

# BEING APPROPRIATELY DISGUSTED

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Empirical research indicates that feelings of disgust actually affect our moral beliefs and moral motivations. The question is, should they? Daniel Kelly argues that they should not. More particularly, he argues for what we may call the irrelevancy thesis and the anti-moralization thesis. According to the irrelevancy thesis, feelings of disgust should be given no weight when judging the moral character of an action (or norm, practice, outcome, or ideal).<sup>1</sup> According to the anti-moralization thesis, feelings of disgust should not be allowed a role in, or harnessed in the service of, moral motivation.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, I will argue against both theses, staking out a moderate position according to which feelings of disgust can (but needn't always) play a proper role in aid of moral belief formation and moral motivation.

First, I will sketch Kelly's position and the arguments for it. Second, I will outline and defend an alternative view according to which disgust can play a proper role in moral belief formation and moral motivation (an application of a view I've defended elsewhere, known as the Prudent Conscience View).<sup>3</sup> Finally, I will revisit Kelly's arguments, using the resources of the view I sketched in the second section to show why these arguments do not succeed in showing that disgust has no proper role in moral belief formation and moral motivation.

## 1. DISPARAGING DISGUST

It seems clear that merely feeling disgust is not sufficient to justify the moral condemnation of an act. Consider a case.

ENDOGRAMY: Roger considers interracial marriage to be very disgusting. Because of these feelings, he strongly condemns as immoral the interracial marriage of one of his coworkers.

The natural response to ENDOGRAMY is to see Roger's feelings of disgust toward interracial marriage as inappropriate. He should seek to rid himself of these feelings, insofar as he's able, rather than use the feelings as the basis for forming a moral belief. Consequently, it is natural to believe that Roger's belief is epistemically unjustified, arising as it does from feelings that are inappropriate. This should not suggest that epistemic justification for a moral belief formed in response to feelings of disgust stands or falls on the appropriateness of the disgust. Consider a second case.

DIAPER: Marla finds cleaning her baby's diaper disgusting and, based on these feelings, begins to accuse her child of being "wicked" whenever the child goes to the bathroom.

The natural response to DIAPER is to see Marla's feelings of disgust at a dirty diaper as at least partially appropriate. That is, dirty diapers are pretty gross. But it's also natural to think that Marla's belief that the child is therefore "wicked" for dirtying diapers is unjustified. Unlike Roger in ENDOGRAMY, the inappropriateness of whose feelings intuitively rendered his moral belief unjustified, Marla's belief that the child is doing something morally wrong is unjustified at the very least because the child cannot help herself. It is therefore natural to think that Marla's moral belief in DIAPER is also epistemically unjustified, despite arising from appropriate feelings of disgust.

Kelly's position has the resources to diagnose both Roger and Marla's errors correctly. For according to Kelly, "feelings of disgust themselves should be given no weight in deciding whether an issue – be it a norm, an activity, a practice, an outcome, or an ideal – is morally acceptable or morally problematic."<sup>4</sup> The sense of 'should' Kelly highlights here is epistemic; feelings of disgust are not

appropriate epistemic bases for moral beliefs. We can thus characterize his position in the following way:

**Irrelevancy Thesis:** S's belief  $b$  that  $\phi$ ing is good (or bad, or praiseworthy, or brave, etc.) is epistemically unjustified to the degree that  $b$  is based upon S's having a feeling of disgust  $f$ .<sup>5</sup>

Kelly provides a definition of what he calls "core disgust" as characteristically involving three components.<sup>6</sup> First, disgust typically involves some feeling of "oral incorporation," that is, feelings (perhaps only partially conscious) of the disgust elicitor's bearing some relation to one's mouth or to ingestion. Second, disgust typically involves a durable feeling that the elicitor is offensive, particularly offensive because of its "uncleanness" (or taint, or impurity). Third, disgust typically involves an easy transference of the disgust feeling from its original elicitor to those things that are somehow similar or proximate to the original elicitor (what Kelly calls "contamination sensitivity.") It's hard to know whether Kelly thinks of these three components as being necessary and sufficient conditions for feeling disgust. These components, particularly that of oral incorporation, are not always introspectively transparent when one is having an intuitively obvious feeling of disgust.

Is 'moral disgust' sufficiently similar to core cases of disgust to render psychologically plausible the extension of disgust to the moral realm? Although there is good evidence that 'pure' moral disgust and non-moral disgust is in fact psychologically linked, there are also moral analogues to the three disgust components Kelly identifies.<sup>7</sup> First, whereas non-moral disgust typically involves what might be described phenomenologically as a (potentially unconscious) fear that the elicitor of disgust may be incorporated into the agent *orally*, moral disgust may involve a (potentially unconscious) fear that the elicitor of disgust—some act  $\phi$ —may be incorporated into the agent's *character* by  $\phi$ ing. Second, cases of moral disgust involve an elicitor's being durably offensive because of some felt moral taint. Arguably, this feature of core disgust is more fitting in the moral realm since, for instance, cockroaches

can be sterilized but there is no corresponding moral sanitation for acts of pedophilia. Third, the elicitation of moral disgust can easily spread from the original elicitor to those which are proximate. In the non-moral realm proximity is determined spatially, but in the moral realm proximity seems determined by similarity and practical connection. For instance, if deeply-held bigotry is disgusting, so too may attitudes resembling it arouse disgust. Similarly, if pedophilia is disgusting, then so too is it disgusting for a pedophile to merely watch children at play.

At any rate, by the irrelevancy thesis, Roger and Marla's errors arose principally from assigning to their feelings of disgust some weight in judging the moral permissibility of interracial marriage and going to the bathroom, respectively. Kelly does not explicitly make use of intuitive judgments but rather provides two arguments for the irrelevancy thesis. The first I will call the content argument; the second I will call the unreliability argument.

According to the content argument, the disgust eliciting system (henceforth 'DES') developed principally to be sensitive to and be triggered by poisons and parasites.<sup>8</sup> However, DES also developed to be flexible, easily acquiring from those around us information about what is a proper disgust elicitor.<sup>9</sup> At a certain point, this flexibility allowed DES to be triggered by violations of social norms and ethnic boundaries, which gave a moral cast to the feeling of disgust, such that elicitors of disgust began to be thought of as wrong in some way.<sup>10</sup> However, disgust is not about avoiding what is immoral and DES is not a system developed to be sensitive to moral facts.<sup>11</sup> Rather, "what disgust properly responds to has nothing to do with morality but is a reaction to cues likely to mark poisons and parasites."<sup>12</sup> Given this, Kelly seems to take moral beliefs formed in response to feelings of disgust as irrational "downstream" byproducts of DES, and epistemically unjustified.<sup>13</sup>

The second argument provided by Kelly is quite simple. According to the unreliability argument, disgust "is on a hair trigger, following a 'better safe than sorry' rule."<sup>14</sup> In other words, DES is a less

than fully reliable system even when it comes to own its proper content, namely, poisons and parasites. Consequently, beliefs formed in response to feelings of disgust will be unjustified because of the unreliable way in which they are formed.

