

## A Failed Proof of Moral Realism

RAGNAR FRANCÉN

doi:[10.48106/dial.v78.i1.01](https://doi.org/10.48106/dial.v78.i1.01)

Ragnar Francén. 2024. "A Failed Proof of Moral Realism."  
*Dialectica* 78(1): 1–1. doi:[10.48106/dial.v78.i1.01](https://doi.org/10.48106/dial.v78.i1.01).

# A Failed Proof of Moral Realism

RAGNAR FRANCÉN

In a paper from 2013, Huemer presented what he describes as a proof of moral realism. Huemer's argument is interesting, first, because it promises to be a *new* argument for moral realism, and second, because it aims to prove moral realism through switching focus to "first-person moral reasons" (aka "subjective reasons"): that is, what we have moral reason to do given our epistemic situation. At a very general level, Huemer's proof has the following form: he first presents an argument for a first-person normative conclusion ("the Antitorture Argument"), and then argues that the features of the Antitorture Argument make it the case that its normative conclusion is true in a realist, attitude-independent, fashion. In this paper I argue that this suggested proof fails: Huemer's considerations fail to support this attitude independence-claim, some because they concern the wrong kind of attitude-independence, and some because they are simply unconvincing.

In his "An Ontological Proof of Moral Realism" (2013), Michael Huemer aims to present precisely that: a proof of moral realism. This attempted proof has received little attention, to my knowledge there is no published evaluation of it. Huemer's argument is interesting, first, because it presents itself as a *new* argument for moral realism, and second, because it aims to prove moral realism through switching focus to realism about "first-person moral reasons", aka "subjective reasons" (more about this below), which is an unusual move. I will argue that the argument fails, however.

Huemer's proof makes use of the distinction between first-person and third-person moral reasons (often called "subjective" vs. "objective" reasons): he aims to present a proof of realism about the former. In a situation where a thirsty agent A justifiably thinks that there is water in the glass in front of her, this gives her reason to drink from it. But if the liquid in the glass is actually poisonous, this provides reason not to drink from the glass. The first reason is a first-person (subjective) reason—that is, what the agent has reason to do given her own epistemic situation. The latter is a third-person

(objective) reason—that is, what the agent has reason to do given *the facts* of the situation. The reasons in this example are prudential, but the same distinction can be drawn for moral reasons—just imagine A giving the glass to some other thirsty agent, B, instead.

It is crucial to Huemer’s argument that one can be a moral realist about both kinds of reasons. (Huemer understands *moral* reasons to be non-selfish and categorical first-person reasons, I will not question that understanding.) It can be an observer-independent truth that A has a non-selfish and categorical first-person reason to give B the glass of transparent liquid (moral realism about first-person moral reasons) and it can be an observer-independent truth that A has a non-selfish and categorical third-person reason *not* to give B the glass of transparent liquid (moral realism about third-person moral reasons). Huemer’s proof aims to establish moral realism about first-person moral reasons only.

At a very general level, Huemer’s proof has the following form: he first presents an argument for a first-person normative conclusion (“the Antitorture Argument”), and then argues that the features of the Antitorture Argument make it the case that its normative conclusion is true in a realist fashion. In section 1 I’ll describe Huemer’s proof, and argue that though its conclusion concerns only realism about moral first-person reasons, and moral realists usually presumably have third person reasons in mind, this conclusion is both interesting and controversial, making the argument worth addressing. In section 2 I’ll argue that the proof fails to establish the conclusion, since the features of the Antitorture Argument do not prove, or even suggest, that its conclusion is true in a realist fashion.

## 571 The Proof

The start of Huemer’s proof is what he calls the “Antitorture Argument”. Very roughly, the thought behind the Antitorture Argument is this: even non-realists can agree that we have at least some (though perhaps weak) reason to think that realism about third-person moral reasons is correct; and also that, if such realism is correct, the objective (third person) morality is such that torturing babies is morally wrong. Further, given that we have some reason to think this, (i.e. that it is objectively wrong to torture babies), this epistemic situation provides a first-person moral reason not to torture babies. Conclusion: there is a first-person moral reason not to torture babies.

Here is a slightly simplified version of how Huemer spells out the argument (2013, p. 266) (simplified in that it leaves out some details irrelevant to our discussion, see fn 1):

1. If the following conditions hold –

- a. If S knew that P, this would provide a reason for S to  $\Phi$ , and
- b. S has some reason to believe that P

then S thereby has a reason to  $\Phi$ .<sup>1</sup>

- 2. If we knew torturing babies was objectively wrong, this would provide a reason to avoid torturing babies.
- 3. We have some reason to believe that torturing babies is objectively wrong.
- 4. Therefore, we have a (first person) reason to avoid torturing babies.

