in typical cases. For rationalists, reasoning is the major source of ordinary moral judgment. At the heart of Haidt’s case for the relative superiority of social intuitionism to rationalism are ‘Four Reasons to Doubt the Causal Importance of Reason’ (Haidt, 2001, pp. 819–825), all of which are also employed by Haidt as reasons to favor social intuitionism to its rationalist alternatives. I’ll briefly summarise these here.

The first consideration is that there is considerable evidence of automaticity in human cognition; indeed there are reasons to believe that the majority of cognitive activity is automatic and non-conscious (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999). Automatic processing is efficient and it seems that when our minds can perform some or other function automatically, they generally do, freeing up the scarce resource of conscious processing for other activities (Moskowitz, Skurnik, & Galinsky, 1999). There is also evidence that much of our social cognition is automatic (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995). Because much moral reasoning is reasoning about behaviour in social contexts, it seems reasonable to infer, therefore, that much of our moral reasoning is also automatic. Because the focus of rationalist accounts of moral

judgment has been on deliberate conscious reasoning, it seems to Haidt (2001) that rationalists will have difficulty accommodating automaticity in moral judgment. However, because the SIM is a dual-processing model, it is purpose built to accommodate automaticity.

The second consideration is that in social cognition we generally employ conscious deliberative reasoning to defend claims that we are already committed to, and we search selectively for evidence to back up claims that we are already committed to, much of the time (Perkins, Allen, & Hafner, 1983). According to Haidt and Bjorklund, people like to imagine that they generally "... behave like (idealized) scientists, looking for the truth and using reasoning to reach their judgments" (2008a, p. 198), examining all relevant evidence in an unbiased manner, before forming explanatory hypotheses on the basis of that evidence.¹⁴ However, it seems that we are often to be found functioning in 'lawyer mode' instead, effectively committing ourselves, in advance, to argue for one position and against others in a dispute. (Baumeister & Newman, 1994). In social cognition, according to Haidt (2001), judgments that we are already committed to commonly drive reasoning. Haidt's social intuitionist account of moral judgment is simply an extension of this general account of social cognition, which has it that judgment typically drives reason, so it fits in very well with it. However, because the rationalist account of moral judgment has it that moral reasoning generally drives moral judgment, it is out of kilter with this general account of social cognition.

The third consideration is that there is evidence that people who are asked to describe the process by which they arrived at the judgments that they now make have a tendency to cite factors that could not have been relevant and to ignore factors that were important (Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Haidt (2001) is not accusing people of lying about the causes of their judgments. Rather, he is accusing people of confabulation. Oftentimes we are unaware of the actual intuitive causes of our judgments and when we are called upon to explain ourselves, we may cite the factors that seem to us to be the most plausible sources of judgment. In doing so we can become convinced that these are the actual sources of our judgment. The prevalence of such behaviour is the basis of Haidt's explanation for the disparity between the lay belief that most of our moral reasoning occurs consciously and deliberately, and the social intuitionist's claim that it is mostly driven by intuitions.

Haidt's final consideration against rationalism is one which concerns moral action rather than moral judgment. He introduces evidence that moral reasoning and moral action are only weakly related (Blasi, 1980) and that moral actions covary more closely with moral emotion than with moral judgment.¹⁵ Such evidence is difficult for the many rationalists who do suppose that moral judgment typically causes moral action to account for. But it is easily accounted for by those proponents of social intuitionism who suppose that moral emotions accompany the activity of moral intuitions in forming moral judgment, and who suppose that moral judgment typically causes moral action.

The first consideration is important but not a decisive reason to reject moral rationalism. Although rationalist accounts of moral judgment have not typically been