Kelly's position regarding disgust is not confined to moral epistemology. He also argues against the propriety of a process Rozin has called "moralization," whereby an agent brings disgust to bear on a particular practice, largely in order to increase the motive to avoid that practice.<sup>15</sup> The examples that Kelly uses suggests he is thinking of moralization as a social practice. That is, a practice whereby one person or group encourages others to feel disgust toward a purportedly immoral practice in order for the others to be more motivated to avoid that practice. However, the argument he provides for this view seems to discount all motivational effects of disgust, as he writes that his view "provides reason to be deeply suspicious of the type of influence disgust can have." Moreover, it is reasonable to wonder about the sense in which moralization is taken to be improper (e.g. morally improper, pragmatically improper, etc.) as Kelly does not specify. I will try to leave this latter interpretation open, and distinguish between two potential positions corresponding to the partially ambiguous scope of the anti-moralization thesis noted above.

**Social Anti-Moralization Thesis:** S should not encourage others to use the potential motivational effects of their feelings of disgust as a moral motivation to  $\phi$  or not to  $\phi$ .

According to this thesis, agents should not encourage others to use the natural motivating force feelings of disgust tend to have as part of their motivation to act in accord with a moral judgment to  $\phi$  or not to  $\phi$ . Hence, by this thesis, it would be wrong to cultivate in others feelings of disgust toward, say, drunkenness, as a way to motivate others not to get drunk. If the motivational effects of disgust are improper at the social level, however, it's hard to see why they'd be fitting for oneself. Kelly thus likely also subscribes to the following:

**Individual Anti-Moralization Thesis:** Insofar as S is able, S should not employ the potential motivational effects of S's feelings of disgust in S's moral motivation to  $\phi$  or not to  $\phi$ .

I suspect that Kelly would be on board with both of these theses; if so, then it seems plausible to attribute to him the following general thesis regarding the motivating role of disgust:

**Anti-Moralization Thesis:** Insofar as possible, the potential motivational effects of feelings of disgust should not be allowed a role in moral motivation.

Similar to the irrelevancy thesis above, Kelly's anti-moralization thesis has some intuitive plausibility. Consider a case.

SCARLET LETTER: After engaging in an adulterous affair as a young woman, Hester is permanently marked off from her community and ostracized. For the rest of her life, she is made to feel the disgust her community feels toward her misdeed.

The natural response to SCARLET LETTER is to see the actions of Hester's community as disproportionately harsh toward Hester's mistake. It does seem intuitively good for communities to provide some social discouragement toward wrongdoing, but Hester's being made to feel the disgust of her community for the rest of her life is going too far. Kelly's position makes sense of this, since by his lights bringing disgust to bear on her misdeeds is inappropriate. His argument against harnessing disgust for the purposes of moral motivation fits the intuitive case here provided. We can call this the argument from emotional overkill.

According to the argument from emotional overkill, "people will tend to intuitively, if not implicitly, think of any elicitors of disgust as being tainted, polluted, contaminating, or inhuman, as well."<sup>16</sup> When something is tainted or polluted, it is avoided; people who are tainted or polluted are—like Hester in SCARLET LETTER—ostracized. One chief motivation for others to avoid that which is tainted or polluted is that the feeling of disgust is often easily transferred to whatever is close to the

elicitor of disgust. Hence, children not only avoid their vegetables, they also avoid the food that touched those vegetables. Moreover, disgust is very difficult to disengage once activated. Thus, people who vomit up a certain type of food will find it incredibly difficult once again to find that food appealing (a condition known as the ‘Garcia effect’).<sup>17</sup> In brief, disgust is a powerful emotion that is difficult to shake once triggered, and one that is transferred easily to those around the offending party. However, a response that strong is out of proportion to what is appropriate for moral motivation, thus, “because of the nature of the emotion itself, the slope from moralization to demonization and dehumanization is just too slippery to endorse even this form of disgust advocacy.”<sup>18</sup>

## 2. AN ALTERNATIVE VIEW: APPROPRIATE AFFECTIONS

I think that Kelly goes too far in disparaging disgust. As I will seek to show, appropriate feelings of disgust can aid in the proper formation of moral beliefs and can be fitting aids to moral motivation. However, as cases like *ENDOGAMY*, *DIAPER*, and *SCARLET LETTER* show, the relationship between feelings of disgust and moral belief and motivation is complicated. Before sketching the role I think disgust should play, I will provide some intuitive support for denying both of Kelly’s theses.

According to the irrelevancy thesis, feelings of disgust should be given no weight in judging the morality of a particular action. As Kelly once puts it, “repugnance is simply irrelevant to moral justification.”<sup>19</sup> However, that’s implausibly strong. Consider a case.

**POOL PARTY:** Ed and his family have a party at their pool one afternoon. He and his wife get into a water balloon fight, which they both enjoy. Later Ed gets into another water balloon fight with his wife, but this time throws at his wife water balloons filled with urine, to his wife’s utter revulsion.

It seems natural to think that Ed wronged his wife when he threw urine-filled balloons at her in POOL PARTY, and it is equally natural to believe that he did not wrong her when he threw water-filled balloons at her. The difference between the two actions is simple. Urine-filled water balloons are appropriate elicitors of disgust, whereas water balloons filled with water should elicit no disgust. Given this difference, it seems intuitively clear that there are at least some moral beliefs that are justified at least partially based upon feelings of disgust (to wit, the belief that Ed wronged his wife in POOL PARTY), despite Kelly's view to the contrary.

According to the anti-moralization thesis, we should not let feelings of disgust influence us with regard to moral motivation. This thesis is also too strong, which should be clear from the following example.

MORAL REFORM: After having several negative dreams about his life, Ebenezer Scrooge decides to reform his conduct. Though he makes great strides in amending his life, he is occasionally tempted to relapse into his former cruelty and miserliness. Whenever he is tempted in this way, he recalls his former way of life with feelings of guilt and recalls his particularly heinous deeds with feelings of disgust. These feelings, paired with his sincere resolutions to be a better person, help him to resist temptation.

It is natural to see Scrooge's use of feelings of disgust in this example as perfectly fitting and appropriate. They do not, after all, seem excessive or suggest his pursuit of morality is compulsive or pathological. Rather, his feelings of disgust seem to be intuitively appropriate responses to his former wicked ways (arguably a common feeling amongst those who've had such a change of life) and the influence that these feelings play in his post-wicked life seem useful, appropriate, and good. Consequently, there is good intuitive reason to believe that there are at least some cases where the 'moralization' of feelings of disgust is a good thing, despite Kelly's claim to the contrary.