I think that this argument is at least fairly convincing. Premise 1 is a principle about first-person reasons that Huemer calls the “The Probabilistic Reasons Principle”.

The rough idea is that if some fact would (if you knew it) provide a reason for you to behave in a certain way, then your having some reason to believe that fact obtains also provides you with a reason to behave in the same way. Even a small epistemic probability of the fact’s obtaining provides you with a (perhaps very small) first person reason for action. Consider [...] an illustration involving prudential reasons. Anne is considering buying a particular lottery ticket. If she knew the ticket would win, that would be a prudential reason for Anne to buy the ticket. Therefore, the Probabilistic Reasons Principle tells us, if Anne merely has some reason to think the ticket will win, then she thereby has a first person reason to buy the ticket. There is in fact *some* reason to think that the ticket win, namely, that some ticket will win, and this one is as likely

<sup>1</sup> Huemer also has a third condition in premise (1), in addition to (a) and (b), namely: “If S knew that P, this would provide no reason for S not to  $\Phi$ ”. I ignore this condition in order to simplify the presentation. Huemer adds this condition to handle complexities in certain cases. But since I do not question premise (1), and the intuitive plausibility of it can be brought out without this additional condition, this will not affect my arguments. Furthermore, since Huemer has this third condition in premise (1) he also needs one more premise in the Antitorture Argument, the premise that: “Even if we knew that torturing babies was not objectively wrong, this would provide no reason to torture babies.” Readers can, if they wish, consult Huemer’s full Antitorture Argument (p. 266), and have this argument in mind rather than the simplified one presented here, when evaluating my objections.

as any of the others (more simply: the ticket has a chance of winning). So Anne has a reason to buy the lottery ticket. Of course, this reason might be very weak, and it might be outweighed by the cost of the ticket. Nevertheless, I take it that the Probabilistic Reasons Principle gives us the intuitively correct verdict in this case. (Huemer (2013), 263)

I agree that this is indeed an intuitively plausible verdict, and I will not question the Probabilistic Reasons Principle. I will also accept (at least for the sake of argument) both premise 2 and 3. If I have knowledge that it is objectively wrong to torture babies, this does indeed seem to imply that I have reasons not to torture babies (premise 2).<sup>2</sup> It also seems fairly plausible that we have *some* reason to believe that torturing babies is objectively morally wrong (premise 3); many people will have the intuition that this is a clear example of an objectively morally horrendous act. Even moral anti-realists should be willing to concede that this intuitive impression gives us at least some reason to think that such acts are objectively morally wrong, even if they think that there are other stronger reasons to deny this. Anyways, I will assume so here. Furthermore, given that the three premises are correct, the conclusion seems to follow.

However, as Huemer acknowledges, the Antitorture Argument does not by itself establish *realism* about first-person reasons. It is merely an argument for the normative conclusion that we have a reason to avoid baby torture. It does not support any particular metaethical understanding of this conclusion. But Huemer presents two additional arguments for thinking that the reason established by the Antitorture Argument is an *observer-independent* reason. Very briefly, these are arguments to the effect that the premises in the Antitorture Argument are established independently of any observer-dependent facts about interests, desires or attitudes. Thus, he concludes, this is a proof that there is an objective (i.e. realist) first-person reason to avoid baby torture—which means that realism about first-person moral reasons is correct. To avoid repetition, I'll describe Huemer's two arguments more thoroughly in the next section, in connection with my discussion of them. I will close this section with some remarks about the conclusion that Huemer aims to establish—realism about first-person moral reasons. I take these remarks to show that Huemer's argument is worthy of attention, since the conclusions it aims to

<sup>2</sup> See fn 3 below, and the reasoning in the text in connection to it, for two different interpretations of premise (2). The premise seems plausible on both interpretations, but for different reasons.

establish, while different from traditional moral realism, is both interesting and controversial.

It is probably the case that moral realists have traditionally been interested in defending realism about *third-person* reasons rather than first-person reasons. That is, they have argued that there are observer- and attitude-independent facts about what we are morally allowed and not allowed to do, irrespective of the agent's or any other person's epistemic situation. That is, there are things that matter, or reasons for acting, irrespective of what anyone feels, thinks, or happens to know or have reason to believe. Consequently, the conclusion of Huemer's argument is not what moral realists have traditionally sought to defend.

