

INTRODUCTION

Intuitions

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Begin reading on practically any issue in contemporary analytic philosophy, and it will not be long before you stumble upon an overt appeal to *intuitions*. “It is truistic,” George Bealer writes, “that intuitions are *used* as evidence in our standard justificatory procedures” [Bealer (1999), p. 30]. Bealer may be right, of course, that intuitions – by which he means a *sui generis* type of defeasible seeming, distinct from belief or any inclination to believe, with a strong modal tie to the truth [ibid. p. 35] – are the experiences upon which we do and ought to rely to justify philosophical claims. But it is hardly a *truism* that those are the experiences we are having when engaged in philosophical, logical, mathematical, and other traditionally a priori thinking. Nor is it a truism that the “intuitions” that enable one to, say, “see” a geometrical or mathematical truth are the same as the “intuitions” that inform one’s gut reactions to a thought experiment in ethics or epistemology. While many would agree that intuitions are seemings, which are in turn *sui generis* mental states [Tolhurst (1998); Pust (2000); Huemer (2001), (2013); Sosa (2007); Chudnoff (2013)], many deny it [Lewis (1983); Hintikka (1999); Williamson (2007)]. Some would agree that intuitions have a strong modal tie to the truth, while others hold instead that intuitions are more like “untutored judgment[s]” which are both informed by and must give way to “substantial theoretical understanding” of an empirical kind [Kornblith (2002), p. 14].

What is in fact truistic is that a wide body of philosophers use the terms “intuition,” “intuitively,” and so on quite often, and with the intention of denoting a class of cognitive experiences which are widely, though not universally, believed to have evidential significance in philosophical thinking. The problem is, and as the articles in this volume will

make clear, there is really no consensus at all about the nature of those experiences, what they accomplish, or how they do so. Herman Cappelen (2012, Part I) has even argued that philosophers' "intuition"-talk does not, in fact, pick out any distinctive class of experiences. Nor, he argues, is there in fact any distinctive class of experiences upon which philosophers rely to evaluate thought experiments, theories, and other philosophical claims. Obviously Cappelen's arguments, as careful and extensive as they are, will not convince everyone. What they undoubtedly do expose, though, is that it is often highly doubtful that speakers and writers have anything very definite in mind when they casually appeal to their "intuitions" in philosophical contexts, and that there is a rather disturbing lack of agreement among contemporary philosophers about just what intuitions are [Hintikka (1999); Williamson (2007), p. 215; Preston (this volume)].

Intuition – *Anschauung* – also plays a dominant role within the phenomenological tradition, especially, but by no means exclusively, in the work of Edmund Husserl. Intuitive consciousness is best explained by contrasting it with signitive or empty consciousness. I can, right now, merely think about the whereabouts of my bike: it is parked outside. This act is of or about my bike, but the bike is not *present* to me. I can also go look at my bike and see that it is parked outside. The perceptual experience is an intuitive act. For Husserl, intuition is primarily this sort of "seeing consciousness" [Husserl (1999), p. 44], and the objects of intuition include not only material particulars and their features, but states of affairs, essences, and values (see Drummond, this issue). In all cases, we can contrast cases in which an object is aimed at in thought, on the one hand, and cases in which it is intuited, on the other, cases in which "we relate directly to the object, we reach it" [Levinas (1995), p. 67; also see Willard (1995)]. It should be clear that intuitions of this kind have nothing to do with hunches, knee-jerk reactions, or pretheoretical, commonsense judgments. Nor are intuitions distinguished, phenomenologically, by a distinctive feeling of forcefulness or confidence when we entertain propositions [Heffernan (1997); Kasmier (2003); Preston, (this volume)]. Nor, finally, are the intuitive acts directed upon ideal entities – a class within which all genuinely philosophical intuitions would fall – invariably concerned with relationships among our *concepts* of those ideal entities [Kasmier (2003)].