Now one may object that relying upon intuitive reactions to cases like POOL PARTY and MORAL REFORM begs the question against Kelly, for I seem to be using, as evidence against his view, the very same intuitive responses that he's claimed we have good reason to distrust and reject as unjustified. Clarification here is thus important. I am only using these intuitive responses to motivate partially an alternative view to Kelly's, which I call the Prudent Conscience View (or 'PCV'), by which these intuitive responses can be explained as trustworthy. If there is reason to endorse PCV, then there is in turn reason to reject Kelly's view that casts the intuitive responses in doubt.<sup>20</sup> More simply, however, I intend to show later in the paper that Kelly's arguments against intuitive disgust reactions are not conclusive, using some of the conceptual resources made available by PCV.

As we saw previously with cases like ENDOGAMY, DIAPER, and SCARLET LETTER, not all feelings of disgust properly justify moral beliefs or motivate agents. However, it seems plausible to see that the chief difference between anti-disgust cases like ENDOGAMY, DIAPER, and SCARLET LETTER and pro-disgust cases like POOL PARTY and MORAL REFORM is that the pro-disgust cases involve (1) appropriate feelings of disgust (2) toward actions apt for the ordinary sort of moral evaluation (e.g. not the actions of those who have no rational choice in the matter). Hence, there seems to be strong intuitive support for thinking that at least some feelings of disgust satisfying (1) and (2) can properly justify moral beliefs and provide moral motivation to agents. Here I will assume we have an intuitive grasp on what sort of actions are apt for moral evaluation (2). Yet it seems at least partially unclear which actions apt for moral evaluation generate appropriate feelings of disgust (1). Do only actions involving poisons and parasites count? I don't think so. Here I will provide a sketch of a view in moral epistemology I call the 'Prudent Conscience View' (or PCV), the elaboration of which should provide some account of (1) as well as provide some of the resources for responding to Kelly's arguments, detailed above.

According to PCV, epistemic justification for a moral belief for an agent is proportionate to the degree of prudence possessed by the agent when the belief is formed.<sup>21</sup> Moral beliefs formed by highly prudent agents are highly epistemically justified; moral beliefs formed by less prudent agents are less justified. What is prudence? It is, to quote Aquinas (following Aristotle), “right reason applied to action.”<sup>22</sup> Prudence does not develop in isolation from the other moral virtues, however. Thus, to the degree that an agent is prudent, he must also possess the virtues of justice, temperance, and fortitude.<sup>23</sup> Being a habit, the prudence of an agent is measured diachronically. Thus, the prudence of an agent’s forming some moral belief *b* will be partially determined by the general level of prudence the agent possesses up to that point, as well as the prudence exercised by that agent in the formation of *b*.

Must one ‘reason rightly’ by inferring each of his moral beliefs for those moral beliefs to be justified? No. Moral epistemologists have usefully highlighted the unique role of seemings in moral belief formation.<sup>24</sup> According to PCV, seemings about moral propositions confer epistemic justification onto beliefs formed in response to them to the degree that the agent experiencing the seeming is prudent. Thus, PCV allows for many non-inferentially justified moral beliefs. For by PCV, epistemic justification for moral beliefs does not depend so much upon the presence of internally accessible evidence (except insofar as the prudent agent depends upon such evidence). Rather, justification depends more fundamentally upon the proper functioning of the conscience, whose operations are central to moral belief formation and whose proper function comes from possessing the virtue of prudence. What exactly is the conscience? We can define it as the power or faculty through which we are able to know moral facts, and whose functionality characteristically gives rise to seemings about moral propositions. Like other cognitive faculties, the conscience supervenes upon those parts of cognition whose functions explain the power of the faculty (in this case, the power to know moral facts).

Giving rise to moral propositions is arguably not the conscience's only function. In his influential writings on the conscience, John Henry Newman attributed to the conscience two distinct functions, one rational and one affective, the latter of which he called "the sense of duty." This sense of duty gives rise to emotions that can be fitting aids to the formation of moral beliefs and which can provide some appropriate influence upon our actions.<sup>25</sup> PCV has the resources to accommodate and explain Newman's phenomenologically satisfying description of the affective function of the conscience. For as prudence cultivates the proper functioning of the conscience and gives rise to greater degrees of epistemic justification for moral beliefs, so too does prudence (in conjunction with the other virtues) help form and make fitting the emotional responses to actions that arise from this "sense of duty."<sup>26</sup> Often the two, a rational seeming about a moral proposition and an affective response, are conjoined. Thus, I do not merely experience the rational seeming that rape is wrong, I also tend to feel anger toward the action when I consider that rape is wrong. This is very useful, for my moral emotions can arouse my rational moral capacities when I am distracted or otherwise cogitatively inattentive, and my rational capacities can sustain me in doing what's right when I am, say, emotionally drained and find appropriate affective responses lacking. Ideally, both would be always operative, but this ideal cannot always be achieved.

Does PCV's analysis suggest that only the affective responses arising from the consciences of prudent agents will be fitting, such that the reactions of less prudent agents should be rejected? No, but affective responses will be fitting in prudent agents, and in acquiring prudence, the affective responses of less prudent agents will increasingly resemble the affective responses of those who are prudent. As one acquires prudence, one can place greater trust in the fittingness of the affective responses arising from the conscience, but that one acquires greater justification for trusting the responses of prudent agents does not imply one has no justification for trusting the responses of less prudent agents.

We needn't merely take Newman's word for it. There is an intuitively strong positive correlation between the possession of virtues and the experience of appropriate emotions.<sup>27</sup> For instance, because of my habitual impatience, I tend to feel frustrated whenever I am stuck behind a driver going well below the speed limit. Certainly some frustration is appropriate, but I realize that the degree of frustration that I actually (most often) feel is disproportionate to the degree of frustration that I ought to feel, and I thus try to form habitual patience and cultivate the sorts of emotional responses that I judge to be in accord with right reason. Cases like these are, I believe, quite common. The advocate of PCV need only add that insofar as these affective responses potentially contribute to the proper formation of moral beliefs, they belong to the functioning of the conscience. Insofar as feelings of disgust seem to be appropriately triggered by a range of elicitors more broad than merely that which harbors poisons or parasites, so too can the full range of disgust feelings partially contribute to the epistemic justification of moral beliefs. By PCV, we needn't confine the propriety of disgust feelings in the narrow way that Kelly suggests (though I will address his content argument for this limitation later in the paper).<sup>28</sup> Hence, feelings of 'moral disgust' triggered by acts that are morally wrong and which elicit appropriate feelings of disgust can also be fitting responses, per PCV.<sup>29</sup>

As we have seen in considering a case like POOL PARTY, some emotional responses do indeed appear to contribute to the proper formation of moral beliefs, and PCV explains how that is. For PCV implies the truth of the following epistemic norm:

**Disgust-epistemic:** S's feeling of disgust *f* contributes to the epistemic justification of S's moral belief *b* at time *t* to the degree that (1) at *t*, it seems to S that *b* at least partially based on *f*, and (2) S possesses the virtue of prudence at *t*.