However, if the proof of realism about first-person reasons were to succeed, this would still be an interesting result. Partly because it is an interesting, and presumably philosophically controversial, position in itself. It states that there are indeed objective, observer- and attitude-independent, reasons for how to act given your epistemic situation. Philosophers who are generally drawn to anti-realist positions about normative reasons—e.g. non-cognitivism, contextualism or error-theory—will probably defend an anti-realist position about such first-person reasons as well. So the conclusion of Huemer's argument questions their views. But I think that the conclusion is also interesting partly because it might indicate something about third person reasons. As just mentioned, anti-realist views about morality—such as non-cognitivism, contextualism/relativism and error-theory—are arguably best construed as positions that hold for both third- and first-person reasons. For example, non-cognitivist arguments for thinking that judgments about what we have moral reason to do are desire-like attitudes (or relativist arguments for thinking that the truth-conditions of moral beliefs depend of the moral standard of the speaker), are plausibly construed as arguments concerning moral reasons judgments generally, i.e. both for judgments about third-person and first-person reasons. This means that successful proof of realism about first-person reasons would potentially make anti-realism about third-person reasons a less stable and attractive position.

Consequently, I don't think that Huemer's argument can be dismissed on the basis that the conclusion it aims to establish is uninteresting. But I'll now argue that it fails to establish this conclusion.

## 162 Problems with the Proof

163 Huemer presents one longer and one shorter argument for the claim that  
 164 the reasons not to torture babies established by the Antitorture Argument  
 165 are “observer-independent reasons”. The *longer argument* states that since  
 166 (i) the premises in the Antitorture Argument logically entail its conclusion,  
 167 and (ii) these premises are independent of interests, desires, and attitudes  
 168 (in the sense relevant to moral realism), (iii) this independence holds for the  
 169 conclusion as well (Huemer (2013), 267). I will not question premise (i), nor  
 170 that (iii) follows from (i) and (ii). The critical premise here is (ii).

171 What does (ii) tell us? That is, in what way are the premises of the Antitor-  
 172 ture Argument independent of interests, desires, and attitudes? Huemer says  
 173 that it is “to be read as saying that each of the premises of the Antitorture  
 174 Argument is true, and the truth of each these premises does not depend upon  
 175 any interest or desire of the agent, nor upon any attitude of observers toward  
 176 baby torturers or acts of baby torture. This is the sense of “independent of  
 177 interests, desires, and attitudes” that is relevant to establishing moral realism.”  
 178 (Huemer (2013), 267–268)

179 This characterization of the relevant sense of attitude-independence seems  
 180 roughly correct, but I have two notes: First, Huemer writes that (to establish  
 181 realism) the premises must be true independently of the attitudes of observers  
 182 *toward baby torture*. But since premise (1) is not about baby-torture, even  
 183 anti-realists who hold that normative truths depend on our attitudes would  
 184 of course agree that the truth of (1)—just like the truth of e.g. the claim “it  
 185 is wrong to lie”—is independent of our attitudes towards baby torture. The  
 186 relevant attitudes in relation to premise (1) are rather attitudes toward a person  
 187  $\Phi$ -ing given that that the conditions (a) and (b) hold (see also fn 4 below).  
 188 Second, independence from the interests of the *agent* is not obviously relevant  
 189 to realism vs. anti-realism. We can imagine it being a fact, independently of  
 190 what anyone (that is, any observer) thinks or feels about it, that what agents  
 191 have moral reason to do depends partly on their (i.e. the agents’) interests. In  
 192 my view, this means that moral realism is correct—there are, in the relevant  
 193 sense, objective moral facts, which happen to be agent-relative. This will not  
 194 matter to my arguments below, however—what is important is that Huemer  
 195 need to show that the truth of the premises is *at least* observer independent.

196 So, is it plausible to think that the truth of each premise of the Antitor-  
 197 ture Argument is independent of attitudes in this way? Two of the premises  
 198 involve moral claims, namely (1) and (2). I will not question that (2) is true

independently of attitudes, since it is arguably analytically correct (which is what Huemer holds (Huemer (2013), 168)): it is analytic if knowing that  $\Phi$ -ing is objectively wrong per definition implies that  $\Phi$ -ing is in fact objectively wrong, and if  $\Phi$ -ing being objectively wrong per definition implies that there is reason not to do  $\Phi$ . (Even error-theorists about morality could accept (2), then, since it only states that *if* there were morally wrong actions (which they deny) we would have reason not to perform these actions.)<sup>3</sup>

Premise (1) is a substantive claim however, stating that *given that certain conditions hold, there are first-person reasons to act in certain ways*. While (1) is formulated as a claim about reasons for action generally, it has to hold for moral reasons specifically, if a conclusion about moral reasons is to follow from the argument. So (1) does crucially entail a moral claim on the form: *given that certain conditions hold, there are first-person moral reasons to act in certain ways*. Because of this, we can expect that moral anti-realists will deny that the independency-claim holds for (1). Defenders of different kinds of anti-realism will either hold...