I believe the rich and insightful contributions in this volume will collectively provide a very handy overview of the existing debates and literature on intuitions, the various positions regarding what intuitions are and what they can or cannot do, how they function in specific do-

mains, such as mathematics and art, what cognitive or neural processes might plausibly underlie them, and, finally, how the “intuitions” of contemporary analytic philosophy compare with those of the phenomenological tradition.

In his article “Intuitions,” JOHN DRUMMOND compares and contrasts Husserl’s account of intuitions and their evidentiary status with those of contemporary philosophers. According to Husserl, intuitions are those acts in which the intended object is given to us in an “originary” way [p. 20]. The most fundamental form of intuition is simple perception, in which an object is optimally presented as being a certain way at or over a time to an attentive, embodied, and active perceiver [pp. 21s.]. Simple perception is not, for Husserl, propositional, though there is an “implicit distinction between the object and its type, properties, and relations” [p. 23] built into it.

All other forms of intuition share certain features with simple perception, namely their “episodic character, their clarity ... and their truthful disclosure of the thing as it is” to an attentive mind [p. 22, also p. 33] That is the primary function of reason in all of its spheres of activity – cognitive, practical, and axiological – and intuitions function in each of them as well. Among the cognitive intuitions we find conceptual intuitions and categorial intuitions. Conceptual intuitions include the intuition of empirical species, of inexact essences, and of exact essences [p. 25]. All of these intuitions are founded upon simple perception. Nevertheless, new objects are given in them, objects which are not present in perceptual intuition itself. Drummond explains that, on Husserl’s account, a species is intuited as an “identity uniting a multiplicity of similars” [p. 26], and describes the process by which the species is brought to givenness. Through imaginative variation we acquire inexact and exact essences, the latter being given as the limiting cases of inexact essences.

In categorial intuition, we “unfold” the distinction between the object and its type, properties, and relations that is implicit within perception [p. 28]. Though not the most fundamental form of intuition, the intuitively fulfilled judgment is the *preeminent* form of intuition, and it encompasses all of the cognitive intuitions mentioned above [p. 29].

In axiological intuitions, values are presented to us. This occurs through feelings or emotions, by whose means we apprehend objects as helping or hindering our projects [p. 31]. Moral intuitions are action-guiding. Through them, we apprehend a course of action as conducive or harmful to our values and commitments [p. 32]. Moral intuitions are

founded on axiological intuitions, which are in turn founded on cognitive intuitions and ultimately upon simple perception [p. 32].

Finally, Drummond contrasts Husserlian intuitions with ordinary intuitions – the intuitions appealed to so often in contemporary philosophy. Ordinary intuitions are, on Drummond’s view, “empty intended convictions” [p. 33]. They do not provide evidence for anything by themselves. What they lack is fulfillment, that is, an appropriate relation to *genuinely* intuitive acts and, via the latter, to the very objects and states of affairs that they are about.

In “Intuition in Analytic Philosophy,” AARON PRESTON contends that the concept of intuition in analytic philosophy differs from the traditional concept, and provides an explanation why. Hermann Cappelen (2012) has famously argued against what he calls the “Centrality Thesis,” according to which appealing to intuitions is a broadly shared and characteristic methodological tool among analytic philosophers. Preston considers the responses to Cappelen’s critique by two prominent philosophers, Berit Brogaard and David Chalmers. Each supports the Centrality Thesis by pointing out that philosophers routinely appeal to claims which seem obvious, which are not supported by other means, and which one can with some confidence expect other philosophers to accept. Preston, however, argues that this sheds very little light on just what intuitions are and why they confer justification on philosophical claims. He agrees with Timothy Williamson that without a more robust account of what intuitions are and why they work, the foundations of analytic philosophy appear to be in serious trouble.