Is it ever prudent to form a moral belief based on a feeling of disgust? If our intuitions regarding cases like POOL PARTY are to be trusted, then the answer is certainly yes. Of course, Kelly's position involves denying that the relevant intuitions are to be trusted, but this is a steep conceptual cost that is both unnecessary (given the plausibility of PCV), and one, I will soon argue, which is unwarranted by the arguments Kelly provides.

Although a complete defense of the position is outside the scope of this paper, the following seems an apt ethical principle underlying the propriety of the disgust-epistemic norm (though, arguably, it is not the only relevant ethical norm).

**Disgust-ethical:** It is prima facie wrong for S to knowingly and freely  $\phi$  when S is epistemically justified in believing that  $\phi$ ing is an elicitor of an appropriately strong disgust reaction.

The position thus sketched helps explain both why Ed's wife's reaction of disgust in POOL PARTY was appropriate and why the belief that Ed did wrong in POOL PARTY is epistemically justified. In particular, it seems intuitively clear that having a water balloon filled with urine thrown at oneself is an elicitor of an appropriately strong disgust reaction (we could imagine elicitors of much stronger disgust reactions, but that's inconsequential). Prudent agents would not do things like that, and would, moreover, be disgusted at the action. Ed's wife's reaction is therefore appropriate, approximating (as it does) to the affective response of prudent agents. Additionally, given the circumstances of POOL PARTY, it is very plausible to think that Ed's action in that case seems wrong simply because of the appropriately strong degree of disgust elicited by it, disgust we judge he should have known it would elicit (thus satisfying the disgust-ethical norm). All other things being equal, the natural response of believing that Ed's action is wrong because of the disgust we feel (condition (1) of disgust-epistemic) is epistemically justified

because the formation of that belief is in accord with norms governing prudence, such as the disgust-ethical norm (thus satisfying condition (2) of disgust-epistemic).<sup>30</sup>

PCV also explains what's going wrong in cases like ENDOGAMY and DIAPER. In ENDOGAMY, Roger's feelings toward an interracial couple are inappropriate, and it seems natural to believe that these feelings will tend to go away in proportion to his cultivation and possession of the virtues. Thus, his forming a belief that the couple is doing something wrong on the basis of his inappropriate feelings is imprudent. In DIAPER, Marla's feelings toward dirty diapers were at least partially appropriate, but she acted imprudently when she inferred that her child was being wicked in dirtying diapers. Why? For precisely the reason pointed out as the natural response to the case, namely, the child—if she even knows what she's doing—cannot help herself and thus the action is not apt for the ordinary sort of moral evaluation. That Marla appraised her child's actions in this way suggests a superficial reflection on morality that is characteristic of imprudence.

By providing an account of what makes for an appropriate affective response to an action, PCV can also help show how disgust can be a useful and fitting motivator for avoiding immoral actions. As MORAL REFORM illustrates, disgust can intuitively often play a useful role in avoiding bad actions. For, to the degree that an action has appropriately elicited disgust (i.e. to the degree that the affective response of an agent to an action approximates to the affective response a prudent agent would have to the same action in the same circumstances), so too is the desire to avoid that action because of the feelings of disgust appropriate. Thus, Scrooge in MORAL REFORM seems to possess an appropriate degree of disgust toward the particularly heinous crimes he committed prior to his reformation. Consequently, contrary to the claims of the individual anti-moralization thesis, the motivational employment of disgust in MORAL REFORM seems appropriate and fitting, since the reminder of those

crimes (and the correlative, appropriate feelings of disgust elicited by them) helps Scrooge to resist temptation to engage in morally similar sorts of behavior.

The advocate of PCV has resources to go a bit further. Consider another case.

PERVERT: Pete feels a strong sexual attraction toward small children. He has experienced feelings of sexual arousal toward small children since puberty, and has endorsed his feelings as perfectly normal and appropriate. However, he knows how others feel about his actions and so would do just about anything to live in a society wherein he can be accepted for who he is and be free to act upon his disordered sexual inclinations.

There are several natural responses to PERVERT. It is natural to see Pete's pedophilic desires as appropriate elicitors of disgust, to see Pete's endorsement of these desires as unjustified, and to see the motivational effects of this endorsement (to wit, the desire to live in a pedophilia-friendly society and engage his pedophilic inclinations freely) as dangerous to Pete and others. PCV makes sense of these natural responses, insofar as pedophilic desires should generate disgust (as least, they do in agents who have cultivated the virtues), and thus should not be endorsed as appropriate and fitting affective responses. So far, this does not break any new ground. What PERVERT illustrates, however, is the intuitively strong connection between one's endorsement of a set of feelings as appropriate and the motivational effects these feelings tend to have. In Pete's case, the fact that he has endorsed as fitting his feelings of sexual arousal toward small children rather than, say, feeling disgust toward those same feelings, makes it far more likely that he would in fact try to live in a community of pedophiles (or not wait to join such a community in order to engage in pedophilia). It would be much better, the advocate of PCV has the resources to add, were Pete to begin to cultivate an appropriate degree of revulsion toward his own pedophilic feelings, which would be effective and fitting aids to his being morally motivated to avoid acting on his desires to belong to a community of pedophiles and freely engage in

pedophilia (it might also, we could hope, lead to some tapering off of those pedophilic desires over time). True, Pete might not need feelings of disgust in order to avoid the harmful motivational effects of his pedophilic desires; his habits of not engaging in that behavior might be sufficient despite his desires to the contrary, for instance. Yet, given the fittingness of a certain degree of disgust and the useful motivational effects those feelings tend to have, it seems entirely right for Pete to cultivate the appropriate affective response to pedophilia, namely, disgust. And if it's right for Pete to cultivate the proper disgust response, then, contrary to Kelly's social anti-moralization thesis, it's hard to see why another agent should not encourage Pete to develop those feelings and use them as a way of avoiding pedophilia.

Are all 'moralizations' of disgust appropriate? Certainly not, as *SCARLET LETTER* demonstrates. In that case, the life-long revulsion felt by Hester's community is strongly disproportionate to the feelings of disgust, if any, that seem appropriate toward her single misdeed. Given the sorts of affective responses cultivated by the possession of the virtues, particularly prudence, it seems that the community should have felt differently. In particular, it seems that were they to have been prudent, they would have reflected more deeply upon, say, characteristic human weakness of will and the strong passions and immaturity of youth, thereby tempering their disgust. In short, *SCARLET LETTER* is a case of inappropriate feelings of disgust, and thus the inappropriate (but predictable) motivational effects such strong feelings of disgust tend to have.