developed as dual-processing models, it would not be difficult to adapt many of these to accommodate them to suit a dual-processing approach to cognition. Dual-processing models of cognition require that there are both automatic intuitive and deliberative conscious processes that contribute to overall cognition, but they do not require that either form of processing contributes more to overall cognition than the other. The rationalist can accept the claim that much cognition is automatic, and accept the more specific claim that most social cognition is automatic, without also having to accept the claim that most moral cognition is automatic.¹⁶ The final consideration is also important, but is not a decisive reason to reject rationalism either. Rationalists do not have to hold that moral judgment is strongly correlated with action. They can appeal to non-moral considerations that can override moral considerations and to the phenomenon of weakness of will to account for apparent dichotomies between moral judgment and moral action. In doing so they can explain the weak correlation between moral judgment and moral action. Again, the third consideration is not decisive. The rationalist can accept that some confabulation takes place, following the unrecognised use of intuition in forming moral judgment. However, unless the rationalist is forced to accept that moral judgments are primarily intuitive judgments, the rationalist will not have to accept that such confabulation occurs frequently. Debate can turn on Haidt's second consideration, if the rationalist offers a rival account of general social cognition to the account favoured by Haidt. Alternatively, it is open to the rationalist to argue that ordinary moral reasoning is distinct from other forms of social cognition and that 'lawyer mode' reasoning is not a significant component of ordinary moral reasoning.

4. The Rationalists Strike Back

Haidt's seminal 2001 paper is much cited¹⁷ and has prompted three responses (that I am aware of) from opponents who are not convinced that reason plays as insignificant a role in the formation of moral judgment as Haidt (2001) suggests. In this section I will examine the three responses, due to Pizarro and Bloom (2003), Saltzstein and Kasachkoff (2004) and Fine (2006). Haidt has responded to Pizarro and Bloom (2003) and Saltzstein and Kasachkoff (2004), and Neil Levy (2006) has responded to Fine (2006) on Haidt's behalf.

Pizarro and Bloom (2003) identify a way that reason may influence intuitions, which Haidt (2001) appears not to have made room for in the SIM. They argue that the conscious construal of situations can play a significant role in prompting changes in intuitive responses. I may react with anger when I learn that a student failed to show up for an exam. However, if I discover that the student failed to turn up for a very good reason, such as the death of a family member, my anger will immediately be replaced with sympathy if and when I cognitively appraise this to be a suitable justification for their behaviour. They also point out that someone can change their intuitive responses to circumstances by selective exposure to particular environments. For example, people with highly negative attitudes to African Americans who

chose to take a course on racism taught by an African American professor showed a significant reduction in implicit negative attitudes towards African Americans. Haidt (2003) responds to Pizarro and Bloom by conceding that both of these are genuine possibilities. However, he suggests that both are rare in practice.

In a wide-ranging discussion Saltzstein and Kasachkoff (2004) identify three reasons for thinking that reason may be more involved in moral judgment than Haidt (2001) allows. First, they argue that the business of articulating the reasons for one's decision does not come easy for many people, and that we should not infer, as Haidt (2001) does, in his analysis of moral dumbfounding that, simply because someone is unable to articulate reasons for her moral judgments, she lacks reasons altogether (Saltzstein & Kasachkoff, 2004, p. 280). Second, they point out that Haidt is too swift in inferring that because a public speech has an effect on someone's emotions, thereby affecting that person's moral judgment via intuition, that it does not also affect her judgment via reasons (p. 278). So Haidt may be right that Martin Luther King's 'I have a dream' speech influenced peoples' intuitions, but King may also have influenced their conscious reasoning, drawing attention to inconsistencies between the moral ideals of fairness and equality that many Americans are committed to, and the reality of entrenched racial discrimination in America in the 1960s. Third, Saltzstein and Kasachkoff argue that there is an important difference between the initial development of a moral judgment and its redeployment on subsequent occasions (p. 279). Haidt may be right that most instances of moral judgment are driven by intuition. But this may be because most instances of moral judgment involve the redeployment of moral rules that people have habituated and which may have been formed earlier by a process of deliberative reasoning. So even if intuition directly causes most instances of moral judgment, it is possible that reason may have laid down the pattern by which intuitions lead to moral judgment. If this is true then, surely, reason is more important to the overall constitution of moral judgment than a first glance at the relevant evidence might seem to suggest. The gist of Haidt's (2004) reply to Saltzstein & Kasachkoff on these issues is to allow that all of these are genuine possibilities and to suggest the use of further experiments to try to resolve outstanding questions about the role of reason in the formation of moral judgments.

