

# Philosophical methodology: The current debate

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*In this paper I investigate current issues in the methodology of philosophy. In particular, the epistemology of intuition and the status of empirical work on the use of intuition in philosophy.*

*Keywords: Experimental Philosophy; Intuition; Philosophical Methodology*

## 1. Introduction

At least one of the central aims of philosophy is to answer certain questions that define the human condition. For example, throughout history, and across many cultures, philosophers have tried to answer the following questions. What can we know? What do we know? Do we have free will? What is the good life? What is it to be moral? What is a good argument? What is beauty? Why is there something rather than nothing? What is it for one thing to cause another thing? Does God exist?: Call these questions concerning the human condition the first order questions of philosophy.

In the past decade (1998–2008) there has been a growth of interest in how philosophers ought to go about answering questions of first order philosophy. This area of philosophical inquiry has come to be known as *philosophical methodology*, *the philosophy of philosophy*, or *the epistemology of philosophy*. Philosophical methodology is not a new topic in philosophy. Significant discussion of it has occurred in almost every period of philosophy. The work of the early analytic philosophers, and logical positivists of the 20th century contain important discussions of philosophical methodology based on ideas about logic and language. However, the recent growth of interest in philosophical methodology has not been brought about by discussion of logic and language primarily.<sup>1</sup> Rather, it is due to a new movement in philosophy called *experimental philosophy*.

One of the major claims of experimental philosophy has been that the traditional methodology of analytic philosophy that has been used in the 20th century to

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answer first order questions of philosophy must either be seriously rethought or abandoned in light of new empirical discoveries coming from experimental philosophy and empirical science.<sup>2</sup> Over the past decade, and at present, armchair philosophers who defend the possibility and value of some form of non-empirical philosophy and experimentalists and empirical philosophers who challenge the value of armchair methods of answering certain philosophical questions are involved in a debate over how philosophical research can and should proceed.

Some of the questions in the contemporary debate on philosophical methodology are the following. What role do thought experiments play in answering philosophical questions? What is the role of conceptual analysis in answering philosophical questions? Is the traditional conception of conceptual analysis fundamentally flawed? Do the methods of the experimental program provide us with data that can move philosophical research forward? Is experimental philosophy completely different from traditional philosophy? What is the value of armchair intuitions in philosophical inquiry? Does philosophy have any kind of autonomy or authority over the findings of empirical science with regard to central philosophical questions?

The aim of this essay is to present and discuss some of the key issues in the contemporary debate, as well as to articulate and defend a moderate position between traditional armchair philosophy and experimental philosophy that dispels the illusion that the two positions are irreconcilable. In section 2 I introduce some distinctions, discussed by experimentalists and empirical philosophers, which help explain what experimental philosophy is. In the discussion of issues that follow section 2, I assume some familiarity with the core findings that are known in the literature on methodology. In sections 3–6, I will discuss a series of issues in the contemporary debate. Although some of the issues discussed are connected, it is best to see each section as a self-contained discussion of a component of the contemporary debate.

## **2. What is Experimental Philosophy?**

What is experimental philosophy? There are at least three distinctions that can be used to explain what experimental philosophy is.

Prinz (2008) draws a distinction between experimental philosophy and empirical philosophy. Roughly, empirical philosophy aims to use pre-made scientific results from neuroscience, linguistics, evolutionary biology, psychology, behavioral economics, and other areas of social and/or natural sciences to support or refute philosophical theories. The empirical approach may simply be referred to as the “empirically informed approach.”

On the empirically informed approach one recognizes that often in a philosophical debate many positions are logically possible. As a consequence, one appeals to social and natural sciences to eliminate some of the merely logically possible positions. For example, in ethics this is most clearly seen in those theories of ethics that accept the principle that “ought implies can.” In accepting this principle, one can argue that any moral theory that implies that we ought to do something that we cannot is

*prima facie* implausible, since morality is partially governed by what it is possible for persons to do.

Experimental philosophy, in contrast to empirical philosophy, aims to conduct its own experiments. What typically demarcates an empirically informed philosophical position from an experimentally informed position has to do with whether or not the empirical data was the product of a philosopher (or a philosopher in tandem with a psychologist or other natural scientist) designing, creating and executing an experiment, and analyzing the data to shed light on a philosophical topic of interest. However, this feature should not be understood as being a necessary or sufficient condition for experimental philosophy. Rather, it should be understood as merely paradigmatic of current work in experimental philosophy. Regarding the distinction between empirical and experimental philosophy, it is important to note that some (even many) non-experimental philosophers may consider themselves empirical philosophers. Indeed in certain areas of philosophy, such as the philosophy of mind, one might say that some of the central philosophers consider themselves empirical philosophers without being experimental philosophers; for example Paul Churchland, Daniel Dennett, and John Searle. It is important to note that what is at issue in the current debate is the relation between experimental and traditional philosophy, and not the relation between empirical philosophy and traditional philosophy.

A finer distinction capturing subareas of experimental philosophy is offered by Nadelhoffer and Nahmias (2007). They distinguish between three kinds of projects in experimental philosophy: *experimental analysis*, *experimental descriptivism*, and *experimental restrictionism*. They maintain that while the goal of experimental analysis is to systematically discover under controlled settings what intuitions “we”—in the widest sense—have, experimental descriptivism has as its primary goal the discovery of what psychological mechanisms are responsible for the generation of intuitions. On a more methodological front, experimental restrictionism has as its primary goal using the data found through the other two projects to argue against the use of intuitions in philosophical debates.

Another distinction that has been drawn within experimental philosophy is about what the intended goal of the experimental research is. Alexander, Weinberg, and Mallon (forthcoming) distinguish between the positive and negative program in experimental philosophy. Roughly, the negative program aims to call the use of intuition in inquiry (philosophical or otherwise) into question. The positive program aims to collect data about intuitions in order to either further illuminate human cognition or bring to light interesting patterns of intuitions that call out for further investigation and philosophical exploration. While these two programs use the same methodology, the methodology of empirical psychology and cognitive science, they use their results in different ways, and they aim to establish different claims. Experimental analysis and experimental descriptivism are instances of the positive program, while experimental restrictionism is an instance of the negative program.

Although experimental philosophy is still young as a movement, there is quite a substantial body of work that has been developed. For the purposes of what will be discussed here, the following four works are central:

- Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich (2001)
- Knobe (2003)
- Nahmias, Morris, Nadelhoffer, and Turner (2006)
- Swain, Alexander, and Weinberg (2008)

Regarding the distinctions so far drawn, all pieces are instances of experimental philosophy, rather than empirical philosophy. Knobe (2003) and Nahmias et al. (2006) are instances of experimental analysis and the positive program. Weinberg et al. (2001) and Swain et al. (2008) are best characterized as instances of experimental restrictionism and the negative program in experimental philosophy.

Finally, a good way to understand the core experimental aspect of the works listed above is by a short description of the general way in which experiments in survey-driven experimental philosophy are conducted. In the papers listed above one primarily does the following:

- Identify a philosophical topic where intuitions are relevant. For example in epistemology, the analysis of knowledge via intuitions about cases, and in metaphysics, the claim that incompatibilism is more intuitive than compatibilism.
- Formulate a testable hypothesis concerning intuitions and the philosophical topic at issue. For example, the hypothesis: intuitions about knowledge in Gettier scenarios vary across East Asians and Westerners.
- Design an experiment involving a survey questionnaire to give to a population or a number of populations in order to generate an initial set of data relevant to the hypothesis.
- Apply statistical tests, such as Fisher Exact Test, T-test, Chi-squared, or ANOVA to analyze the findings, and determine the statistical significance of the data.
- Apply the results to the philosophical topic at issue.