Two objections must be considered. First, as previously pointed out, disgust tends to transfer easily from the original disgust elicitor to whatever comes into physical contact with (or is similar to) the original elicitor. Thus, as previously pointed out, children tend not only to avoid the vegetables they think are gross, they also tend to avoid eating anything that touched those vegetables. In *SCARLET LETTER*, there seems to be signs of a similar sort of transference from the disgust that Hester's action



elicited and Hester herself. After all, her community didn't ostracize Hester's actions, but her person. By endorsing as appropriate feelings of disgust in some cases, it seems that the advocate of PCV is also endorsing the natural consequences of that disgust, such as the transference of disgust feelings from the action to the agent who did what was disgusting. Yet, as Kelly points out, disgust feelings directed toward people tend to dehumanize those people, and, we may add that there can be nothing prudent or morally mature in dehumanization, no matter how many disgusting actions an agent engages in. Consequently, disgust toward actions does not seem appropriate, contrary to PCV, as it eventually leads to effects that are recognizably imprudent.

In response to this objection, I will begin by admitting that I endorse the thrust of this argument. In particular, even if one might feel appropriate disgust toward a person's intentions, it does not seem to me to be fitting or prudent to dehumanize and feel disgusted toward a person. However, as I intend to explain more fully when I respond to Kelly's argument from emotional overkill later in the paper, the transference of disgust from something that is a fitting disgust elicitor to something that is not a fitting disgust elicitor is inappropriate and thus the effect of emotions not well formed and moderated by the virtues. In other words, the inappropriate disgust transference just described is an affective response at odds with right reason, or prudence. However, precisely because this affective response ill befits the affective response of the prudent agent, we have reason to believe that this sort of imprudent transference is not a necessary part of feeling disgusted, but rather a norm that characterizes those whose disgust eliciting system has not been formed through the exercise of prudence. In becoming more prudent, agents will resist those transferences, just as mature adults will unhesitatingly eat food that has touched the vegetables they don't really care for, resisting childish impulses to the contrary. Over time, as the example of vegetables suggests, these inappropriate affective responses will go away in those acquiring the virtues, particularly prudence.

Second, the disgust eliciting system is recognizably flexible, capable of picking up on the disgust of others and reproducing those feelings of disgust in oneself. This is useful as one can, say, feel a ready repulsion toward food that others indicate has been contaminated. However, this flexibility makes the disgust eliciting system vulnerable to abuse, as one can pick up on and emotionally mimic both appropriate and inappropriate disgust reactions, inadvertently spreading prejudicial or otherwise arbitrary conventional disgust reactions to others.

Two points can be made in defense. First, experience indicates that merely conventional disgust is not very easily spread. The presence of a noticeably picky guest at a dinner party does not, for instance, swiftly turn others away from a gourmet cheese plate or from the pâté, whereas knowing a cockroach had just been seen on these dishes would lead to immediate and shared aversion. Nor is merely conventional disgust very durable. The child of a picky eater may be initially disinclined to try some exotic food based purely upon the known disgust of his parents toward that food, but often enough curiosity or social pressure is sufficient to undermine these negative attitudes by getting the child to try the food and see that the parents' disgust was poorly grounded. Second, and similarly, the practices of prudence often involve reflecting upon one's emotional responses in order to see whether and to what degree those responses are fitting. Merely conventional disgust responses (of which prejudicial disgust is a type) should be easily uncovered, and incrementally eliminated, through sufficiently systematic and mature self-examination. At the social level, we see examples of this progress taking place, for instance in the American south. For, arguably, part of the motivation for Jim Crow segregation laws was a disgust felt by many whites of that time toward blacks. Yet, after the success of the Civil Rights movement—success largely attributable to morally mature reflection on the injustice of this treatment—much of this purely conventional disgust was undermined and incrementally eliminated, such that few contemporary white southerners would now feel anything like disgust at black people.<sup>31</sup>

Up to this point, I have discussed PCV and outlined how the resources of PCV can make sense of the intuitive, natural responses to several cases involving disgust. With the resources of this view, I will now conclude by considering Kelly's arguments against disgust, showing that they fail to establish the strong conclusions Kelly draws from them.

### 3. DEFENDING DISGUST

In arguing for the irrelevancy thesis, according to which feelings of disgust are irrelevant to (and should be given no weight in judging) the moral character of actions, Kelly advances two arguments, previously outlined, the content argument and the unreliability argument.

According to the content argument, the disgust eliciting system (DES) properly responds not to moral facts but to cues likely to mark parasites and poisons. Why think that DES is insensitive to facts constitutive of morality? Kelly's central argument for this claim seems to be etiological. That is, DES developed first to be responsive to harbingers of poisons and parasites. Since cues about poisons and parasites are not, qua cues, obviously related to moral facts, the fact that something cues our disgust is irrelevant to its moral character and the evaluation thereof.

There are at least two problems with this argument. First, it seems to prove too much. DES's "downstream" effects in moral cognition seem to be both systemic and opaque.<sup>32</sup> That is to say, we cannot introspectively determine which of our beliefs are, and to what degree they are, influenced by DES, but we have empirical evidence to suggest that a great many of our moral beliefs may in fact have been influenced by DES, potentially in significant ways. If, as Kelly suggests, disgust is absolutely irrelevant to the moral evaluation of an action, such that moral beliefs formed at least partially on the basis of influence by DES are unjustified (to the degree that they are in fact influenced) then these facts constitute grounds for a powerful epistemic defeater against our moral beliefs. An illustration is in order. Suppose I were to discover that corrupt cognitive scientists had been playing with my memory using a

highly sophisticated Memory Altering Device (or ‘MAD’). They used MAD to both implant in me wholly false memories and alter genuine memories in such a way that the false memories would fit with the genuine memories, forming in sum a cohesive memorial “narrative.” Suppose also that I am given very good evidence of all this by a guilt-ridden research assistant, who also told me that there is no purely introspective way to determine which parts of my memory have been influenced by MAD and which have not. Moreover, he tells me, the cognitive scientists were being particularly bold when they experimented upon me, and thus used MAD to influence or create a large number of memories, not just a few. It seems natural to think, in this case, that I’d have very good reason to distrust all of my memories up to that point, given the malignant epistemic influence of MAD upon my cognition. Rather than guiding me toward truth or proper belief formation, the effects of MAD lead me to error by giving me information that internally seems to be truth-conducive, but which is actually unconnected to the truth.