Cordelia Fine argues that private reflection may be more important than Haidt allows (2006, p. 86). In addition to affecting the formation of moral judgments indirectly, by affecting the formation of the intuitions that give rise to moral judgments, it may also disrupt the process by which intuitions become judgments. So, for example, we might have intuitions primed by a culturally prevalent stereotype of a minority group, but if we consciously decide that it is morally wrong to judge people on the basis of stereotypes then our conscious decision that such stereotyping is morally wrong can directly prevent the formation of moral judgments on the basis of such stereotypes. Fine presents a variety of psychological and neuro-scientific evidence for this conclusion. Haidt has not responded to Fine, as yet, however Neil Levy (2006) has offered responses on his behalf. Levy points out that, although Fine has established that such disruptions occur, she has not established that these are the result of rationally governed

processes. Also, she has not established that these have a significant effect on our moral judgments, because she has not established that they occur often enough to have a significant effect (Levy, 2006, p. 101).

It is clear enough that debate between Haidt and his rationalist opponents is ongoing. It seems reasonable to conclude, on the basis of the considerations surveyed, that the SIM does not allow for all of the ways in which reason and intuition might interact to produce overall moral judgment. However, it is not clear that any of the proposed ways in which reason and intuition can interact to produce overall moral judgment, that Haidt's opponents have identified, are significant enough to warrant modification of the SIM—where the SIM is understood as a model that captures the most significant causal processes leading to the formation of moral judgment. In order to properly adjudicate the debate in moral psychology between Haidt and his rationalist opponents we should await the results of further experiments, which may enable us to better assess the significance of the objections raised by Pizarro and Bloom (2003), Saltzstein and Kasachoff (2004), and Fine (2006) to Haidt's anti-rationalism. Until such evidence has been assembled, it seems most sensible to withhold judgment about the merits or otherwise of the case for anti-rationalism in psychology based on the work on Haidt and his collaborators.

5. Philosophical Anti-rationalism

Haidt and Bjorklund assert that "... there is no firewall between philosophy and psychology" (2008a, p. 213) and they specify a number of philosophical implications that they take acceptance of the SIM to involve. One important philosophical implication that they take the SIM to involve is that "... an adequate normative ethical theory should be pluralistic, even if that introduces endless difficulties in reconciling conflicting sources of value" (2008a, p. 215). Their argument for normative pluralism is based on the assumption that, because moral judgment is predominantly intuitive in origin, rather than deliberative and rational, and because our moral intuitions have a variety of sources,¹⁸ there is a diversity of legitimate grounds for moral judgments. Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) recognise the various sources of moral intuition as legitimate grounds for normative claims, but do not recognise rationality as either an independent legitimating source, or as a significant contributor to moral intuition; so in effect their normative pluralism is a stridently anti-rationalist metaethical position. Haidt and Bjorklund are not alone in holding that the SIM has anti-rationalist metaethical consequences. Jacobson, a leading proponent of sentimentalism in metaethics,¹⁹ argues that Haidt and Bjorklund's empirical position best coheres with a sentimentalist metaethical theory (2008, p. 220). Although he is a convinced sentimentalist for other reasons, he does accept that his philosophical position requires the grounding of a realistic moral psychology and he tells us that he is willing to accept the 'primary empirical claims' of Haidt and Bjorklund (2008, p. 221). It seems, therefore, that Jacobson accepts that the empirical

work of Haidt and his collaborators provides us with good grounds to favour a sentimental metaethical position over rationalistic alternatives.

Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) also claim that the work of Haidt and his collaborators has a variety of other philosophical implications. These are implications for debates about relativism and skepticism, the nature of moral truth, and the relation between is and ought statements. They are right about all of this, although the various implications that they suggest are open to dispute.²⁰ They also claim that a further philosophical consequence of the work of Haidt and his collaborators is that “The methods of philosophical inquiry may be tainted”²¹ (Haidt & Bjorklund, 2008a, p. 216). Still more philosophical consequences of the work of Haidt and his collaborators are that it may be of use to those such as Gintis (2007) who are interested in the project of unification of the behavioural sciences and that, by deploying a naturalistic account of intuitions in the service of his account of moral judgment, Haidt lends indirect support to philosophers such as Devitt (2006) who argue for a naturalistic account of intuitions.

A quick way to attempt to dispute the claims of those who might seek to derive anti-rationalist metaethical conclusions from the empirical work of Haidt and his collaborators, would be to follow Hare (1952) and others in insisting that one can never derive normative philosophical conclusions from factual psychological premises. If this is right then, contra Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a), there is a ‘firewall’ between philosophy and psychology. I do not propose to take this quick route. As Jacobson points out, naturalistically-inclined philosophers accept that facts about human moral behavior are relevant to ethics and that our ethical position should be one that coheres with a realistic moral psychology (2008, p. 221). I agree, but Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) are nevertheless in error. Their error does not consist in inferring from the factual to the normative, but in inferring too swiftly from the factual to the normative.