- that (1) can be true, but is true insofar as it is approved by the moral standards of individual judges or communities, where those standards consist of or are functions of the attitudes of individuals (*moral relativism* in the style of e.g. Dreier (1990); Harman (1996); Wong (1984)), or true only relative to a particular practical point of view (*Humean constructivism* in the style of e.g. Street (2008)), or
- that (1) is false since there are no substantive normative truths at all (*error-theory* à la (Mackie (1977); Streumer (2017))), or
- that uttering (1) is not to state anything that can be true or false but rather to express a non-cognitive attitude of approval/planning of  $\Phi$ -ing given that certain conditions are fulfilled (as *non-cognitivists* hold, e.g. (Blackburn (1998); Gibbard (2003))).

I think that this is, in the end, the problem with Huemer's "proof": that it assumes that premise (1)—i.e. a (first-person) moral statement—is attitude-independently true, while the existence of such truths is exactly what is to be shown by the proof. Huemer does present three arguments in favour of

<sup>3</sup> On a different interpretation of (2) it says that having knowledge that it is objectively (third-person) morally wrong to torture babies puts me in an epistemic situation where I have (strong) *first person* reasons not to torture babies. This seems plausible. But since this is not (not obviously, at least) an analytic truth, perhaps there is room for anti-realists to reject that it holds independently of attitudes. I'll pursue this issue further, however.



thinking that (1) is attitude-independently true, however, so let us look at these (A–C below).

A. Premise (1) is what Huemer calls the “The Probabilistic Reasons Principle”, stating that if having knowledge of  $P$  provides reason to  $\Phi$ , then having some (perhaps small) reason to believe  $P$  also provides a (perhaps weak) first person reason to  $\Phi$ . Huemer writes that this is a general principle of rationality, the status of which is similar to that of other axioms of rationality, e.g. that “the principle that if one desires some end and one believes that a certain action will lead to that end, then one has a reason to perform that action” (Huemer, 2013, p. 268). He adds that such principles “appear to be necessary truths, true in every conceivable circumstance”, and hence they hold for one “no matter what desires and interests one has—even if one somehow has no interests or desires” (Huemer (2013), p. 268). What Huemer seems to be claiming here is that the Probabilistic Reasons Principle holds for some *agent* independently of that *agent’s* interests etc. The problem with this argument is that this is not the relevant sense of independence for realism, since anti-realists can accept such agent-independence as well. Suppose e.g. that some form of anti-realist moral relativism is correct, according to which any moral claim that is true is true “only” relative to the moral standard of some society or individual judge. These are forms of anti-realism, since they imply that moral claims and moral principles cannot be correct independently of people’s attitudes. If relativism is correct, then the Probabilistic Reasons Principle is true (if it is true) because it accords with our communal or individual moral standards. But those standards may well be such that they do not conditionalize the correctness of this principle on the agent’s interests, they may imply that the principle holds for one “no matter what desires and interests one has”, and that they hold in every conceivable circumstance. Consequently, even if Huemer is correct that (1) holds for everyone independently of their interests, and in every circumstance, this is consistent with anti-realism and therefore does not lend support to a realist understanding of (1).<sup>4</sup>

B. Huemer further argues like this:

---

4 In connection to this passage, Huemer writes that “Nor does the truth of the Probabilistic Reasons Principle depend on anyone’s attitudes toward baby torture—it is not as though, if we started approving of baby torture, then the Probabilistic Reasons Principle would somehow be falsified. So premise 1 is true independent of interests, desires, and attitudes in the relevant sense.” (p. 268) This is confusing: of course, anti-realists who say that the truth of moral reasons-claims depends on people’s attitudes, will not say that the truth of the Probabilistic Reasons Principle depends on anyone’s attitudes *toward baby torture*. They will rather say that the principle’s truth depends on people’s attitudes toward *S’s  $\Phi$ -ing when the conditions (a) and (b) in the principle hold*.