MAD’s malignant epistemic influence on my cognition seems to parallel the malignant epistemic influence Kelly suggests of DES. In particular, the outputs of DES and MAD both lead me to form beliefs that are purportedly unjustified, to the degree that they have been influenced. The influence of both DES and MAD is also introspectively opaque. I cannot tell if, and to what degree, a moral or memorial seeming has been influenced. But I am also given every reason to think that the influence is systemic, and thus likely to lead me into many errors. Insofar as the influence of MAD gives me good reason to distrust all my memories, so too does the analogous influence of DES, if Kelly is right, give me good reason to distrust all my moral seemings. However, it seems quite surprising to find in the facts about the etiological development of DES justification for such a broad sort of moral skepticism, which leads me to my second response to the content argument.

If Kelly's content argument is to succeed, an implicit premise must be employed. In particular, the reason that DES is not fit to give us information relevant to moral facts is, Kelly suggests, that it did not develop with that purpose 'in mind'; it rather developed with a very different purpose in mind. Thus, the etiological purpose of a development puts constraints on its proper usage. When the original purpose of a naturally selected adaptation  $d$  is to  $\phi$ , it seems, and  $\psi$ ing is not a conceivable part of  $\phi$ ing, then  $\psi$ ing is not a proper use of  $d$ . However, this implicit premise cannot be true, as it implies an unsatisfying account of the phenomena of exaptation.<sup>33</sup> In the case of exaptation, an adaptation is used in a novel way—a way not 'intended' by natural selection. Yet by Kelly's lights, the novel usage of an adaptation (insofar as that novel usage is not a conceivable part of the originally intended purpose) is not its proper usage; hence, exaptation involves the natural selection of what is, in fact, an improper function. However, it's strange to think that etiology so strictly limits the proper usage of an adaptation or faculty. After all, exaptations provide distinct advantages to a population. Aside from a strong commitment to a simple etiological view of proper functions, it is hard to see why we shouldn't think of exaptations as being perfectly proper and fitting functions. However, if an adaptation or faculty's novel use can be just as proper as its originally 'intended' use, contra Kelly, why be bothered by the fact that DES arose as a system for detecting parasites and poisons? Perhaps that was the original function, but we seem to have adapted it for a new and important purpose, and one, moreover, that intuitively seems proper (given cases like POOL PARTY).

Kelly might not intend to preclude the propriety of exaptations generally, but instead intend only to limit the proper function of a cognitive faculty to its original etiological purpose. It would seem strange if the propriety of a cognitive function must be treated as *sui generis*, but I will leave that to one side. All the same, there are problems even with this more modest position. In particular, it seems that natural selection, whatever its 'intentions' when forming the human brain, never had in mind doing philosophy.

Doing philosophy wastes resources by encouraging those who engage in it to divert attention away from the practical to the abstract or theoretical; it also encourages a certain sort of argumentativeness that tends to facilitate against its practitioner a degree of personal or social animosity (e.g. Socrates). If anything, philosophy seems like a net negative from an evolutionary point of view. All the same, it seems strange to say that our doing philosophy is something improper to us as humans, using (as we seem to do) our brains in ways that are at least partially inimical to the practical survival and reproductive advantages clearly envisioned by natural selection. Kelly himself is, after all, doing philosophy in making claims about the propriety of using DES for moral beliefs (and the epistemic justification of beliefs formed by the influence of DES). It does not therefore seem as though he'd recommend restricting the use of all cognitive faculties to their originally intended purposes. Yet if we can properly do philosophy with brains originally intended to do no such thing, why can we not properly employ DES to help us form moral beliefs? It seems instead that the etiology of DES does not give us reason to believe that DES is only about tracking poisons and parasites, contra Kelly, and usages of it beyond these two are improper. If nothing else, we can think of these new usages of DES as fitting cognitive exaptations.

Kelly advances a second argument for the irrelevancy thesis, what I have called the unreliability argument. According to this argument, DES is unreliable even when it comes to generating disgust regarding its proper domain of poisons and parasites. In particular, it generates many false positives. Consequently, the argument goes, those who rely upon DES for moral beliefs will form those beliefs in unreliable ways (a fact that should constitute a defeater for those beliefs). I will respond to this argument in two ways. First, it is not entirely clear how facts about the unreliability of some faculty F constitute a defeater for beliefs formed through the use of F. For it is entirely unclear that reliability is either necessary or sufficient for epistemic justification. Yet, if reliability is not necessary, it's difficult to see

what sort of defeater facts about unreliability might comprise.<sup>34</sup> They would not comprise an undercutting defeater, since those sorts of defeaters undermine (partially or totally) the way in which a belief was thought to be justified (hence, reliability would have to be part of, or at least believed to be part of, a belief's justification – which is entirely unclear). Nor would they comprise a rebutting defeater, since those types of defeaters work by providing evidence that conflicts with the truth of the defeated belief. The beliefs being purportedly defeated (e.g., that some x is disgusting) are not beliefs about the reliability of the faculty under whose influence the belief has been formed, however, so that the faculty is unreliable would not rebut the truth of the beliefs being formed through its influence. At any rate, the connection between unreliability-facts and defeaters is unclear, and until the connection is made clearer, I'm hesitant to trust appeals to the unreliability of a faculty as providing defeaters for beliefs formed through the use of that faculty.<sup>35</sup>

Second, as I have previously argued by appealing to armchair, intuitive evidence, we have good reason to believe that affective responses are generally capable of cultivation and improvement. Anger management classes, for instance, seek to help irascible people keep a lid on their strong passions. Disgust seems similarly capable of being well or poorly formed. Those who are never made to eat their vegetables (or other seemingly unappetizing foods) as children seem to grow up into picky eaters. But those who are forced to confront in some way what they perceive to be disgusting—though which are not in fact appropriate disgust elicitors—often gradually find the initial disgust feelings ebbing away and disgust feelings generally not being as much on a 'hair-trigger.' The empirical evidence regarding DES's hair-trigger seems to be ambivalent on this point. For researchers do not seem to filter for participants with well or poorly formed affective responses (be it regarding disgust or other emotions). It's hard to see how they might, since a self-serving bias is likely to make all agents consider themselves to have the right affective responses to various stimuli. Yet as the above intuitive examples illustrate, we

do in fact differentiate between proper and improper affective responses, and thus have prima facie reason to attribute whatever empirical evidence is discovered for the unreliability of a particular type of affective response to the poor affective formation of the participants in the study (who, as it happens, are most often undergraduate students).<sup>36</sup>

A similar sort of response seems fitting to the argument from emotional overkill that Kelly employs as a defense of his anti-moralization thesis. According to this argument, feelings of disgust are too powerful and difficult to shake to be proportionate and fitting sources of moral motivation. Thus, we ought not use disgust as a source of moral motivation, and instead disregard known motivational effects of disgust. This argument too seems to treat all disgust eliciting systems as being equally well formed, or else incapable of being formed in such a way that one does not experience inappropriate feelings of disgust. Yet, as I have argued, there are good reasons to believe that as one's affective responses become increasingly well formed by the possession of the virtues (particularly prudence), so too will one's affective responses approximate in similitude to the appropriate affective responses. If so, then though disgust feelings may in fact be strong, they will not be too strong in the prudent, nor will they last too long, nor be inappropriately transferred to proximate objects (or superficially similar actions). They will instead be appropriately strong, last an appropriate duration of time, and be transferred only to appropriately similar or proximate objects of evaluation, if any. In such a case, there will be no emotional "overkill" in the motivational employment of disgust, because the feelings of disgust are appropriate; thus, it would not seem at all fitting or necessary to disregard potential motivational effects of disgust when it comes to moral motivation.