### **3. Conceptual Analysis and Intuition**

One of the central claims of experimental philosophy is that the methodology of analytic philosophy rests on a questionable foundation. For example, Weinberg et al. (2001) and Swain et al. (2008) provide empirical data that purports to call into question the methodology of “analytic philosophy” or what the former call “intuition driven romanticism.” In this section, I want to discuss three topics that involve specific questions that are central to evaluating the experimentalist critique. The questions are the following: What is the precise target of the negative program of experimental philosophy? How do different conceptions of conceptual analysis interact with a standard critique of conceptual analysis stemming from the metaphysics of concepts, and what plausible responses are there to this critique? What kind of critique of conceptual analysis is most threatening to the traditional program? What positions at

present are at play in the current debate over the evidential status of intuition, and what other options might be available? I will approach these questions in the order I have presented them.

How should one conceive of the proper target of the negative program in experimental philosophy? Without arguing that the negative program has selected or poorly captured its target, I would argue that it is best *not* to think of the methodology that the negative program calls into question as “analytic methodology.” There are at least two reasons for this. On the one hand, not all members of “analytic” philosophy practice or endorse the same methodology. Both A. J. Ayer and Saul Kripke are analytic philosophers, yet their views about philosophical methodology in their respective works, *Language, truth, and logic* and *Naming and necessity*, are quite different. On the other hand, it is safer to identify a set of assumptions at play in philosophy (analytic, continental, or empirical) that are called into question by the results of the negative program. The twin points are that some analytic philosophers don’t use the methodology that experimental philosophy criticizes, such as “intuition driven romanticism,” and that some non-analytic philosophers use the methodology that they do criticize.<sup>3</sup> The target should be the method itself, regardless of what group uses the method.

Focusing on the method, here are two assumptions that have been central to a subclass of philosophers both historically and in the 20th century, whether the philosophers were analytic or non-analytic: *the analysis assumption* (AA), and *the evidential assumption* (EA):

- (AA) A conceptual analysis of a concept  $C$  can be given by providing a set of necessary and sufficient conditions  $c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$ , where conditions  $\Gamma$  are satisfied.
- (EA) Intuitions generated from thought experiments and cases serve as evidence in favor of or against any of the following: a conceptual analysis of a concept, a theory in domain  $D$ , such as morality or epistemology, or the nature of a phenomenon.<sup>4</sup>

I will begin by discussing an empirical critique of (AA) and responses to it as a way of arguing that the contemporary issue in philosophical methodology is really over (EA) and not (AA).

Even if a priori conceptual analysis is *not* all of philosophy, or the proper aim of philosophy,<sup>5</sup> part of philosophy, analytic or otherwise, has consisted in attempting to produce analyses of concepts.<sup>6</sup> As a consequence, discussion of it in philosophical methodology is important to understanding what its role could be in answering philosophical questions.

But, first, what is conceptual analysis? On the *strong* model of conceptual analysis, (SCA), a *conceptual analysis* of a concept  $C$  is a *decomposition* of  $C$  into concepts  $c_1 \dots c_n$  such that:

- (i)  $C \equiv c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$  is *true*
- (ii)  $C \equiv c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$  is *a priori*
- (iii)  $C \equiv c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$  is *informative*

- (iv)  $C \equiv c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$  is *non-circular*
- (v)  $C \equiv c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$  is *necessary*
- (vi)  $c_1 \wedge \dots \wedge c_n$  is *complete*

There are at least two ways to use empirical data to critique conceptual analysis. One way is to challenge the structure of concepts that conceptual analysis presupposes. The other way is to challenge intuition as a source of evidence in conceptual analysis.

Although Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations* provides a critique of conceptual analysis by way of his discussion of family resemblance relations, Ramsey (1998), appealing to the psychological work of Rosch and Mervis (1977/1998), has provided a precise version of the Wittgensteinian/Roschian based critique. Ramsey argues that (SCA) is impossible for concepts that have a prototype structure. His main move is to argue that (SCA) presupposes that concepts have a classical structure with a fixed set of necessary and sufficient conditions. On that basis, he maintains that if concepts have a prototype structure, there will be no strict set of necessary and sufficient conditions, which makes the production of successful conceptual analyses highly unlikely. His arguments threaten one identifiable component of philosophical methodology.

However, one might wonder if the argument is as strong as it appears to be. Is conceptual analysis impossible? A defender of conceptual analysis might adopt any of the following three responses: *conceptual pluralism*, *a priori conditional analysis*, or the *dual aspect theory of concepts*. Conceptual pluralism maintains that only some concepts have a classical structure, and it restricts the scope of (SCA) to those concepts that most probably have the appropriate structure. For example, it distinguishes between concepts like FURNITURE, which probably have a prototype structure, and concepts like NUMBER, which probably have a classical structure.

Opting for a weaker kind of conceptual analysis, a defender of conceptual analysis could choose to drop the biconditional requirement and the completeness clause, and merely look for interesting connections between concepts.<sup>7</sup> Even if two concepts have a prototype structure, it does not follow that there are no interesting connections between the concepts. For example, even if MORAL RESPONSIBILITY and FREE WILL have a prototype structure, it does not follow that there are no interesting conditionals linking them. Either of these modifications of conceptual analysis would allow a defender of conceptual analysis to ward off the threat posed from the empirical data concerning concepts. However, on the conceptual pluralist approach it may be the case that conditionals linking prototype concepts are not strict conditionals in some cases, which may make the truths expressed by those conditionals less interesting from a philosophical point of view.

Finally, one might adopt the dual aspect theory of concepts on which one distinguishes between the structure of the representational vehicle of a concept C and C's content. Using this distinction one argues that (a) prototype theory is only about the structure of the representational vehicle of C, and that conceptual analysis is about the content of C, and (b) that reliable categorization intuitions are sufficient for conceptual analysis of C.

Given the three possible responses in defense of conceptual analysis above, the more likely threat to conceptual analysis comes from challenges to (EA), and not from the metaphysics of concepts.

Weinberg et al. (2001) and Swain et al. (2008) do not challenge (AA). Rather, their focus is on (EA), “intuition driven romanticism.” Of those that challenge and defend the epistemic status of intuitions, a key metaphysical assumption to take note of is *the doxastic assumption* (DA)<sup>8</sup>:

(DA) Intuitions either are beliefs, dispositions to believe, or attractions to believe.

While some accept (DA), others endorse some *non-doxastic account* (NA):

(NA) Intuition is a kind of contentful mental state that is metaphysically distinct from belief.

With respect to (EA) and (DA) all of the following are possible positions, as shown in Table 1:

In general, one can accept the doxastic assumption and argue either for or against the evidential value of intuition, and one can also take a non-doxastic account and argue either for or against the evidential value of intuition. Experimentalists, such as Weinberg et al. (2001) and Swain et al. (2008), take a non-doxastic view of intuitions as seemings or spontaneous judgments, and have provided evidence against their evidential value.<sup>9</sup> Traditionalists, such as Bealer (1998) and Huemer (2005), by contrast, have taken a non-doxastic account, and argued for the evidential value of intuition. Others, such as Ludwig (2007) and Sosa (2008) have argued for a doxastic account, and defended the evidential value of intuition. Meanwhile, Ichikawa (unpublished manuscript) has defended a doxastic account, and questioned whether the primary use of intuition in philosophy is or should be evidential.

Additionally, two things to take note of about Table 1 are the following: first, following Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009), a distinction should be drawn between a source of evidence S actually being a source of evidence, and our appealing to the deliverances of S as evidence when in fact S is not a source of evidence. Assuming that the reliability of a source S is relevant to its outputs serving as evidence, if unbeknownst to us S is highly unreliable, yet we appeal to the deliverances of S as evidence for a domain of beliefs D, then while in fact it is true that we appeal to the deliverances of S as evidence for beliefs in D, it is in fact false that the deliverances of

Table 1 Intuition.