the Probabilistic Reasons Principle is not a categorical reason-ascription. That is, it does not say that anyone in fact has a reason for anything. The Probabilistic Reasons Principle says that *if* certain reason-claims hold, *then* another, closely related reason-claim holds. And whether or not it is objectively true that anyone has a reason for anything, it is plausible that conditional claims of this sort could still be objectively true. For example, it is objectively true that *if* fetuses have a right to life then killing them is *prima facie* wrong, even if it is not objectively true that fetuses have a right to life. (Huemer (2013), p. 271)

I agree, of course, that it *could* be “objectively true that if fetuses have a right to life then killing them is *prima facie* wrong, even if it is not objectively true that fetuses have a right to life”. But this is just to say that, if there are objective moral truths, some moral claims will be true and others false. This is irrelevant to the present issue. Anti-realists (of some varieties), can agree with the claim that if fetuses have a right to life then killing them is *prima facie* wrong, but they will either say that agreeing to this is merely to be disposed, given certain conditions, to have a certain non-cognitive attitude towards killing fetuses (non-cognitivism), or they will hold that the claim is true relative to our (societal or individual) moral standards (moral relativism). They will not, to be sure, hold that it is true due to correspondence with objective moral facts. Likewise for the Probabilistic Reasons Principle (as we have seen above). In Huemer’s proof against moral anti-realism, he would need to show that such anti-realist understandings of the Probabilistic Reasons Principle are implausible. Showing that this principle is more likely to be objectively true than certain other moral claims (since it is conditional, and therefore weaker, perhaps) *given that there are objective moral truths*, does not do the needed trick.

C. Lastly, Huemer also argues as follows to the effect that premise (1), that is the Probabilistic Reasons Principle, is objectively true:

[... ] the Probabilistic Reasons Principle is not a claim about morality *per se*, like the claim that stealing is wrong or that everyone has a right to life. The Probabilistic Reasons Principle is a general, formal principle governing reasons of any kind, including prudential reasons, instrumental reasons, and even epistemic reasons, in addition to moral reasons. Thus, to deny objective truth to the Probabilistic Reasons Principle on the grounds that it is a claim about reasons would apparently involve one in anti-realism about reasons in general, which I take to be much less attractive than mere *ethical* anti-realism. (Huemer (2013), p. 271)

Huemer here argues (a) that rejecting that (1) is objectively true implies accepting general normative anti-realism, and (b) that general normative anti-realism is implausible. There are two problems with this argument. The first, which concerns (b) is that it radically weakens the “proof” of moral realism, since it conditionalizes it on the *mere assertion* that general normative anti-realism is not correct. Since general arguments against there being objective normative facts of any kind is one main route to make a case for moral anti-realism, if Huemer’s argument simply assumes that general normative anti-realism is incorrect, it fails to rule out many forms of moral anti-realism.

The second problem is that (a) is incorrect. Suppose that we accept moral anti-realism but are realists about e.g. epistemic reasons—this is the kind of “local” moral anti-realism that Huemer describes as much more attractive than general normative anti-realism. This merely local moral anti-realism is consistent with rejecting that the Probabilistic Reasons Principle is objectively true.

The local moral anti-realist can accept the following combination of views:

- A restricted version of the Probabilistic Reasons Principle that concerns only epistemic reasons is objectively true—i.e. it is made true by observer-independent facts about epistemic reasons.
- Restricted versions of the principle concerning moral reasons are not objectively true, since there are no objective facts about moral reasons to make it true. If the moral reasons-version of the Probabilistic Reasons Principle is true, it is true due to fitting with the moral standard consisting of our societal conventions or individual attitudes.

Since, the Probabilistic Reasons Principle concerns reasons in general—it makes a claim about all sorts of reasons: moral, prudential, epistemic etc—accepting the above combination of views is to reject that the Probabilistic Reasons Principle (concerning all reasons) is objectively true. But this combination of views obviously does not involve one in general normative anti-realism.