Preston proposes a hypothesis, and that is that contemporary analytic philosophy has inherited from the logical positivists a kind of “institutional skepticism” [p. 44] regarding the possibility of constructive philosophical knowledge. In support of this, he contrasts the contemporary conception of intuition with the traditional “core Medieval conception” [p. 45]. For many medieval philosophers and their philosophical heirs, intuition is the immediate intellectual apprehension of extra-mental realities [Ibid.]. Preston argues that what contemporary philosophy lacks is a firm conviction in the possibility of acquiring philosophical knowledge, and a detailed account of the nature of the act of knowing. Preston turns to Husserl’s account of intentionality to fill this gap, providing a very concise summary of Husserl’s rich account of the nature and structure of intentional experiences. Most importantly, Preston presents Husserl’s account of fulfillment, in which an object is *present* to

consciousness as it was meant [p. 49]. Preston argues that the richness of Husserl's phenomenological account of consciousness in comparison with the dominant conceptions in analytic philosophy is further evidence for the predominantly skeptical attitude of analytic philosophers.

In "Intuitions, Seemings, and Phenomenology," HARALD WILTSCHÉ also argues that phenomenologists and analytic philosophers don't mean quite the same thing when discussing "intuitions." However, he argues that the phenomenologists' intuitions do bear a close resemblance to *seemings* as discussed by Michael Huemer and others. According to Wiltsche, the debate over the *nature* of intuitions among analytic philosophers today is largely between reductivism, which identifies intuitions with other cognitive states such as judgment or belief, and sui-generism. Within the phenomenological tradition, intuitive experiences also play a central role. A paradigmatic case of an intuitive act on Husserl's view is sense perception – seeing one's bike in the office, for instance. There are other acts very much like perception, and very different from merely thinking about something emptily or signitively, such as recollection and visualization. Are they intuitive as well? Wiltsche, following Husserl, argues that they are, and draws a distinction between *originary* and *reproductive* modes of intuition. What unites intuitive acts on Husserl's view is not the nature of their *objects*, but their capacity to fulfill or confirm signitive acts. This embraces a much wider class of acts than is standardly designated by the term 'intuition' among analytic philosophers. As a consequence, the phenomenological view of intuition is not easily categorized along the lines prevalent in analytic philosophy.

Regarding the epistemic role of intuitions, Wiltsche appeals to Husserl's "Principle of All Principles." For Husserl, all knowledge ultimately bottoms out in acts of intuitive fulfillment, in which something is given as it is intended [p. 65s.]. When this occurs, we have *prima facie* justification for believing that things are the way they are revealed to be in intuition. Wiltsche points out that intuitions function very similarly to seemings in Michael Huemer's Principle of Phenomenal Conservatism, according to which its seeming to S that P provides S with *prima facie* justification for believing that P. Nevertheless, Wiltsche argues that Huemer has very little positive to say about the nature of seemings, and suggests that an enriched, descriptive account of them along phenomenological lines is needed.

In “The Role of Intuition in Metaphysics,” MARÍA JOSÉ GARCÍA ENCINAS argues that metaphysical truths are modal truths, that mere knowledge of conceptual truths cannot generate knowledge of such truths, and that intuition can and does. Encinas agrees with Quine that we cannot come to know *de re* modal necessities on the basis of knowing analytic or conceptual truths. For example, we cannot conclude from the *de dicto* claim that necessarily, all bachelors are unmarried the *de re* metaphysical claim that all bachelors are necessarily unmarried. Indeed, the latter claim is false. Nor can we conclude that water is necessarily H₂O by any amount of conceptual analysis, nor any amount of conceptual analysis together with empirical information. Rather, a necessary condition of our knowing that water is necessarily H₂O is our knowing that identity is a relation that things necessarily bear towards themselves, and this is not, argues Encinas, either analytically or conceptually true.

Modal knowledge must be *a priori*, argues Encinas. This is not because modal knowledge must be certain or indefeasible. Rather, it is because no amount of empirical knowledge can inform us that something is necessarily so. Moreover, the source of modal knowledge is not conceivability – whether that is spelled out in terms of concepts, images, or any other medium. The reason, argues Encinas, is that conceivability plainly does not entail possibility. We really can, argues Encinas, conceive that water \neq H₂O and many other absurdities.