Intuition	<i>Evidential</i>	<i>Non-Evidential</i>
<i>Doxastic</i>	Intuitions are beliefs, and they are sources of evidence whether or not we appeal to them as evidence.	Intuitions are beliefs, and they are not sources of evidence, whether or not we appeal to them as evidence.
<i>Non-Doxastic</i>	Intuitions are not beliefs, but they are sources of evidence, whether or not we appeal to them as evidence.	Intuitions are not beliefs, and they are not sources of evidence whether or not we appeal to them as evidence.

S are evidence for beliefs in D; since S is highly unreliable. In the other direction: it could be the case that unbeknownst to us the deliverances of S are highly reliable, yet for some reason (either cultural or individualistic) a person or a culture fails to take the deliverances of S as evidence for beliefs in D. In a case such as this, it is true that the deliverances of S are evidence for beliefs in D, even though we don't appeal to the deliverances of S in justifying our beliefs in D. On my account, the debate between the two camps is over whether or not we ought to take intuitions as evidence, and not about whether we in fact do so. It is quite clear that some philosophers and non-philosophers treat both their own and the intuitions of others as evidence for believing a proposition, an analysis of a concept, or a theory. Nevertheless, this issue is orthogonal to the question of whether philosophers, or non-philosophers, ought to, if at all, or in certain circumstances only, take their own intuitions or those of others as evidence for forming beliefs in a domain.

Second, it is not the case that there is only one way to hold a non-doxastic account. At least one core element of non-doxastic accounts is the fact that they take seriously cases of intuition without belief. Bealer (1998) offers an example that is often used to illustrate how there can be intuition without belief. Bealer argues that both of the following are possible:

- (i) A subject can believe that the naïve comprehension axiom (NCA) of set theory is false, without having the intuition that it is false.
- (ii) A subject can have the intuition that (NCA) is true, without believing that it is true.

(i) is true since many people would believe that (NCA) is false based on the testimony of an experienced mathematician without even being able to understand the content of (NCA)—that for every predicate P there is a set of objects that satisfies P. (ii) is true since many experienced mathematicians have the intuition that (NCA) is true, even though they don't believe it because they know the proof that shows that it leads to a paradox in the foundations of naïve set theory.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, even though many non-doxastic accounts accept Bealer's example, or examples like it, there is no requirement that all non-doxastic accounts be filled out in exactly the same way. And it is not clear that all non-doxastic accounts are the same. Bealer (2000) and Weinberg et al. (2001) are both non-doxastic accounts, yet it is not clear that Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich would endorse the full account of intuition offered by Bealer.

Let me close this section by uncovering an unexplored option in the debate on the value of intuition. The present debate over the evidential status of intuition in philosophy has stemmed largely from a focus on its role in conceptual analysis and theory construction. However, there is a larger argument in which discussion of intuition can take place. Consider the following argument:

- (1) Intuition is valuable in human inquiry only if intuition can serve as evidence.
- (2) If intuitions are unreliable, then they are not sources of evidence.
- (3) Intuitions are unreliable.
- (4) So it is not the case that intuition is valuable in human inquiry.



There are traditionally two ways to undermine the argument above. One could simply challenge (3), which I will discuss in section 6. Or one could choose to challenge (2) and argue that intuition is equally unreliable as perception and memory, but since perception and memory are sources of evidence, there is no special reason to maintain that intuition is problematic. The tenability of the later approach has been discussed by Weinberg (2007). However, it is also possible to reject (1) and maintain that intuition is valuable to human inquiry, but that its value does not derive from being a source of evidence. Briefly, here are two possible versions of this.

On *the inquiry-production model of intuition*, intuition is valuable because it serves as a starting point for discussions that lead to the production of theories. Intuition does not have intrinsic evidential value; rather it has instrumental evidential value. Its value lies in getting inquiry started and pushing inquiry in certain directions. The metaphysical nature of intuitions on this view is not as important as its methodological role. The role of intuition is not to provide evidence for what to believe. Rather, the role of intuition is to help delimit what path amongst the available logical options will be pursued in inquiry.

On *the affective model of intuition*, our intuitions are emotions. They are emotions that reveal to us what we are attached to and what is important in inquiry. Notice that intuitions about freewill, moral responsibility, and knowledge are all intuitions about things humans care a great deal about because of how they define the human condition. It is not implausible to think that intuitions about certain domains are caught up with emotions, and that our emotions in these domains are partly constitutive of our intuitions. On a model such as this a distinction is drawn between merely conceptual intuitions or metaphysical intuitions and affective intuitions. In the latter case our intuitions are not just about conceptual links or metaphysical relations. Instead, if our emotions have the capacity to represent certain phenomena adequately, they are about the value of those phenomena. The phenomena would include free will, moral responsibility, and knowledge, and their relative importance to us in different scenarios.<sup>11</sup>

It is not clear whether advocates of the armchair or experimentalists would find either of these views problematic or disagree with them. And it is clear that at present the debate is over the evidential value of intuition, and not over the prospects for a non-evidential account of the value of intuition. However, the value of intuition in human inquiry can be approached outside of the evidential assumption, and it should not be assumed that the only value intuition has is in virtue of its evidential role in inquiry.

#### 4. Common and Uncommon Ground

In philosophy it is often important to point out when disputants in an argument may be having a verbal disagreement; or simply talking past each other because of an interest in a substantively different enterprise; or when disputants might actually be in greater agreement than it appears. While it is true that on the surface it appears

that advocates of the armchair and some experimental philosophers are at odds with one another, there are two points where we should examine the surface disagreement in more detail:

- (i) The disagreement over methodology with respect to intuition.
- (ii) The disagreement over the scope of traditional and experimental methods.

Concerning (i), I will argue that some traditionalists and experimentalists have different interests, and that we need to think about the relation between philosophical intuition and other areas in which intuition is used. Concerning (ii), I will articulate a moderate position between traditionalism and experimentalism, which shows positive traits of both programs that I believe members of each camp would agree are good.

With respect to (i) it should first be noted that since the debate between the two camps is over whether intuitions should count as evidence, the parties must agree on the metaphysics of intuition, if their arguments are to apply to one another's positions. For example, Weinberg et al. (2001) adopt a non-doxastic account, while Ludwig (2007) and Sosa (2008) defend a doxastic account of intuition. Given this difference, the parties may not agree on the substantive metaphysics of intuition. For example, if one party maintains that a subject's intuitions are whatever the subject reports them to be, and another party disagrees, and maintains that a conscious deliverance that does not derive from competence (or does not have the correct etiology) is not an intuition, the two sides would be talking past one another.

Consider the transparency assumption (TA):

- (TA) Subjects can reliably report both when they have an intuition, and what the contents of their intuitions are.

With (TA) in place, survey data would be relevant to assessing whether intuitions are evidence. However, if a traditionalist denies (TA) either for all subjects, or just for those that lack competence with the relevant concepts, it would be difficult to argue that survey studies show that for all subjects intuition is unreliable as a source of evidence.

Second, there is a difference in how the opponents in the debate talk about intuition. On the one hand, traditionalists discuss whether intuitions are evidence, by way of substantive discussion of the metaphysics of intuition. Bealer (1998), Ludwig (2007), and Sosa (2007) all discuss the metaphysics of intuition in detail. On the other hand, experimentalists and critics of intuition discuss whether intuitions are evidence by talking of the practice of appealing to intuition in philosophy. Although both Kornblith (1998) and Weinberg (2007) take a stance on what an intuition is, they spend far less time on the metaphysics of intuition than their opponents, and prefer to speak of the practice of appealing to intuition. In order to draw out the relevance of these two ways of talking about intuition that reveals how the parties may have different interests, I will briefly discuss Bealer's account of intuition in

contrast to Weinberg et al. (2001), Swain et al. (2008), and more importantly a genuine concern in the epistemology of philosophy.

