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# The role of intuition in philosophical practice

Tinghao WANG

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THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

WANG TINGHAO

MPHIL

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2016

THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE

by

WANG Tinghao

王庭昊

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submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## ABSTRACT

### The Role of Intuition in Philosophical Practice

by

WANG Tinghao

Master of Philosophy

This dissertation examines the recent arguments against the “Centrality” thesis—the thesis that intuition plays central evidential roles in philosophical inquiry—and their implications for the negative program in experimental philosophy. Two types of objections to Centrality are discussed. First, there are some objections which turn out to only work against Centrality when it is taken as a potential form of philosophical exceptionalism. I respond by showing that negative experimental philosophy doesn’t need the assumption that philosophy is distinctive in its reliance on intuitions. Second, there are some objections which turn out to be related to some particular view concerning the nature of evidence. In response, I distinguish between several different versions of Centrality, and argue that the version of Centrality that experimentalists need remains innocuous. Though none of the arguments against Centrality works as intended, I agree with its opponents that negative experimental philosophers have mischaracterized philosophical practice in a way which has problematic consequences for at least some versions of their argument. Specifically, I contend that philosophical practice grants important evidential status to general intuitions and context-rich intuitions, but extant experimental studies have almost exclusively focused on case intuitions and context-poor intuitions. I conclude that those who work on the negative program of experimental philosophy need to more carefully examine how philosophers actually use intuition in their practice.

## DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.

Tinghao Wang  
(WANG Tinghao)


CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS


THE ROLE OF INTUITION IN  
PHILOSOPHICAL PRACTICE


by  
WANG Tinghao


Master of Philosophy

Panel of Examiners:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Prof. HO Hung Lam Elizabeth) (Chairman)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Prof. Max DEUTSCH) (External Member)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Prof. Jennifer NADO) (Internal Member)

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Prof. Darrell ROWBOTTOM) (Internal Member)

Supervisor:

Prof. Jennifer NADO

Approved for the Senate:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
(Prof. MOK Ka Ho Joshua)  
Chairman, Postgraduate Studies Committee

04 AUG 2016

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Traditional philosophical methodology has received much criticism from the “negative program” in experimental philosophy.<sup>1</sup> I will refer to the philosophers engaging in this program as “experimentalists” and their criticism as the “experimental critique.” Experimentalists conduct psychological research, mainly using survey methods, to investigate people’s intuitive responses to thought experiments. Two early well-known findings suggested that non-Westerners surprisingly do not share Westerners’ intuitions about Gettier cases (Weinberg, Nichols, & Stich, 2001) and Kripke’s (1980) Gödel case (Machery, Mallon, Nichols, & Stich, 2004).<sup>2</sup> Given that demographic background is plausibly irrelevant to the truth of judgments in those cases, many experimentalists concluded that the intuitive disagreements stem from cultural bias. More recently, experimentalists have performed surveys which show that intuitive judgments vary as a function of other irrelevant factors like the subject’s personality (e.g., Feltz & Cokely, 2009), age (e.g., Colaço, Buckwalter, Stich, & Machery, 2014), gender (e.g., Buckwalter & Stich, 2014), and the order in which cases are considered (e.g., Swain, Alexander, & Weinberg, 2008; Liao, Wiegmann, Alexander, & Vong, 2012).

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<sup>1</sup> A common distinction is made between the “positive program” and the “negative program” in experimental philosophy. According to Alexander and Weinberg (2007), while the negative program “challenges the usefulness” of the current intuition-based philosophical practice, the positive program takes it that “experimental philosophy is (at least an indispensable part of) the proper methodology for this practice” (p. 298).

<sup>2</sup> Weinberg et al.’s finding fails to be replicated by more recent experimental work (e.g., Nagel, Juan, & Mar, 2013; Kim & Yuan, 2015; Seyedsayamdost, 2015; Machery, Stich, et al., 2015). By contrast, cross-cultural variation of intuitions in the Gödel case has been more robustly replicated (see, e.g., Machery et al. 2010; Machery, Sytsma, & Deutsch, 2015; Sytsma, Livengood, Sato, & Oguchi, 2015).