It is not altogether clear how we should proceed when inferring from evidence about the processes of moral cognition to metaethical conclusions about the proper formation of moral judgment. Judging by the ways in which their argument is developed, it seems that Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) implicitly assume that they are entitled to infer from facts about the ways in which moral judgments happen to be made, in some societies here and now, to general conclusions about how moral judgments ought to be formed. At any rate Haidt and his collaborators provide evidence for the conclusion that the majority of majority of people in contemporary Western societies and some non-Western societies, happen to make moral judgments largely on the basis of intuition, rather than deliberative reasoning. And it is on the basis of this evidence that Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) ground their case for an anti-rationalist metaethics.

But this seems too narrow an empirical basis from which to draw reliable metaethical conclusions. If we are to draw reliable metaethical conclusions, on the basis of empirical evidence about human moral judgments, we require an empirical basis that informs us about the nature of human moral judgment *per se*. So these must be generalizations that hold across variations of social structure and across time

rather than generalizations about how the majority of us happen to make moral judgments here and now. Haidt and his collaborators do not show us that in societies that are, or might be, configured differently from the ones that they have studied, most people would also make moral judgments largely on the basis of intuition rather than deliberative reasoning. If societies are possible in which the majority of people make moral judgments largely on the basis of reason rather than intuition, then we lack a suitable empirical basis for anti-rationalist metaethical conclusions.

It might be objected, at this point, that my complaint against those who seek to draw anti-rationalist metaethical conclusions from the work of Haidt and his collaborators is based on speculation about what might be possible and that this is not the strongest basis from which to argue. However, my case is far stronger than first appearances may suggest. As we will see in the next section of the paper the SIM, properly understood, gives us good reason to think that human societies in which moral judgments are made in a predominantly rational mode are indeed possible. Haidt's work contains at least one suggestion as to how we might begin to change Western society so that Western societies become ones in which moral judgments are made predominantly on the basis of deliberative rational considerations, rather than intuitive considerations. And there are several other possible ways of achieving the same goal that will be discussed.

6. The Social Dimension

The social dimension of the SIM has had a tendency to disappear from view in discussion of Haidt's account of moral judgment. This is unfortunate because the social dimension of the SIM has an important bearing on the question of the relative causal contributions of reason and intuition to moral judgment, the locus of debates between Haidt and his rationalist opponents. There is good reason to believe that social factors have the capacity to alter the balance between the causal contributions of reason and intuition to overall moral judgment. If this is right, then there can be no general answer to the question of whether reason or intuition makes the greater contribution to overall moral judgment. The answer to this question will vary from society to society. And if differences in social circumstances are sufficiently significant within particular societies then the answer may vary between individuals within those societies.

Because the SIM allows that social factors can alter reason, intuition, and moral judgment, directly or indirectly, it seems that it cannot be used to support general claims about the relative causal contribution of reason and intuition to overall moral judgment in the absence of social factors. So the SIM cannot be used to support a general cross-cultural and atemporal social intuitionist case. It might be expected that Haidt would oppose the above line of reasoning, however it would be exceedingly difficult for him to do this effectively, because in Haidt (2001) he provides a specific example of a case in which he believes that social factors cause a variation in the relative contribution of reason and intuition to the formation of

moral judgments. Haidt suggests that the approach to moral education taken in Lawrence Kohlberg's 'just community schools' may have the effect of strengthening Link 6 in the SIM (private reflection) (Haidt, 2001, p. 829). If Haidt is right about this then 'just community schooling' alters the nature of the interplay between reason and intuition in the formation of overall moral judgment, increasing the influence of reason on intuition, and thereby indirectly increasing the overall influence of reason on overall moral judgment.²² The adoption of 'just community schooling' at a national level would have the potential, therefore, to turn a society that was composed mostly of social intuitionists into a society that was composed mostly of rationalists.