In a series of papers Bealer argues that it is metaphysically necessary that when a subject possesses a concept *C* and determinately understands *C*, she will in ideal cognitive conditions have truth-tracking intuitions about *C*'s application across cases. His position is based on a detailed analysis of ideal cognitive conditions, determinate understanding, and what it is to possess a concept. Consider the following passage:

Suppose that in her journal a sincere, and wholly normal, attentive woman introduces *through use* (not stipulation) a new term 'multigon'. She applies the term to various closed plane figures having several sides (pentagons, octagons, chiliagons, etc.). Suppose her term expresses some definite concept—the concept of being a multigon—and that she determinately understands this concept. By chance, she has neither applied her term 'multigon' to triangles and rectangles nor withheld it from them; the question has just not come up. Eventually, however, she considers it. Her cognitive conditions (intelligence, etc.) are good, and she determinately understands these concepts. Suppose that the property of being a multigon is either the property of being a closed, straight-sided plane figure, or being a closed, straight-sided figure with five or more sides. Then, intuitively, when the woman entertains the question, she would have an intuition that it *is* possible for a triangle or a rectangle to be a multigon if and only if being a multigon = being a closed, straight-sided plane figure. Alternatively, she would have an intuition that it is *not* possible for a triangle or a rectangle to be a multigon if and only if being a multigon = being a closed, straight-sided plane figure with five or more sides. That is, the woman would have *truth-tracking* intuitions. If she did not, the right thing to say would be that either the woman does not really understand one or more of the concepts involved, or her cognitive conditions are not really good. (Bealer, 2002, p. 103)

Bealer's argument is largely a priori. It proceeds by consideration of a thought experiment and analysis of what the concepts involved mean, and it appeals to no empirical evidence. In general, Bealer's account does not address whether anyone ever possesses determinate understanding or is in ideal cognitive conditions. The consequence of this is that Bealer's account provides us with an a priori argument for the possibility of a priori philosophy based on intuitions and thought experiments. However, his arguments do not evaluate how philosophy is actually practiced or how it might be improved.

By contrast, an epistemologist of philosophy might not be concerned with the possibility of philosophy. Rather, they might be concerned with how philosophy should proceed, given the actual epistemic condition of humans. This concern is distinct from the possibility of a certain kind of philosophy. In Bealer's account, one shows that in some possible world traditional philosophical methods are ratified. In the other case, one's focus is on how in the actual world philosophy should be practiced and can be improved.

It is important to note that although the defense of traditional philosophy by appeal to highly idealized conceptions of intuition, understanding, and our cognitive

conditions is important with respect to understanding the traditional project, it does leave open two central questions concerning actual practice:

- (i) If intuition is idealized and not infallibly accessible in consciousness, how do we know when we have a real intuition from something that is like an intuition?
- (ii) If philosophical appeals to intuition are ratified in ideal cognitive conditions, how should philosophical research proceed in non-ideal cognitive conditions?

Third, in discussing philosophical intuitions and appeals to intuition in philosophy it is important to recognize that the appeal to intuitions as evidence is not something peculiar to philosophy. Intuition is common in both linguistics and mathematics. As a consequence, it is necessary to inquire into whether philosophical intuitions are different from or similar to either linguistic or mathematical intuitions. All of the following questions are relevant. Is the practice of appealing to intuition in philosophy drastically different from the practice of appealing to intuition in linguistics and mathematics? Are appeals to intuition justified in linguistics and mathematics, but not in philosophy? How do we individuate ‘intuition’ talk? Do the instability results from Swain et al. (2008) apply to linguistics and mathematics as well as every other domain in which intuitions are appealed to?

Without answering these questions definitively, I want to present some considerations that bear on them. Especially on the question of how to individuate talk of ‘intuition’. In particular, I want to discuss the attempt to isolate intuition in philosophy from intuition in linguistics and mathematics. Consider the following. ‘First National Bank’ and ‘The Colorado Riverbank’ have ‘bank’ in common, but most competent speakers of English would tell you that you could know a whole lot about one without knowing much about the other. More importantly, a deep investigation into what causes, sustains, and enables flourishing for the first type of bank has little or nothing to do with what causes, sustains, and enables the second type of bank to exist. The former concerns economics, the later geology.

Likewise, concerning intuition, one might try to make a “no company” argument. In a *no company* argument one argues that something that looks like it belongs in the *company* of others, whether that company is good or bad, because of certain similar features, in fact does not belong there. In the present case, one would argue that it is true that ‘linguistic intuition’, ‘mathematical intuition’, ‘philosophical intuition’, ‘the practice of appealing to intuition in linguistics’, ‘the practice of appealing to intuition in mathematics’, and ‘the practice of appealing to intuition in philosophy’ all have ‘intuition’ in common, but that we should not think that there is anything deep to that commonality. Moreover, the similarity is just like the case of ‘bank’. The point being that philosophical intuition is not really in the company of mathematical and linguistic intuition.

Does this move work? There are two ways it can be applied: on the one hand it can be applied to the external practice of appealing to intuitions, and on the other it can be applied to the internal mental state. Although there are differences in the practice of appealing to intuition, there is also a common core in the practice. In each of these disciplines participants do appeal to intuitions about cases as evidence for something

(i.e., grammaticality, truth of an axiom, truth of an analysis). Thus as a way of exploring a no company argument, I will be exploring the move as applied to the internal mental state.

However, even when the move is applied to the internal mental state there is still a problem. Unlike the bank case there is an important common property between the cases of intuition drawn above at the internal level. The property is the phenomenological property of representing their contents as true independently of perception and introspection. In all of the cases 'intuition' seems to be marking a phenomenological property, regardless of whatever else it may be marking; 'bank' in 'First National Bank' and 'The Colorado riverbank' do not share any interesting metaphysical properties.

Nevertheless, the no company argument might be pushed through by way of a different analogy. Perhaps it is a mistake to start the no company argument with the 'bank' case. What is really needed is the case of the gem Jade. Recall that 'Jade' used to refer to two superficially similar substances Jadeite and Nephrite until scientists discovered 'Jade' actually classified two substances with different chemical structures. After the discovery of the two substances classified by 'Jade', 'Jade' was taken to only refer to Jadeite and the term 'Nephrite' was introduced for the distinct substance. In this case we still say that there is an important physical property that the two share: how they look. However, we differentiate them, and may even value them differently because of a more important property that we care about: their fundamental chemical structure. Perhaps 'intuition' in 'linguistic intuition', 'mathematical intuition', and 'philosophical intuition' is the same. All three share an important phenomenological property. However, they do not all have the same kind of process underwriting their outputs. Perhaps philosophical intuition does not belong in the company of mathematical and linguistic intuition because of a difference at the level of underlying process.

From an evolutionary perspective it would be of great advantage to humans to have reliable linguistic and mathematical intuitions. The former facilitate language acquisition, which is useful for social interaction. The latter facilitate calculating distance in hunting, construction of dwellings, and resource distribution. Along these lines one might question whether we would have developed any need for philosophical intuition. Do intuitions about knowledge and freewill confer any advantage?