So far, we have considered Huemer’s longer argument for the claim that the reasons not to torture babies established by the Antitorture Argument are “observer-independent reasons”. This consisted in arguing that the truth of each premise of the Antitorture Argument is independent of the interests or attitudes of observers. I have argued that Huemer fails to provide good reason

to think that his holds for premise (1). His shorter argument instead goes like this:

The Antitorture Argument establishes that we have a reason for avoiding baby torture. What is this reason? It is that *baby torture might be objectively wrong*. But *that baby torture might be objectively wrong* is obviously not an appeal to some desire, interest, or observer attitude. Therefore, it can only be an objective moral reason. (Huemer (2013), 269)

I think it is obvious where this argument goes wrong. It fails to point to a sort of objectivity that is relevant to the realism vs anti-realism divide. Anti-realists may well agree that objective facts can be/provide moral reasons—what they deny is that *it is an objective fact* that these objective facts are/provide moral reasons. Consider the following fact: Punching a person in the face will cause suffering. This is an objective fact about acts of face punching. Arguably, this objective fact provides moral reason not to perform such acts. Obviously, moral anti-realists (excluding error-theorists) can agree with this claim. What they reject is that there is an objective attitude independent moral fact making the claim true. They can say that it is true due to our conventions or private moral standards disapproving of causing suffering (relativism), or say that agreeing with the claim is to harbour such a disapproving attitude (non-cognitivism).


I conclude that Huemer's attempted proof of realism about moral first-person reasons fails. The proof depends on either showing directly that the reason not to torture babies established by the Antitorture Argument is of an observer-independent sort (short argument), or that the premises of the argument—especially premise (1)—are true in an observer-independent manner (longer argument). But the considerations Huemer points to as evidence of these claims are either irrelevant since they concern the wrong kind of attitude-independence (argument A and the short argument), or simply unconvincing (argument B and C above).

I take the lesson that different kinds of attitude-independence (or objectivity) must be kept distinct to be the most general take-away from my criticism. Moral realism requires *observer independence*. Interestingly, Huemer's argument itself relies on distinguishing this kind of independence from another kind of independence, namely "*epistemic agent independence*": it aims to establish that there are observer independent facts about what an agent has reason to do given her epistemic situation (first person reasons). Due to this attitude-dependence, the latter kinds of reasons are often called "subjective reasons", but Huemer correctly points out that it is not a kind of subjectivity at odds with moral realism's claim that moral facts are objective (i.e. observer-

independent). But then some of Huemer's arguments relies on confusing moral realism's observer independence with other kinds of attitude independence. Argument B fails to properly distinguish what we could call "affective agent independence"—dependence on the desires of the agent—from observer independence. And the short argument fails to properly distinguish the attitude independent status of the facts that provide moral reasons from the attitude independent status of the fact that those facts provide moral reasons (where it is only the latter that is relevant for the truth of moral realism). In these ways, a proper understanding of Huemer's argument itself, and of where it goes wrong, requires that we keep distinct these different attitude dependence claims.

Let me end by noting that, of course, there are arguments in favour of moral realism, and against anti-realist theories, in the metaethical literature, and these could be used to support a realist interpretation of the conclusion of the Antitorture Argument. But if Huemer would rely on this move, it would be these other arguments that did the job, not Huemer's proof.\*

Ragnar Francén

 0000-0002-7963-676X

University of Gothenburg

ragnar.francen@filosofi.gu.se

## References

- BLACKBURN, Simon. 1998. *Ruling Passions: A Theory of Practical Reasoning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, doi:[10.1093/oso/9780198247852.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198247852.001.0001).
- DREIER, James. 1990. "Internalism and Speaker Relativism." *Ethics* 101(1): 6–26, doi:[10.1086/293257](https://doi.org/10.1086/293257).
- GIBBARD, Allan F. 2003. *Thinking How to Live*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, doi:[10.2307/j.ctv1pncqb8](https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1pncqb8).
- HARMAN, Gilbert H. 1996. "Moral Relativism." in *Moral Relativism and Moral Objectivity*, pp. 3–64. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- HUEMER, Michael. 2013. "An Ontological Proof of Moral Realism." *Social Philosophy and Policy* 30(1/2): 259–270, doi:[10.1017/S0265052513000125](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0265052513000125).
- MACKIE, John Leslie. 1977. *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*. London: Penguin Books.
- STREET, Sharon. 2008. "Constructivism about Reasons." in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics*, volume III, edited by Russ SHAFER-LANDAU, pp. 208–245. Oxford: Oxford University Press, doi:[10.1093/oso/9780199542062.003.0009](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780199542062.003.0009).

---

\* I wish to thank the two referees for *Dialectica* for helpful comments.

- 408 STREUMER, Bart. 2017. *Unbelievable Errors: An Error Theory about All Normative*  
409 *Judgements*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, doi:[10.1093/oso/9780198785897.001.](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198785897.001.0001)  
410 [0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198785897.001.0001).  
411 WONG, David B. 1984. *Moral Relativity*. Berkeley, California: University of California  
412 Press, doi:[10.2307/jj.8306171](https://doi.org/10.2307/jj.8306171).

PROOF