An objection to this response should be considered. According to the position I've sketched, one's affective responses tend to be more trustworthy insofar as one develops the virtues, as the development of the virtues shapes one's affective responses in ways that make them approximate to exemplary



affective responses. However, Kelly's argument from emotional overkill illustrates an important point. In particular, less prudent agents will tend to have less appropriate affective responses, and their motivations based upon the less appropriate responses of disgust will likely exhibit the problems pointed out by Kelly in his argument from emotional overkill. Thus, they will be too strong, last too long, etc. This, after all, seems to be the problem in *SCARLET LETTER*, illustrated above. Would the position developed in this paper, arising from PCV, suggest that only the virtuous should allow disgust to influence their moral motivation? No, as I will argue, less virtuous agents can also allow their affective responses, including disgust, to influence their moral motivation.

In response to this objection, careful attention should be paid to the distinction between the appropriateness (or fittingness) of an affective response and the trustworthiness of an affective response. The affective responses of less prudent agents will be fitting insofar as they approximate to the affective responses of prudent agents, but less prudent agents cannot be as confident as more prudent agents that their affective responses are in fact fitting, or appropriate. An example should help to illustrate the point. I believe that my affective response of disgust to Pete's pedophilic desires in *PERVERT* to be largely appropriate and I would not discountenance those feelings as inappropriate influences on a decision, say, not to leave young children alone with the hypothetical Pete. However, I also know that I am not an exemplar of the virtues, having many moral defects. Thus, I have prima facie reason to lack trust in the appropriateness of my affective response to *PERVERT*, in proportion to the degree that I ought to consider myself morally defective. However, lacking trust here does not seem to require me thereby to cease to allow that affective response an influence over my actions. After all, it does not seem as though I must possess an unmitigated confidence in the appropriateness of my emotions first in order for me to allow them influence over my actions. Rather, it seems that one should only try to eliminate the motivational effects of affective responses that one does or ought to think are inappropriate. Otherwise, the

motivational effects of many people's emotions should be eliminated, which seems too strong a position to take.

Lacking trust in the appropriateness of one's emotions here thus principally involves exercising prudent caution regarding one's emotions and their effects. I am not a wholly vicious person, after all, lacking the virtues entirely. Consequently, for all I know, my feelings of disgust toward Pete's desires in PERVERT are very similar to the feelings of highly prudent agents. That is, for all I know about myself, my feelings are appropriate. I cannot be highly confident in their appropriateness, however, but that is not an actual reason to think them inappropriate. Yet given my ignorance about their fittingness, I should be cautious. It thus seems appropriate for me to be sensitive to criticism regarding my affective response and be prepared to apologize if the criticism is apt. I should also be deferential toward the affective responses of those I have reason to believe are more prudent than myself, and introspectively consider natural or potential criticisms of my actions. In the case of PERVERT, I do not think prudent caution uncovers any reason for me to believe my affective response is inappropriate; thus, I do not believe I have reason to eliminate potential motivational effects of the response.<sup>37</sup> Of course, I am open to objections to the contrary.

Clarifying this helps diagnose central problems with the community in SCARLET LETTER. In that case, the people of the community imprudently relied upon their affective responses to Hester's actions. They need not have totally discountenanced their feelings of disgust toward adultery from influencing their actions, but in the circumstances, it seems that they should have exercised greater caution. Thus, they ought to have reflected more deeply about the appropriateness of their feelings toward Hester and their own actions based upon those feelings (thereby taking greater strides toward the virtues of prudence and, in this case, justice too). Among other things, they should have considered the natural distinction between an agent and agent's deed, not impugning as disgusting the former because of an

appropriate response of disgust toward the latter. Prudence would also have involved their consideration of the natural objection that ostracizing a woman her whole life for the deed in question is disproportionate and thus unjust. In brief, they ought to have realized that their affective response to Hester was inappropriate and eliminated the motivational effects of that response (insofar as it was inappropriate). However, this does not imply that disgust should never be allowed a role in moral motivation, as I have argued.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have argued against Kelly's position that feelings of disgust are irrelevant to the epistemic justification of moral beliefs as well as against his position that feelings of disgust should be given no role in moral motivation. I thereafter sketched an alternative position regarding disgust, based upon the Prudent Conscience View, according to which disgust feelings can, but do not always, appropriately justify moral beliefs and form a part of moral motivation. Finally, using resources made available by the Prudent Conscience View, I responded to Kelly's arguments, showing how they do not succeed in securing the strong position he's staked out regarding disgust. Rather, alternative views of disgust's proper epistemic and motivational roles, such as that sketched in this paper, are at least equally as plausible.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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<sup>1</sup> Daniel Kelly, *Yuck!: The Nature and Moral Significance of Disgust* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), p. 148.

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2 Ibid., p. 151.

3 See Brian Besong, “The Prudent Conscience View,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* (Forthcoming).

4 Kelly, op. cit., p. 148.

5 The basing relation invoked here should be taken in a broad sort of way; thus, S needn’t see (or even be capable of introspectively discovering) that b is based on f for b to in fact be based on f.

6 Ibid., pp. 17–21.

7 See, for instance, Jorge Moll and others, “The Moral Affiliations of Disgust: A Functional MRI Study,” *Cognitive and Behavioral Neurology*, Vol. 18, No. 1, (2005), 68–78; Paul Rozin, Laura Lowery and Rhonda Ebert, “Varieties of Disgust Faces and the Structure of Disgust,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 66, No. 5, (1994), 870–881.

8 See Kelly, op. cit., pp. 43–56.

9 See *ibid.*, pp. 89–92.

10 See *ibid.*, pp. 119–126, 132–135.

11 See *ibid.*, p. 147.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

13 It is unclear whether Kelly thinks all or only some moral beliefs formed in response to feelings of disgust are irrational byproducts of the disgust eliciting system, see *ibid.*, p. 134.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 147.