In the other direction, the view that philosophical intuitions are really different from the other two kinds can be deflated through assimilation. It is not clear that philosophical intuitions, when we start looking at cases, do not just boil down to mathematical and linguistic intuitions. For example, philosophical intuitions about Leibniz's Law could be assimilated to mathematical intuition. What is the difference between Leibniz's Law and the geometric claim that any line parallel to a given line is not perpendicular to it in Euclidean space? And in more advanced cases intuitions about composition, identity, and mereology might just be extensions of mathematical intuitions. If mathematical intuitions are reliable then intuitions in philosophy that are mathematical in nature should be also.

What about linguistic intuitions? Typically linguistic intuitions divide up into three sub-classes: grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic. The claim that evolution would have favored reliable linguistic intuitions is primarily about grammatical intuitions, and not about semantic or pragmatic intuitions. For the most part philosophical intuitions are not grammatical intuitions, but some could be said to be semantic intuitions. However, if some philosophical intuitions were semantic intuitions, then their reliability would depend on the general reliability of semantic intuitions. Semantic intuitions are not innate, and so their epistemic value would be a function of some kind of learning.

Closing of the first point of discussion it is important in thinking about philosophical intuition to determine whether it belongs in the company of linguistic and mathematical intuition, and whether being in the company of those makes philosophical intuition more respectable or more problematic.

Moving to the disagreement over the scope of traditional and experimental methods. Here are two theses that capture a moderate position between traditional and experimental approaches that dispels the illusion that the two positions are in complete conflict:

*Domain variation:* in some domains of philosophy empirical research and experimental philosophy itself are of central importance to providing data that informs an evidentially adequate philosophical theory for the domain.

*Armchair Aid:* connecting empirical research and experimental philosophy to philosophical questions often requires good armchair reasoning and intuition.

Domain variation is important for understanding where the traditional program and the experimental program are most plausible. Areas such as philosophical logic, formal logic, set-theoretic metaphysics concerning part-hood, etc. appear to be driven by theoretical considerations that require a high degree of reflection and knowledge about the domain in question. In cases like these, although empirical results are relevant and should not be dismissed, they would appear not to be as relevant as the theoretical considerations that go into constructing a theory in the domain. These areas in many cases may not map neatly into anything the folk are interested in or have important intuitions about. And in some cases, such as formal logic, it may be fallacious (i.e., the Psychologism complaint) to build a theory of formal logic by considering what inferences people engage in and do not engage in.

By contrast, topics of philosophy like freewill, moral responsibility, knowledge, justification, and intentional action are areas in which what the folk think matters, and where empirical research from psychology and other disciplines would seem to be central to building theories that actually pertain to the human condition. Put another way, the point is simply that not everything that goes by “philosophy” is the same with respect to empirical research. The moderate position takes this as its starting point, and attempts to find interesting ways in which empirical research bears on philosophical issues as a way of building theories that are overall epistemically better.

The moderate position also endorses armchair philosophy. But the armchair philosophy that the moderate position endorses is not tied to either the classical or contemporary use of 'armchair'. On the classical use, 'armchair' is synonymous with 'a priori'; Jackson (1998) develops armchair philosophy with respect to conceptual analysis in this sense. On the contemporary use, 'armchair' has been argued to be better captured by the notion of 'non-experimental', and with reasoning being neither wholly a priori nor wholly a posteriori; Williamson (2008) develops this view with respect to philosophical methodology.

The 'armchair' used in the moderate position takes from both the classical and the contemporary use. Like the contemporary use, 'armchair' generally means non-experimental; however, like the classical use it acknowledges that sometimes the reasoning is wholly a priori, rather than a mixture of a posteriori and a priori reasoning. Let me draw this out by contrasting to kinds of armchair activities the moderate program endorses.

In the style of classical armchair reasoning one might create a thought experiment or a set of scenarios to test whether a conditional is true. Let the conditional be: if *s* knows that *P*, then *P* is true. In reasoning about this conditional, one is as careful as possible to employ only the semantic aspects of the concepts involved, and not pragmatic effects. One may judge after a series of considered scenarios that no thought experiment one could come up with would show the conditional to be false. One's judgment is based on an inductive argument. That argument can be evaluated for cogency and strength. One's reasoning here possesses a priori warrant, whether or not the overall inductive argument is good. One could then use the results to evaluate empirical data. In particular to evaluate whether a subject's reported intuition reveals comprehension of a question about the concept of knowledge.

In the style of experimental armchair reasoning one reasons in the armchair, prior to running a survey experiment, about any of the following: whether a certain effect will occur on a population, how to improve experimental design in the survey, and whether the experiment will be philosophically significant. In experimental armchair reasoning one consults not only their intuitions about the case in question, but also their intuitions about the populations' intuitions given an empirically backed theory about cognitive styles.

For example, in one kind of case I may wonder if East Asians and Westerners have different intuitions about Kripke's thesis concerning biological origin essentialism. I may wonder prior to running my experiment if the empirically backed theory that categorizes East Asian and Western cognitive styles predicts this result for this domain. In reasoning in my armchair about whether this result would come up I consult my empirically backed intuitions about other people's intuitions about biological origin essentialism, given a theory about variations in cognitive styles. My armchair reasoning here is a posteriori.

In another kind of case, I may consult my intuitions about how subjects might interpret a question given their cognitive style, and whether how they might interpret the question might require that other questions be present in the survey in order to check whether the subject actually comprehended the initial question in the

manner intended. In such a case my armchair intuitions about how to improve an experimental design are a posteriori.

Both kinds of armchair activity are important in philosophy. In the first case the intuitions are about concept application, and in the latter case the intuitions are about whether or not others will have certain intuitions or reactions. Each kind of intuition is appropriate given a specified problem in a domain. Sometimes classical armchair activity is needed in order for us to understand what we are looking for. There are limits to what survey's can tell us.

For example, we might be willing to look at a population and say, "yes this population understood what we were asking them via these probes in this experiment about knowledge, and they think that a proposition can be both known and false." By contrast, what would we say about a population that holds that a proposition can be known while at the same time maintaining that knowledge of a proposition has nothing to do with the epistemic status of the individual relative to others that merely believe the proposition with no justification (i.e., whether or not knowers and believers without justification are epistemic peers or of equal epistemic standing with respect to the proposition in question)?

Moreover, in so far as population A and B share concept C there is only so much variation in intuitions that can be tolerated before we must say that the two populations have different concepts. The central point is that even within the range of experimental studies there is a limit as to what we can discover. The boundary between what we can discover experimentally and what we cannot is partially determined by our intuitions about what counts as 'comprehending the question', 'possessing the same concept', and what is rational for one to hold. And some of the views we have on these matters will be a priori, and some of our judgments about what we can learn about a particular concept will be a priori. However, this does not eliminate the possibility of discovering interesting patterns of variance and invariance across groups given a concept.

Given the moderate position, I *suspect* that traditionalists and experimentalists may actually be in agreement over two points.

Traditionalists ought to concede that empirical research is relevant to many domains of philosophy, without being relevant to all domains and without being all that is relevant, additionally they ought to concede that experimental philosophy can serve as a good mechanism for checking the intuitions of philosophers against the folk. In fact, it may even be the case that experimental analysis is continuous with conceptual analysis under the traditional program, and only differs from it in terms of the number of people involved and the manner in which data is generated and analyzed.<sup>12</sup> On the other side, some experimental philosophers should concede that classical armchair reasoning is crucial to conducting experimental philosophy. In particular, in helping to make decisions about what data amounts to variation under a single concept vs. no variation because of the presence of distinct concepts. And, that experimental philosophy may have far less bearing on, for example, issues in the philosophy of logic or formal logic than it does on moral philosophy.



## 5. Intuition vs. Intuitive

In the literature on intuition there are two phrases that are often treated as if they are interchangeable:

- (i) S has the intuition that P.
- (ii) P is intuitive to S.