A defender of Haidt might try to respond to the above line of argument by arguing that what Haidt (2001) has in mind is that 'just community schooling' can have a minor effect on the relative balance between the contribution of reason and intuition to the overall formation of moral judgment, and that he does not mean to contemplate the possibility that it might alter the balance to such an extent that reason actually makes more of a contribution to moral judgment than intuition. However, it seems that there is no basis for restricting the claim in this way. Haidt supplies reasons to think that 'just community schooling' can strengthen link 6, but he supplies no reasons that might be used to ground the claim that, while it can strengthen link 6, it can only do so to a limited extent. And it seems that Haidt is in no position to make such a claim. To be able to make such a claim, and defend it, someone would need to know much more about how 'just community schooling' can affect link 6 and what possible limits there are, if any, on its effectiveness.

The adoption of 'just community schooling' is only one plausible way in which social circumstances might be altered to cause individual moral judgments to be more influenced by rationality than they might otherwise be. Another way is suggested in some remarks made by Neil Levy. Levy proposes that we view public moral discourse as a 'community-wide enterprise which is lead by moral experts' (2006, p. 102). If the people whom we defer to as moral experts make moral judgments in ways that are more rational than the average moral judgment and if they faithfully transmit the results of their highly reasoned moral judgments, then the degree of rationality of average judgments is lifted. Individuals might not themselves become more rational moral judges, however, through 'distributed cognition' they may come to accept more rationally based moral judgments. If we increase the degree to which we rely on the testimony of such moral experts in the formation of our moral judgments, then we will increase the influence of reason on moral judgment accordingly.

Another way of trying to make our moral judgments become more rationally based is to use education to try to reduce the relative influence of post hoc reasoning and increase the relative influence of reasoned judgment in the overall balance of people's moral reasoning. In other words we increase the relative causal contribution of link 5 in the SIM and decrease the relative causal contribution of link 2 in the SIM. One way in which we might do this is by training people in critical reasoning. Many people

find it difficult to identify post hoc reasoning and rhetoric. People who are trained in critical reasoning can better distinguish between post hoc reasoning and constructive reasoning, so they are more protected from the influences of the post hoc reasoning and the rhetoric of others, than people who cannot make this distinction.

A further way of increasing the relative influence of reasoned judgment and decreasing the relative influence of post hoc reasoning is to create social circumstances in which the use of reasoned judgment is encouraged and in which post hoc reasoning is discouraged. Scientific journals and some philosophy journals are domains in which the use of reasoned judgment is favored over post hoc reasoning and debates that take place in these venues are ones that minimise the influence of post hoc reasoning on conclusions. It may be that the influence of reason on moral and political debates can be increased simply by adjusting the rules of debate in which moral and political debates take place, to favor reasoned judgment and to discourage post hoc reasoning. Such a change can reasonably be expected to have a flow on effect on individual moral judgment, if Haidt is right about the social dimension of moral judgment. Many of the debates that currently occur in the public domain are ones which involve much post hoc reasoning and in which constructive reasoning is frequently clouded by rhetoric. However, we can design institutional structures that promote the influence of reasoned judgment and discourage the influence of post hoc reasoning and rhetoric. Proponents of ‘deliberative democracy’ stress the importance of public deliberation in producing better outcomes in democratic societies (Cohen, 1989). Whilst much of the writings of proponents of deliberative democracy does not distinguish between post hoc reasoning and reasoned judgment in the formation of outcomes, some do recognise the importance of ensuring the quality of public reasoning and there is a strand of thinking in the deliberative democracy movement that emphasises the importance of designing institutions so as to improve the quality of public debate (Bohman, 1998).

I’ve considered several ways in which social circumstances might be changed that can affect the overall balance of reason and intuition in the formation of moral judgment and it seems plausible to think that all of them could be sufficient to change the balance of reason and intuition to the extent that social intuitionism is not a viable account of moral judgment. The changes that I have considered are all piecemeal changes. More extreme and systematic ‘social engineering’ type changes have the potential to have an even more pronounced effect on the balance of reason and intuition in the formation of moral judgment.

7. Concluding Remarks

Although Haidt presents social intuitionism as an alternative to rationalism and although he has engaged in a series of debates with a number of defenders of rationalist alternatives to social intuitionism, he is also at pains to stress that the SIM is not a straightforwardly anti-rationalist model. According to him it is “... a model about the complex ways that intuition, reasoning and social influences interact to

produce moral judgment” (2001, p. 829). We can think of the SIM as having two aspects. First, it involves a structure—specifying how its different components relate to one another. Second, it involves a set of related claims about the relative causal contributions of these different structural components to overall moral judgment. Haidt’s use of solid and dashed links in the SIM is intended to indicate the differences in the relative causal contribution of the various components of the SIM. The bare structure of the SIM (call this SIM_S), specifies ways in which reason, intuition and social factors interact without addressing the question of the relative causal contribution of the components of the model to overall moral judgment.