Typically these alleged counterexamples to the conceivability-possibility link are diagnosed as follows: when we take ourselves to imagine that water \neq H₂O, we are not actually conceiving of that. What we are conceiving of, rather, is the watery stuff of our environment not being H₂O. Encinas is unconvinced. She argues that we have access to metaphysical truths through intuition, which is distinct from sense experience or imagination. Intuition is a distinctive sort of immediate experience in which we become aware of something’s incapability of being otherwise [p. 89s.]. It is the experience of metaphysical necessity, the “passive power of apprehending self-evident data” [p. 90]. Moreover, intuitions are not principally concerned with, much less confined to, concepts, words, or meanings. Rather, intuition affords us knowledge of “the categories and deep modal structures *in the world*” [p. 91]. Like sense-experience, intuition is fallible. That, however, does not entail that it is incapable of apprehending modal facts. The paper ends with the enticing proposal that intuition is none other than *wit*, which the Spanish monk Baltasar Gracián regarded as the source of creativity and insight. It is

what distinguishes mere understanding from “*vigorous* understanding” [p. 19] or intellectual seeing.

In “A Defense of the Evidential-Role View of Intuitions,” JOHNNIE PEDERSEN defends the evidential value of intuitions against a recent attack by Joshua Earlenbaugh and Bernard Molyneux. Earlenbaugh and Molyneux have argued that states of intuiting are dissimilar from other basic sources of evidence, such as sense perception and memory. Their “test” for determining whether a mental state ψ is treated as basic in a community is whether we are willing to accept that P on the basis of the fact that S ψ 's that P. In the case of intuitings, the philosophical community does not. That is, we do not generally accept that P just because Jones or Smith intuits that P.

Pedersen notes that this test appears to be an idealization. A more accurate claim is that we are willing to judge that P provided not only that S ψ 's that P and ψ is a basic source of evidence, but that various possible defeaters do not obtain. More specifically, we require that (a) S's mental apparatus is functioning properly, (b) the conditions are favorable, and (c) “nothing else is amiss” [see Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009), p. 98; cited by Pedersen on p. 3]. The philosophical community's behavior is compatible with intuitings being a basic source of evidence on this “augmented test” [p. 105], since philosophers often do think that one of the defeaters obtains. Moreover, philosophers do sometimes treat the intuitions of others as evidence.

Pedersen offers another explanation for why we tend, nevertheless, not to rely on the intuitions of others very often, and it is because we very rarely need to. The reason is that the objects or contents of intuitings are available for our own immediate consideration.

Pedersen then addresses Earlenbaugh's and Molyneux's argument that intuiteds – the contents of acts of intuiting – cannot be sources of evidence. Their argument, briefly, is that the content of an intuiting is evidential just in case it is “credence-entailing” [p. 108]. Intuitions are not credence-entailing, since it is coherent to claim that one intuits that P, but places no credence in P. An example might be finding the naïve comprehension axiom intuitively plausible while fully knowing that it must be false. Pedersen, however, argues that if one finds P intuitive, one will place at least *some* credence in P; one will find P to be “prima facie plausible” [p. 110], even though one does not find it plausible all things considered. But it is coherent to claim that one finds P prima facie plausible but not plausible all things considered.

In “Physicalism’s Incompatibility with A Priori Knowledge,” MATTHEW OWEN addresses an issue distinct from but related to that of intuition, namely the justification of a priori beliefs. Owen argues, first, that in many cases of a priori knowledge arrived at through reasoning, logical laws themselves “play a meaningful role in the production of” our beliefs [p. 126]. Any view which denies that such laws can play such a role, he argues, is incompatible with the existence of a priori knowledge [Ibid.]. If physicalism is correct, however, every mental state and occurrence is brought about by exclusively physical causes. This is widely thought to spell trouble for mental causation, provided mental states are not identical with physical states. Logical laws, however, are also non-physical, and so should not be able to play any causal role in the production of knowledge. But, argues Owen, such laws do and must if our a priori beliefs are to be appropriately justified. And even if there were a solution to the problem of mental causation, that would leave the problem of the causal role of non-physical concepts and principles in our mental lives unsolved. Owen argues that two sophisticated versions of physicalism, realizer functionalism and type eliminativism, are incapable of explaining how logical laws play any significant role in our mental lives.