The aim of this section is to draw a distinction between these two phrases. It will be useful here to engage in a bit of analysis to do this. Consider the following conditionals:

- (iii) S has the intuition that P only if P is intuitive to S.
- (iv) P is intuitive to S only if S has the intuition that P.

It is appropriate to interchange (i) and (ii) if and only if (iii) and (iv) are true. It is possible for a theorist to stipulate in constructing a theory of intuition that (iii) and (iv) are true, but that would miss the point of paying attention to how (i) and (ii) naturally differ in certain contexts of use. It is this natural difference that I wish to draw attention to.

The phrase to be careful with is (ii). It is important to set aside two distinct uses of (ii). On the *evidential* use, (ii) is used in a manner under which (iv) is true. On the *phenomenal* use of (ii), (iv) need not be true. Let me characterize the phenomenal use of intuitive by turning to comparative claims involving the property of *being intuitive*.

The property of *being intuitive* comes in degrees. One can appropriately say, “P is more intuitive than Q,” such as in a claim that one proof of the invalidity of an argument is more intuitive than another. Teachers of critical thinking know this well. For example, some students find arithmetical counter-models of invalidity more intuitive than Venn diagram proofs. Consider the III form syllogism: Some A are B. Some B are C. So, Some A are C. While both a Venn diagram and an arithmetical counter-model show III form syllogisms to be invalid, the following arithmetical counter-model is more intuitive than a Venn Diagram: Some even numbers are whole numbers. Some whole numbers are odd numbers. So, some even numbers are odd numbers.

When we use the phrase ‘P is intuitive to S’ we need to be careful to distinguish between the sense in which it means the same as what is said by (i) in the evidential sense, and the sense in which we are making a comment on *how easy it is to comprehend the proposition, entertain it, or reflect on it*. For example, Nahmias et al. (2006) argue against the claim that incompatibilism is more intuitive than compatibilism by presenting empirical data which shows that subjects are willing to ascribe moral responsibility to individuals in a deterministic world. It is important to note here how ‘intuitive’ is being used. In order for the argument to carry through, the following must hold: if more people have the intuition that P than not-P, then P is more intuitive than not-P. The conditional does capture a use of ‘intuitive’. Nevertheless, we should distinguish this sense of ‘intuitive’ from the sense discussed above.

On the earlier notion of ‘intuitive’ what is important is the ease of which something is understood, and reflected upon. It is possible that these two notions come apart. It is possible that incompatibilism is easier to understand than compatibilism, but after consideration of some cases and relevant details the folk have the intuition that incompatibilism is true. In general, the fact that many people find P intuitive initially but are easily brought around to see that not-P is intuitive does not show that P is not intuitive. The two senses need to be distinguished. From the set  $\{P, \neg P\}$  a subject can find P more intuitive because it is initially easier to understand. However, after consideration of some simple cases, they can be brought to have the intuition that not-P. What this shows is that either the intuitiveness of P is not strong or that intervening factors, such as affect, may guide one to have the opposite intuition.

It is also important to note two further things about the term ‘intuitive’. First, the claim ‘P is more intuitive than Q with respect to showing R’, when true, does not entail ‘P is greater evidence for R than Q’. Borrowing again from logic, one might say that Henkin’s proof of the completeness of predicate logic is more intuitive than Gödel’s proof. Or taking our earlier example, that an arithmetical counter-model is a more intuitive proof of the invalidity of III form syllogisms than a Venn diagram. In making these claim one need not maintain that the evidential value of either proof is greater. Henkin’s proof is not of greater evidential value than Gödel’s proof. The label ‘more intuitive’ can appropriately be used to designate understandability, and not evidential weight.

Second, the claim ‘P is more intuitive than Q’ is usually relative to a class of thinkers. Perhaps some claims are intuitive to everyone within a culture, but in general it is necessary to take note of the fact that ‘intuitive’ is relative to a group. For example, some results in theoretical economics are probably very intuitive to working economists, while being completely non-intuitive or counter-intuitive to the folk. Again the claim that there are different sizes of infinity is intuitive to most mathematicians that have seen Cantor’s diagonalization proof, but not to those that simply understand an infinite set as not finite. When one claims that ‘P is more intuitive than Q’ it is important to ask: to which group? Work in experimental philosophy has been extremely useful in elucidating this point.

In the context of the current debate this is important because of the following. If the claim is ‘P is more intuitive than Q for group G’, then evidence showing that ‘Q is more intuitive than P for group H’ does not refute the prior claim. The evidence may bear on a larger issue about the intuitiveness of P and Q, but it does not refute the claim that P is more intuitive than Q for group G.

Returning to our conditionals (iii) and (iv), we can illustrate them differently, and evaluate them, by using the operational definition of ‘intuition’ by empirical researchers making claims about intuition. Empirical researchers, from a behaviorist standpoint, take intuition to be the response an individual gives to a question. As I see it, this is in effect to make the transparency assumption, and maintain that there is no distinction between having an intuition that P, and having the belief

that P. Consider (v), which is a variant of (iv) constructed by substituting ‘believes’ for ‘has the intuition that’:

(v) P is intuitive to S only if S believes that P.

If (iv) means the same as (v), and (v) is false on a reading where ‘intuitive’ means easily understood or accepted, then (iv) is false on the same reading. Consider Sosa’s (1998) discussion of the propositions that constitute a paradox. In that case each of the propositions is intuitive. But upon providing a solution to the paradox one must minimally believe the negation of one of the propositions that generate the paradox. In such a case P is intuitive to S, even though it is false that S believes that P. So, (iv) is false on some readings of ‘intuitive’ that are natural.

In this section I have attempted to draw a distinction between two uses of ‘intuitive’. On my reading of the literature on intuition, I think that at times philosophers pass between these two uses of ‘intuitive’. Sometimes passing between these two uses is harmless; at others it is not harmless. It is better to keep in mind the distinction between these two uses.

## **6. Evaluating the Experimentalist Challenge**

The experimentalist challenge to traditional philosophy can be broken down into two distinct kinds of data:

- (i) Data pertaining to cultural variation (see Weinberg et al., 2001).
- (ii) Data pertaining to the stability of intuition (see Swain et al., 2008).

These two sets of data pose distinct problems. One could have a solution or response to one of these sets of data without having a response to the other set of data. For example, data pertaining to cross cultural variation does not show that traditional methods of doing philosophy are impossible; rather the data only constrains or brings into question the normative scope of the conclusions reached through traditional methods. If East Asians and Westerners have different intuitions about knowledge, it does not follow that traditional methods of investigating the Western conception of knowledge via intuitions of Westerners is fundamentally flawed. What follows is that something more is required for the conclusions reached in the West concerning knowledge to apply cross-culturally, and that investigation of theories or concepts is restricted to groups. Sosa (2008) points out that it is possible to react to the data from cross-cultural variation by maintaining that possibly there is a disagreement in questions, and not a disagreement in answers. The populations may be interpreting the questions differently and thus responding with answers to different questions. On this line of response, one could argue as follows:

- (1) Population A and B have different intuitions about C’s application only if they share concept C.
- (2) However, if A and B share C, and are in ideal cognitive conditions, then their intuitions should be the same.

- (3) So, if A and B have different intuitions, then either they don't have the same concept, or some performance error has occurred for one of the groups.

This presents a dilemma for survey results, and is a possible response one could take to the data from cultural variation. I do not endorse this argument, because I take it to be possible for two populations to share a concept and yet not have the same intuitions about its application. My reasons however do not stem from any complete view of how this can come about. However, there is at least one plausible way to deny the argument above. This route is based on arguments that go in favor of content externalism or anti-individualism. If one adopts a suitable version of content externalism or anti-individualism one can argue that populations A and B share concept C because of being suitably related to the relevant physical or social environmental factor E, even though population A and B have different intuitions about C's application conditions. One way this could come about is because populations A and B associate different descriptions with C, which drive their intuitions about C, even though both A and B acquired C only by interacting with E. In addition, one who denies the argument above on externalist grounds, need not be unsympathetic to a version of conceptual analysis based on Two-dimensional semantics as discussed by Jackson (1998) and Chalmers (2004).