The SIM_S might be accepted by either rationalists or social intuitionists, with each camp interpreting it differently. Social intuitionists will want to conjoin the SIM_S with a claim about the relative causal contribution of reason and intuition to moral judgment, to produce the SIM. Rationalists will want to conjoin the SIM_S with a different claim about the relative causal contribution of reason and intuition to moral judgment. However, all claims about the relative contribution of reason and intuition to moral judgment, made within the context of the SIM_S are limited in generalizability, because of the variability of causally relevant social factors. Because the SIM_S contains a social dimension and because variations in that dimension can have significant effects on the ways in which reason and intuition interact to form moral judgment, there is very unlikely to be a fully generalizable, empirically accurate, rationalist or social intuitionist interpretation of the SIM_S to be had. The formation of moral judgment is a complex affair and its details can be expected to vary between societies and between individuals within some of those societies.

How might a social intuitionist who wished to accept the SIM_S and wanted to insist that their position was generalizable across cultures and across time respond to the above line of reasoning? They might try to argue that, in actual fact, the ability of social factors to affect the ways in which moral judgments are made is limited in such a way that it is guaranteed that social intuitionism will always be the correct model of moral judgment, regardless of social context. However, such a line of argument would require the social intuitionist to produce a significant body of evidence regarding limits to the ability of social factors to influence the formation of moral judgments, or to produce significant evidence regarding limits to the variability of social contexts, at least in so far as these affect the formation of moral judgment. It is possible that there is some such evidence out there waiting to be found, but recent research by Haidt and his collaborators points to the conclusion that social contexts are very important for the formation of moral judgment and that the social contexts that affect the formation of moral judgment can be highly variable. Haidt and Bjorklund argue that “. . . our moral judgments are strongly shaped by what others in our ‘parish’ believe, even when they don’t give us any reasons for their beliefs” (2008a, p. 193). Haidt and Graham (2007) argue that social contexts can vary to such an extent that the foundational sources of intuitive moral judgements in some countries do not prompt intuitions that are recognisably moral intuitions for many people in other countries.

As we saw in section four, debates between Haidt and his rationalist opponents in psychology are currently unresolved. These may become resolved when more empirical evidence becomes available. However, philosophical debate between rationalists and anti-rationalists that follow on from the work of Haidt and his collaborators are very unlikely to be resolved by the identification of further empirical evidence. This is because, as we have seen, the sort of empirical evidence that would be required to resolve such debates is, *inter alia*, evidence of cross cultural and cross temporal consistency in the relative contribution of reason and intuition to moral judgment. It would not be easy to find reliable evidence of this sort and Haidt and his collaborators provide us with reasons to think that such evidence is unlikely to be out there waiting to be found.

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Notes

- [1] Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) characterize debates between rationalists and emotivists this way. Horgan and Timmons agree that this is the way in which such debates are typically framed, but argue that this way of framing such debates obscures the possibility of some options (2007, p. 280). An alternative way to understand such debates is as boiling down to a dispute about the ‘cognitive penetrability’ of the moral (Gerrans & Kennett, 2006). Mental processes are said to be cognitively penetrable if they can be altered systematically in response to an agent’s goals and beliefs. On Gerrans and Kennett’s (2006) way of framing the dispute, rationalists argue that the mental processes underpinning moral judgments are subject to revision, and that these can be revised so that moral judgments adapt in response to an agent’s goals and beliefs. The opponents of rationalism deny this possibility, or at least they deny that it often occurs.
- [2] See for example Gewirth (1980) and Broome (1999).
- [3] Greene, Nystrom, Engell, Darley, and Cohen (2004) refer to “reasoning and ‘higher cognition’,” which they contrast with emotional processes.
- [4] Prinz (2007), which was unavailable at the time this paper is being written, promises yet another approach to the explanation of recent experimental work on moral judgment, offering an account that is grounded in neuroscience, anthropology and philosophy.
- [5] Although these are different approaches, when contrasted with the old rationalist orthodoxy of Kohlberg’s era they appear to have much in common. So much so that it seems plausible to say that a new synthesis has now emerged in moral psychology (Haidt, 2007, 2008).
- [6] Horgan and Timmons describe Haidt as “...arguably the leader of the recent anti-rationalist, pro-intuitionist trend in moral psychology” (2007, p. 280). Whether other participants in this trend would accept this description is unclear, but there is no denying that Haidt has been extremely influential.