In his paper “Don’t Believe the Hype: Why Should Philosophical Theories Yield to Intuitions?,” MOTI MIZRAHI evaluates the commonly held view that in certain cases, counterexamples alone are sufficient to refute a philosophical theory. For instance, Gettier-style counterexamples to the definition of knowledge as justified true belief are often taken to refute that theory. Mizrahi argues that counterexamples alone are not sufficient to refute any philosophical theory, however. Rather, they can only refute a theory in conjunction with the claim that intuitive judgments about hypothetical cases constitute good evidence [pp. 142-3]. Mizrahi draws on confirmation holism to support his case. According to confirmation holism, we cannot test isolated propositions that compose a science, but only scientific theories as wholes. When a theory T predicts that P, and P is false, all we can conclude is that at least one of the propositions that compose T is false, but cannot determine which one. Mizrahi applies this lesson to philosophical methods, arguing that in the face of an alleged counterexample to a philosophical theory, it only follows that either (a) the theory in question is false or (b) producing counterexamples based on intuitive judgments is not a good method for evaluating the theory in question. For instance, from Gettier counterexamples to the

definition of knowledge as true justified belief, we are only entitled to conclude that either knowledge is not true justified belief, or that the method we employ when considering Gettier cases is not reliable. Furthermore, argues Mizrahi, there are reasons to think that our intuitive judgments are not reliable.

In “Experimental Philosophy and Intuitions on What is Art,” ANNELIES MONSERÉ takes up the issue of the role of intuition in determining what does and does not qualify as art and in framing an acceptable definition of art. Many experimental philosophers have argued that here, as in other fields, philosophical intuitions are incapable of justifying claims about what is and is not art, and Monseré agrees. Nevertheless, she argues, experimental research is also inadequate.

Traditional armchair philosophy relies upon *intuitions* as sources of evidence for philosophical claims, principles, and descriptive analyses of important concepts. Experimental philosophers insist that this is not a legitimate method. Some experimental philosophers endorse a “positive program” [p. 160], whose goal is to evaluate and correct philosophical conceptual analyses by appealing to experimental data. Other experimental philosophers, however, pursue a negative program. According to the “restrictionist challenge” [p. 163], not only do philosophers’ intuitions frequently differ from folk intuitions, but there are very few cases in which we can find appreciable uniformity among philosophers, or among the folk, themselves. On this view, experimental data is valuable in criticizing philosophical definitions, but not in confirming them.

When it comes to art, or the concept thereof, Monseré provides ample evidence (Section II) that most philosophical definitions are supported by philosophical intuitions, and are therefore “suitable target[s] for the attacks of experimental philosophers” [p. 167]. She then considers how well the positive program of experimental philosophy can contribute to an analysis of the concept of art. Monseré provides an extensive discussion of the research of Richard Kamber. Kamber’s research reveals that the cases that generate disagreement among art professionals also generate disagreement among ordinary subjects. Monseré, however, takes issue with his suggestion that experimental data are valuable in resolving disputes about hard cases. A good descriptive theory of intuitions about what is art should not discount minority views or intuitions, but provide an explanation of why the views or intuitions are embraced by only a minority. And we cannot appeal to a theory to settle whose intuitions are correct and whose are incorrect, since if we had

such a theory, appeals to intuitions would be superfluous. The criticism of the negative program of experimental philosophy against traditional reliance upon intuitions holds, argues Monseré, against the positive program of experimental philosophy as well. Neither is equipped to tell us why we should rely upon some intuitions rather than others.

Monseré's conclusion, however, is not entirely negative. While intuitions, whether gathered from one's own armchair reflections or statistical surveys, are not adequate for supporting descriptive definitions of art, there may be other models of conceptual analysis, including normative models, according to which intuitions may make a positive contribution.