Moreover, as I see it, while the data from cultural variation is interesting, the data does not present a severe threat to traditional methodology. Even if the scope of traditional philosophy is limited by cultural variation, the methods of traditional philosophy are not shown to be fundamentally flawed. Data pertaining to the instability of intuition from Swain et al. (2008), and the problem of the hopelessness of intuition discussed by Weinberg (2007), by contrast, are more threatening to the traditionalist methodology than the possibility of cultural variation because, if sound, it would show that there is a fundamental problem with appeals to intuition which cannot be solved.

How might a traditionalist respond to the data pertaining to instability? Without giving an exhaustive list of responses, I will sketch some plausible responses. There appear to be at least two moves a direct response can take. First, one could adopt the *adequacy* response and question the studies themselves. On this approach, one would argue that the studies are not conclusive because they either employ an unsound methodology or that the data fails to support the conclusion. Second, one could adopt the *expertise* response and question whether the results of the surveys are relevant to the reliability of philosophical intuition.

There are two ways the adequacy approach can be carried out. On the *skeptical* version of the adequacy approach the traditionalist argues that the surveys are fundamentally flawed because they cannot reliably get at the mental state that is under study. One version of this simply maintains that intuitions are not beliefs, and since studies do not distinguish between these two things we never know whether a response is a reliable report of the target mental state we are testing for. Although the skeptical version of the adequacy response has some initial force, it is ineffective in the current dialectical space for two reasons. First, it faces a dilemma. Either intuition

can be distinguished from belief or it fundamentally cannot. On the later horn the problem is that if intuition cannot be distinguished from belief, then not only would experimental data be irrelevant but also appeals to intuition would be impossible, since no one could maintain that their appeal was an appeal to an intuition rather than a belief. On the former horn, the problem is that no reason has been given for why if there is a distinction between the two, experimental methods cannot reliably get at intuition.

Second, it is far more important to simply find experimental ways of improving surveys with better design, than to lay down a flat-footed objection that blunts progress in experimental design. It is true that we can never know with certainty what subjects are doing, but from that it doesn't follow that there aren't better ways of conducting and designing experiments so as to get data that is valuable.

The *constructive* version of the adequacy approach embraces the failure of the skeptical version. It aims at providing more experimental work that aids the evaluation of earlier experiments. Along this route two recent experimental studies have been extremely useful in evaluating some of the experimental results, and helping to shape how future experiments should be conducted.

Pinillos, Smith, Nair, Marchetto, and Mun (unpublished manuscript) argue in "Philosophy's new challenge: Experiments and intentional action" that reflection on cases reduces the Knobe effect. When subjects are sorted according to scores on the cognitive reflection test, those that score high are less likely to have asymmetric judgments about intentional action in the help and harm scenarios. Experiments such as this suggest that adding cognitive reflection tests or need for high cognition tests to experimental surveys can help us discover which intuitions are dependent on a subject's capacity to engage in extended reflection, and whether those that are reflective are less likely to have unstable intuitions.

Jen Wright (unpublished manuscript), in "The stability of intuitions: A matter of confidence?," replicated the ordering/anchoring effect found by Swain et al. (2008) for the Truetemp Charles and Fake Barn Suzy cases—people's knowledge attributions varied as a function of what case preceded them. She also found, just as with Swain et al. (2008) study, that people's knowledge attributions were stable across conditions for both the Coinflip Dave (not-knowledge) and Testimony Karen (knowledge) cases. Importantly, however, Wright found that participants' reported confidence in their attributions tracked this stability—they were significantly more confident of their judgments in the Dave and Karen cases than in the Charles and Suzy cases, regardless of when in the series they were presented. Her results suggest two things. First, that there may be a way to track the stability of some intuitions. Second, that confidence checks should be added in experimental design, and that confidence checks can be used to ascertain whether we ought to trust the intuitions of subjects involved. Low confidence in one's intuitions would, all else being equal, suggest that we might want to disregard the subject's intuition as reflecting anything significant.

On the *expertise* response a traditionalist responds to Swain et al. (2008) by conceding that surveys of folk intuitions produce interesting results, but that these do not bear on the practice philosophers have of appealing to intuition, since what

matters about philosophical intuitions is that they are the intuitions of experts. Even if the following analogy isn't exact, the basic story is the following.

Just as physicists don't appeal to the judgments of the folk, philosophers don't need to take folk judgments into consideration. Although folk physics is interesting, judgments in that domain do not control the development of physical theories. Likewise one argues that just as folk theories of intentional action and knowledge are interesting, folk judgments do not control the development of the theories for those domains.

Along this line one aims to establish that expert intuitions do not suffer from the kinds of problems that surveys of folk intuitions reveal. Expert philosophers are like expert physicists. Of course the claim that intuitions of philosophers do not suffer from the kinds of problems that the data from the folk reveal is an empirical claim that should be tested.<sup>13</sup> But perhaps data, such as from Pinillos, Smith, Nair, Marchetto, and Mun (unpublished manuscript), are suggestive of the claim that philosophers are more reflective, and thus less likely to make certain kinds of mistakes. Even though there is yet no empirical data on the expertise of philosophers, Weinberg, Gonnerman, Buckner, and Alexander (this issue) have argued that there are severe roadblocks to the attempt to ground the evidential force of appeals to intuition in philosophy through the claim that philosophers possess some kind of expertise. In their work they discuss three ways in which philosophers might possess a certain kind of expertise: conceptual schemata, superior theories, and cognitive skill.

Because of limitations of space I cannot offer an extended discussion of their arguments. Instead, I will briefly sketch a cognitive skill that pertains to how the intuitions of philosophers are different from the folk. This account can be empirically tested. As I see it one question in this area is: what does expertise amount to, such that if philosophers are experts in this way the evidential quality of the intuitions of philosophers would be different from those of the folk? The account I will discuss is called *relevance-deviance tracking*.

With respect to intuitions generated from thought experiments it is possible that philosophical training helps one acquire the ability to track extensions of thought experiments that are consistent and inconsistent, relevant to or deviant from the thought experiment that initially generated the intuition. For example, Gettier's thought experiment is a small fictional story. As discussed by Williamson (2008) and Ichikawa and Jarvis (2009), there are many ways in which Gettier's small fictional story can be filled out. Some of those ways are ways that are inconsistent with the Gettier intuition, or would be cases in which one would not have the Gettier intuition. And others are ways that are consistent with the initial story. One thing philosophical training provides one with is the ability to distinguish between extensions of a thought experiment that are consistent with an initial thought experiment from those that are not. This ability allows one to realize when one extension of a thought experiment undermines one's initial intuition about a case. As a way of filling out this account it is useful to distinguish between two kinds of thought experiments.

On the one hand, there are thought experiments that can be made *complete* by adding further elements to the initial story that would make it the case that any further additions would be incapable of undermining the initial intuition generated. Thought experiments such as these are ones for which it is possible to make the intuition they generate stable or rigid. Examples of thought experiments in this class, I suspect, would be Gettier's case against the tripartite analysis of knowledge, and Frankfurt's case against the principle of alternate possibilities with respect to moral responsibility. In both of these cases it is likely that by adding in additional elements to the initial fictional story one can make a complete version that stabilizes the initial Gettier intuition and the initial Frankfurt intuition across further embeddings.