- [7] Haidt's key paper (2001) is entitled "The Emotional Dog and its Rational Tail." However, Haidt and Bjorklund (2008b) concede that the term 'emotional dog' in Haidt (2001) was misleading.
- [8] For a recent account of intuitions that does not depend on emotion see Sunstein (2005). Sunstein (2005) is further discussed in section two.
- [9] Haidt and Bjorklund (2008a) thank Walter Sinnott-Armstrong for helping them to see this distinction.
- [10] A plethora of philosophical issues are raised when we consider the ways in which scientific models represent aspects of the empirical world. See Bailer-Jones (2003).
- [11] Haidt (2001) does not say this, but as the SIM is meant to model the processes of ordinary moral judgment, it is probably not intended to model the processes of moral judgment of those who are psychologically abnormal such that their ability to reason morally is limited or non-existent. There is reason to believe that autistics and psychopaths, being unable to empathise with others, are unable to develop the moral emotions that typically accompany moral intuitions (Blair, 1996; Blair, Mitchell, & Blair, 2005). So they probably lack moral intuitions. Kennett (2002, pp. 349–353) argues that autistics (but not psychopaths) can think about morality, but, lacking moral intuitions, they can only do so in an extremely Kantian way that may be abnormal; explicitly articulating and deliberately applying moral rules. There has been much written on the relationship between psychopathy and moral responsibility. See, for example, Levy (2007).
- [12] These two different sorts of processes are sometimes referred to as applications of 'System 1' and 'System 2' processing (Stanovich & West, 2002).
- [13] According to Lieberman "...intuition is a phenomenological and behavioral correlate of knowledge obtained through implicit learning" (2000, p. 110). For more on training intuitions see Klein (1999).
- [14] An anonymous referee points out, quite rightly, that the weight of opinion in contemporary philosophy of science is that individual scientists often behave more like intuitive lawyers than ideal intuitive scientists. This view is even more entrenched in contemporary sociology of science and is often used as part of an attack on the objectivity of science. Defenders of the objectivity of science typically respond to advocates of this view by arguing that scientific institutions are structured in such a way that objectivity can emerge at the group level. This answer is on the right track, but a plausible version of it must be considerably more nuanced than this bare statement. See, for example, Kitcher (1993, 2001).
- [15] The main evidence that Haidt presents to substantiate the claim that moral emotion and moral action are strongly correlated are studies of the behaviour of those who are capable of moral reasoning, but lack moral emotions, including psychopaths and people who have suffered certain sorts of brain damage (2001, p. 824).
- [16] Furthermore the rationalist can draw on evidence provided by dual-processing theorists for the conclusion that many of our automatic social judgments are subsequently amended by conscious reasoning. See Chaiken and Trope (1999).
- [17] Google Scholar lists 632 citations as of October 22, 2008.
- [18] For more on these sources see Haidt and Graham (2007).
- [19] See, for example, D'Arms and Jacobson (2000).
- [20] And they are disputed by Jacobson (2008).
- [21] By this they mean that the moral intuitions of philosophers—on which much weight is placed in contemporary moral philosophy—may be predominantly driven by unreliable automatic intuitive processing, rather than rational deliberation, even though moral philosophers may be often unaware that this is the case. This line of criticism is developed further by Greene (2008), who introduces evidence for the provocative claim that deontological philosophical intuitions are primarily driven by emotional rather than rational processing. This is a claim which, if true, would, as Greene argues, seem to undermine the grounds that are usually provided by Kantians for accepting the legitimacy of deontological

moral reasoning. However, see Timmons (2008), who suggests, contra Greene, that an emotionally-grounded deontology may be viable.

- [22] 'Just community schools' are, in effect, participatory democracies. Students and staff vote on policies to run their school (with all votes counting equally) after deliberation in an open forum. Kohlberg contends that participation in this process accelerates moral development, resulting in moral judgment becoming more explicitly reason-based. (Reed, 1997, pp. 163–220).

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