In "A Phenomenological Approach to the Intuitive Aspect of Mathematical Practice," ALEXANDRA VAN-QUYNH approaches the role of intuition in mathematics empirically by consulting actual mathematicians regarding their actual practices. Among the striking results of her research is the consensus among her research subjects that mathematical discovery is very rarely, if ever, the result of deducing that result from known premises; it is not a "linear process." Far more often, a solution to a problem simply becomes clear or evident in a kind of "seeing" [p. 183] or "impression" [p. 184]. Another surprising result is the apparent commitment to realism among the mathematicians interviewed. They routinely characterize finding new mathematical results as, well, a process of *finding*, of discovering how matters are and were all along. Once "seen," the solutions are coercively evident. The subjects were unanimous in claiming that they always trust their intuitions [p. 187], and their confidence is what motivates them to work out a proof for a given result. The respondents, however, characterize intuition as the result of mathematical experience and expertise. Intuition is founded on and emerges from exploratory work and the elimination of possible solutions, and is characterized as a kind of sensitivity to truth [p. 189]. Nevertheless, full confidence is not achieved until a proof is constructed.

Finally, in another empirically oriented article – "Intuition & Reason: Re-assessing Dual-Process Theories with Representational Sub-activation" – JAMES TRAFFORD and ALEXANDROS TILLAS argue for a unified account of cognition. There is a widely endorsed distinction between Type-1 and Type-2 cognitive processes. "Type-1 (T-1) processes are characterized as fast, automatic, associative, heuristic and intuitive; whereas Type-2 (T-2) processes are rule-based, analytical and reflective" [p. 198]. Intuitions, as standardly conceived, bear many of the hallmarks of T-1

processes. Dual-processing theories are invoked to explain a number of psychological phenomena, such as subjects' attributing a higher degree of probability to a conjunction than to one of its conjuncts, and being more likely to recognize an argument as valid when its conclusion is plausible.

Trafford and Tillas identify a number of problems with dual-processing accounts (§1.2). T-2 reasoning is often modelled on traditional conceptions of logic, but it is an open question whether our reasoning really does conform to those rules. T-2 reasoning is also susceptible to bias. Heuristic processes retain their "intuitive pull" even after correction by T-2 processes. Finally, there are cognitive skills that begin as deliberative, slow, attentive processes but become automated with mastery [p. 201]. Furthermore, after examining the empirical evidence and some recent interpretations of it, Trafford and Tillas argue that many phenomena currently explained by dual-process theories are better explained by a unitary model of cognition.

On the positive view they defend – the Representational Sub-activation Thesis (RST) – intuitions or T-1 processes are "sub-activated representations, which are in turn influenced by the weightings of the connections holding between different representations" [p. 204]. The mental representations in question are concepts [p. 207]. Furthermore, the account they develop is an empiricist account of mental representations, according to which all mental representations are founded, directly or indirectly, on perceptual representations. Concepts are associatively linked, and the more frequently they co-occur, the stronger the connection is between them [p. 206s]. The activation of one concept will result in the sub-activation of others strongly associated with it. And this, in turn, will make the connection between one thought and another more intuitive than it would otherwise be [p. 207].

This model helps explain bias. One phenomenon that dual-process models are invoked to explain is "belief bias." For instance, subjects will incorrectly judge an invalid syllogism to be valid more often when its conclusion is especially obvious [p. 208]. Rather than explaining this in terms of two distinct cognitive systems, Trafford and Tillas explain this in terms of "doxastic conservativeness" [p. 209; also Dutilh Novaes (2012)], which is the "tendency of reasoners to bring to bear prior beliefs on the assessment of argument" [Ibid.]. Finally, Trafford and Tillas bring RST to bear on the empirical results, arguing that it provides a superior explanation of them than do dual-process theories.

Naturally none of the papers in this volume, nor all of them together, stand as the final word on intuitions of either the phenomenological or the analytic variety. But each does, I am confident, broaden and deepen our understanding of what intuitions could or could not be and what role they perform in the production of belief and knowledge.

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