15 See Paul Rozin, “Moralization,” in Allan M. Brandt and Paul Rozin, eds., *Morality and Health* (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 379–401; Paul Rozin, “The Process of Moralization,” *Psychological Science*, Vol. 10, No. 3, (1999), 218–221 <doi:10.1111/1467-9280.00139>. See also Kelly, op. cit., p. 151.

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16 Ibid., p. 151.

17 See *ibid.*, p. 47.

18 *Ibid.*, pp. 151–152.

19 *Ibid.*, p. 148.

20 The intuitive responses I've relied upon to motivate PCV can also be provided a justification at the level of ethical theory. For the disgust eliciting system (DES) seems designed to promote human flourishing, giving rise to adverse reactions toward those things that are inimical to human wellbeing, such as poisons and parasites, among others. Yet, as Philippa Foot (*Virtues and Vices and Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), chap. 7–8.) has argued, there is a strong conceptual connection between acts that have a negative moral status and those actions that tend to be inimical to human flourishing and constitutive of human wellbeing. Hence, it seems entirely prudent for agents to pay attention and give at least *some* weight to the outputs of the disgust eliciting system, as the reactions provide some defeasible and indirect evidence that the action is morally wrong, since the fact that something triggered a DES response is a reason to believe it is inimical to human flourishing. After all, it is *prima facie* plausible to believe that DES provides evolutionary advantage because disgust reactions promote human flourishing, and ignoring these reactions across the board would be inimical to human flourishing. Any entanglement between disgust and morality will thus not be *ad hoc* and obviously unfitting at a theoretical level, if indeed acts that have negative moral status are acts that are inimical to our flourishing. Of course, Kelly will deny that a disgust response provides defeasible evidence for the moral status of an act, but if the foregoing analysis of his arguments is apt, then we have reason not to be so quick to reject this theoretic connection. More broadly, in his presentation of the natural law theory of ethics, Michael Cronin expands upon how the “moral feelings” can constitute a defeasible secondary (or derivative) criteria for judging the moral character of an action,

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*The Science of Ethics*, 3rd edn, 2 vols. (Dublin: M.H. Gill and Son, Ltd., 1930), Vol. 1, pp. 155–157.

Although PCV is independent of natural law ethical theories, the two fit well together, and Cronin’s explanation provides a deeper theoretical rationale for why prudent agents may fittingly rely upon their feelings as providing partial justification for their moral beliefs.

21 Moral beliefs can be re-formed when an agent considers them and affirms them anew. Acts of reaffirming a moral belief, like this, alter the epistemic justification of a moral belief so that the belief’s epistemic justification is proportionate to the degree of prudence possessed by the agent at the time of the belief’s being reaffirmed. This does not mean, as indicated above, that one must reason rightly to every belief, but it does mean that every belief must be formed according to the norms of right reason (which allows for non-inferentially justified beliefs).

22 Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. by Fathers of the English Dominican province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1920), sec. IIaIIae 47:2.

23 Aquinas, op. cit., sec. IaIIae 65:1, IIaIIae 47:14.

24 Robert Audi, “Intuition, Inference, and Rational Disagreement in Ethics,” *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice*, Vol. 11, No. 5, (2008), 475–492 (pp. 447–448); Matthew Bedke, “Intuitionist Epistemology in Ethics,” *Philosophy Compass*, Vol. 5, No. 12, (2010), 1069–1083; Michael Huemer, *Ethical Intuitionism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 99; William E Tolhurst, “Seemings,” *American Philosophical Quarterly*, Vol. 35, No. 3, (1998), 293–302.

25 See John Henry Newman, *An Essay in Aid of a Grammar of Assent* (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1870), chap. 5.1.

26 Although it is not the goal of this paper to develop a comprehensive psychological model for moral disgust, one might see moral disgust as being a ‘nonbasic’ emotion, comprised of ordinary disgust triggered by the cognitive state in which one recognizes the moral impermissibility of an act. If so,

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prudence serves to regulate, by a form of ‘calibration’, which cognitive states trigger a basic feeling of disgust, see discussion in Julien Deonna and Fabrice Teroni, *The Emotions: A Philosophical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2012), pp. 24–26. I thank a blind referee for this suggestion. One might think that certain emotional responses are not dependent upon the virtues, but the converse, namely, that the virtues are dependent upon the right emotional responses as, for example, supplying a necessary part of moral motivation; for instance, see Linda Zagzebski, *Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 126–134. I do not think this is correct, but it is amenable to PCV insofar as proper affective responses and the virtues seem to develop in positive proportion to each other, according to this view.

27 See David Pugmire, *Sound Sentiments: Integrity in the Emotions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 63–64; Zagzebski, *op. cit.*, p. 128.

28 For more detail regarding PCV, see again Besong, *op. cit.*

29 See Deonna and Teroni, *op. cit.*, pp. 118–121.

30 By PCV, more prudent agents will be proportionately more justified in the belief that Ed’s actions were wrong, but given that the belief that Ed’s actions were wrong is in accord with the norms of prudence, the seeming that Ed’s actions were wrong because of the disgust they appropriately elicited will always confer at least some degree of epistemic justification onto beliefs formed in response to it.

31 For reasons alluded to here, although Pete begins to feel disgust at his pedophilic desires in PERVERT through social pressure, not all social pressure to feel disgust is bad nor purely conventional. Some social conventions—such as those against pedophilic desires—can be firmly grounded on appropriate disgust reactions.

32 See Kelly, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–26.

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33 Stephen Jay Gould and Elisabeth S. Vrba, “Exaptation-A Missing Term in the Science of Form,” *Paleobiology*, Vol. 8, No. 1, (1982), 4–15 (pp. 7–8).

34 See John Pollock, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge*, First Edition (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1986), pp. 37–39.

35 One might think that hesitancy here undermines my previous objection that Kelly’s argument proves too much, since it would imply that we should withhold judgment regarding all of our moral beliefs (akin to the way we’d act toward memorial beliefs if we discovered many had been falsely produced). However, the tension here is only apparent, for there are externalist accounts of epistemic justification available that explain the relevant cases of defeat other than process reliabilism, see Michael Bergmann, *Justification without Awareness: A Defense of Epistemic Externalism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), among others.

36 Joseph Henrich, Steven J. Heine and Ara Norenzayan, “The Weirdest People in the World?,” *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Vol. 33, No. 2-3, (2010), 61–83 (p. 63).

37 The situation is different when one knows that one’s affective response  $r$  is very similar to the affective response of an agent one has justified reason to believe is prudent. In that case, one has a defeater for any potential defeater against the trustworthiness of  $r$ , particularly against those potential defeaters arising from one’s knowledge of one’s own moral defects. In that case, one can justifiably place greater trust in the fittingness of  $r$  than one should based upon one’s own virtuous character alone.