April 16th, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Hume, Blackburn, and Korsgaard on the Sensible Knave

Bill Porter
Illinois Wesleyan University

Charlotte Brown, Faculty Advisor
Illinois Wesleyan University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc

http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/jwprc/2005/oralpres4/1

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Ames Library, the Andrew W. Mellon Center for Curricular and Faculty Development, the Office of the Provost, and the Office of the President. It has been accepted for inclusion in Digital Commons @ IWU by the faculty at Illinois Wesleyan University. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@iwu.edu.

©Copyright is owned by the author of this document.
HUME, BLACKBURN, AND KORSGAARD ON THE SENSIBLE KNAVE

Bill Porter and Charlotte Brown*
Philosophy Department, Illinois Wesleyan University

In "Ruling Passions," Simon Blackburn advances an ethical theory that welds Blackburn's quasi-realism to a Humean-Smithean theory of moral sentiments. This paper concerns the latter Humean side of Blackburn's theory, specifically Blackburn's treatment of Hume's famous problem of the sensible knave.

I have two tasks. My first task is to examine Hume's original formulation of, and reply to, the problem posed by the sensible knave. Also, I will deal with two complexities in Hume's picture: a prima facie circularity problem, and the threat posed by a variation or descendant of the original sensible knave.

My more ambitious second task is an examination of the knave-related contemporary controversy between Blackburn and Christine Korsgaard. Blackburn's Humean defense consists especially in his repudiation of criticism levelled against Humean theories by Korsgaard in "The Sources of Normativity." I hope to show that Blackburn fails to escape Korsgaard's argument that Humean theories generally fail, in the case of the knave, to fulfill a requirement of transparency.