On the other hand, there are thought experiments which although not essentially incomplete, involve numerous complex factors which make them virtually impossible to make complete in a way that would insure that the intuition generated from it would be preserved if any further additions were made. Examples of thought experiments in this class, I suspect, would generally be in the domain of ethics, but not necessarily only in ethics.

With respect to evidential quality it may be the case that, for thought experiments that can be made complete, if a complete version were presented to both experts and non-experts, the quality of intuitions would be the same. That is when both experts and non-experts are attentively reading the complete fiction, understand what is being presented, and are focusing only on what is relevant, their intuitions will be the same. However, I hypothesize that when experts and non-experts are presented with an initial thought experiment and then an extension of it and asked whether the extension is consistent with the initial intuition, experts will do better than non-experts. That is, philosophical training provides one with the ability to discern what is relevant in a given extension of a thought experiment in a manner where one can assess consistency.

If philosophers had this skill, the epistemic advantage of their intuitions would be their ability to track consistency across extensions of basic thought experiments and understand when an intuition is likely to change given the addition of some feature. This would mean that their intuitions across extensions of a thought experiment have a higher evidential quality because they derive from the application of a skill that allows them to track when an extension of a thought experiment is consistent with or deviates from the initial intuition. Nevertheless, it must be noted that this account would not address the question of why their initial intuitions are better than non-experts. The primary aim of this account is to provide a picture of a relevant cognitive skill that philosophical training could impart in several cases.

## **7. Conclusion**

In this paper I have discussed some issues in the contemporary debate on philosophical methodology. I have advocated a moderate position, which borrows from both traditional and experimental philosophy.

I believe that the return to questions of methodology sparked by experimental philosophy is positive growth for philosophy. From my perspective much of the work in experimental philosophy can be characterized in terms of a reaction to a picture (not necessarily a complete picture) of the past 40 years of analytic philosophy. Post-Kripke's work on modality, much of analytic philosophy concerned itself with possible worlds, and thought experiments. One reaction to this is to refocus attention from that which is possible or merely possible on to what is actual. The experimental methods of experimental philosophy lock philosophy back into the actual world, and away from merely possible hypotheses. Experimental methods help philosophers countercheck their intuitions about scenarios with what the folk think.

Perhaps the way forward in philosophy is to embrace experimental methods as one more tool in the philosopher's toolbox, just as logic and the philosophy of language were embraced in the early part of the 20th century as a key tool in many areas of philosophy. It would be fruitful to improve the experimental tool kit, and to understand where and when its use in philosophy is appropriate.

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### Notes

- [1] I would like to make two clarifications about this remark. First, it is important to point out that prior to the period I am talking about, and in the period I am talking about, important work in philosophical methodology has been done by George Bealer. See the papers listed in this bibliography for a representative sample (Bealer, 1987, 1992, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002). Additionally, it is important to point out that DePaul and Ramsey (1998) collected together several works investigating intuition and philosophical methodology that predate experimental philosophy. Second, there are three exceptions to my remark here about sources of the return to philosophical methodology, which are Frank Jackson's (1998) *From metaphysics to ethics: A defense of conceptual analysis*, David Chalmers' (2004) work in "Epistemic two-dimensional semantics" as a way of grounding conceivability and the possibility of conceptual analysis, and Timothy Williamson's (2008) book *The philosophy of philosophy*. All three works engage in a direct way with the work of Ayer, Burge, Carnap, Frege, Kaplan, Kripke, Putnam, Quine, Russell, and others whose work on logic and language shaped philosophical methodology. All three philosophers have made important contributions to philosophical methodology that have led to the development of many new discussions.
- [2] See Weinberg et al. (2001) for discussion of this point relative to analytic epistemology.



- [3] For example, Edmund Husserl is a non-analytic philosopher who maintains that intuition is a source of justification.
- [4] I distinguish between concepts, theories, and phenomena since philosophers do not agree on what intuition is evidence for. Some may hold that they are evidence for theories and inputs into reflective equilibrium, but not evidence for necessary and sufficient conditions for concepts. Others may maintain that they are only evidence for the conditions for concept application, but not for theories or phenomena. Finally, some may maintain that intuitions are not evidence for what our concepts mean, but rather for phenomena in the world.
- [5] See Kornblith (1998) for discussion of the proper target of philosophy. According to his account philosophers should not be attempting to analyze concepts, rather they should be aiming at the phenomenon in the world. So, for example the concept of knowledge is not of central importance, rather the phenomenon of knowledge is of central importance.
- [6] See Jackson (1998) for extensive discussion of conceptual analysis, its a priori foundation, and its role in metaphysics. The account I discuss here is not Jackson's.
- [7] Strong conceptual analysis almost seems to be a false position for anyone to attack. The primary reason is that probably no one maintains that strong conceptual analysis holds for every concept. A priori conditional analysis seems to be a far more plausible project, and an appropriate target. In this project one is only looking to establish interesting conditionals linking concepts. For example, Frankfurt's (PAP) "x is morally responsible only if x could have done otherwise" is not a complete analysis of moral responsibility; however, it is an interesting conditional expressing a link between moral responsibility and freedom.
- [8] I would like to thank Eli Chudnoff for discussion of this distinction.
- [9] Although I have here classified Weinberg et al. (2001) as holding a non-doxastic account, I have done so on the basis of a conversation with Weinberg, in which he stresses that there is no commitment in their view to a doxastic account, and more importantly that Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich do not see the distinction between doxastic and non-doxastic accounts as central to the value of the evidence they have provided against intuition driven romanticism. Nevertheless, I find it difficult to classify their account on along the lines of this distinction. Indeed, a predecessor of this paper presented at "Armchair in Flames" in Cologne, Germany was titled "On the central theoretical posit of experimental philosophy." The argument of that paper was that experimental philosophers ought to provide a comprehensive account of intuition, given that it is one of the central objects of their study. At present the issue can be illustrated by the following. If intuitions are seemings, then one can take a non-doxastic account and maintain that they are appearances or an intellectual kind. However, if one maintains that they are spontaneous judgments it would appear that one would have to take a doxastic account, since 'judgment' typically lines up with doxastic. For the purposes of this paper I present Weinberg et al. (2001) as offering a non-doxastic account. Hopefully future discussion will clear up this issue.
- [10] Although Bealer maintains that in the NCA case one can believe that NCA is false, and yet have the intuition that it is true, I have doubts about how to correctly understand this claim. For example, Bealer maintains that the case is similar to the case in which a subject is looking at the lines of a Muller-Lyer diagram. However, there is at least one significant property that distinguishes the two cases. In the Muller-Lyer case the perceptual seeming of the lines being of different lengths is cognitively impenetrable. No belief or set of considerations brought to consciousness can change the content of the perceptual state. However, it appears to be the opposite in the NCA case. It seems possible that one can initially have the intuition that NCA is true, recall to consciousness the proof or problem that NCA leads to, and if they understand the problem (i.e., Russell's Paradox), then can at least momentarily lose their intuition that NCA is true. And this appears true even if, on another occasion without thinking of the proof the same subject has the intuition. The problem in Bealer's claim perhaps comes from failing to distinguish between 'intuition' and 'intuitive'. See section 4 for discussion of this distinction.

- [11] It is important to note that Tamar Gendler (2007) might be a proponent of a kind of affective model of intuition, or at least should be regarded as someone who has explored affect in intuition and thought experiments.
- [12] I would like to thank David Chalmers for bringing this point to my attention. Under one way of looking at experimental analysis we get a picture where we are doing conceptual analysis with a more controlled and systematic effort. We are testing people's intuitions at large, and we are systematically studying them through statistical analyses.
- [13] The expertise defense of traditional philosophy is best evaluated through experimental philosophy.

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