According to experimentalists, the above survey data don't merely suggest that some particular philosophical views (e.g., the view that the Gettier case isn't a case of knowledge) are ill-grounded, but in one way or another present a serious challenge to the standard *methodology* of philosophy. Defenders of traditional "armchair" philosophy have offered a number of different lines of response. Some (e.g., Ludwig, 2007; Cullen, 2010; Bengson, 2013) distinguish between subjects' answers to survey questions and subjects' intuitions. It is then argued that, though experimentalists have discovered variation among survey answers, they haven't found variation among intuitions. Others (e.g., Kauppinen, 2007; Horvath, 2010; Devitt, 2011) hold the view that only trained philosophers' intuitions play a substantial role in philosophical methods. Since most experimental studies test intuitions of lay people, it is claimed, they pose no serious threat to standard philosophical methodology.

Several philosophers have recently raised a different objection to the experimental critique, by denying that any intuitions play a substantial role in philosophical methods at all. They contend that the experimentalists' data do not support their conclusion, since that conclusion relies on the following false assumption:

(Centrality) Intuition plays a central evidential role in philosophical practice.<sup>3</sup>

I will refer to this sort of objection to the experimental critique as the "anti-Centrality response." Main proponents of this response include Williamson (2007), Deutsch (2009, 2010, 2015), and Cappelen (2012). Some other philosophers (e.g., Gendler, 2007; Earlenbaugh and Molyneux, 2009, 2010; Molyneux, 2014; Ichikawa and

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<sup>3</sup> I borrow the term "Centrality" from Cappelen (2012, p. 3).

Jarvis, 2013) have also expressed worries with the Centrality thesis, though they don't explicitly use those worries to cast doubt on the importance of the experimental critique.

It might be helpful to distinguish Centrality from several other views. First, Centrality is primarily a descriptive claim concerning what role philosophers *actually* grant to intuition. It doesn't imply the normative claim that intuition *ought to or should* play its current role. Second, Centrality describes the *usage* of intuition in philosophical inquiry. It is different from the view that philosophers *think of* themselves as giving intuition a central evidential role; it is possible that they have misconceptions about their own practice. For instance, Bealer (1992) argues that Quinean empiricists in fact make use of a wide range of intuitions. However, they don't conceive of intuition as having any evidential role in their theorizing, since they are committed to Quine's principle of empiricism, according to which only experiences and observations constitute prima facie evidence. Third, Centrality doesn't entail that intuition plays the *only* important or even the *most* important evidential role in philosophy. It is merely the claim that intuition has a central evidential role to play, regardless of whether there is something else that plays an equally central role.

In the next two Chapters of the dissertation, I shall defend Centrality by responding to four recent arguments against it. The first argument is the "argument from linguistic practice," according to which Centrality doesn't fit in well with philosophers' use of "intuition"-terminology in their texts. The second argument is the "argument from cognitive capacities," which involves the claim that intuition has no significant epistemological status within philosophy because it has no significant status in the psychology of philosophical thinking. Both arguments, I shall argue, are

only effective against Centrality when it is treated as an instance of philosophical exceptionalism. I then argue that, since experimentalists do not need to assume philosophical exceptionalism, these two anti-Centrality arguments fail to undermine the importance of the experimental critique.

The other two anti-Centrality arguments I shall examine are the “argument from non-neutrality” and the “argument from reasoning.” Both arguments are related to some particular view regarding the nature of evidence. The former argument alleges that Centrality is ill-motivated by the principle of “Evidence Neutrality.” I reject this argument by distinguishing between a strong version and a weak version of Centrality. I then claim that, though the argument might work against the strong version, the weak version remains untouched. The latter argument involves the thought that we seldom reason from propositions concerning intuitions; I’ll suggest that this argument tacitly assumes that evidence has to be propositional. My objection to the argument from reasoning is mainly based on an analogy between intuition and perception. While there is a similar problem in the case of perception, I shall argue, nearly no philosopher would deny perception’s evidential role on the basis of that problem. It thus remains unclear why one is supposed to deny Centrality in the case of intuition.

After responding to the anti-Centrality arguments, in Chapter 4, I shall develop my own criticisms of the experimental critique. Experimentalists are right that philosophers extensively make use of intuitions; nevertheless, my worry is that experimentalists rely on false assumptions about how philosophers use intuitions. More specifically, experimentalists tend to assume that intuitions about particular cases are granted a primary evidential role; by contrast, I will provide several reasons to think that general intuitions occupy a more prominent evidential status. Further,

experimentalists typically elicit intuitions through vignettes containing little contextual information. However, philosophers' use of intuition involves more contextual information—it is “context-rich” rather than “context-poor.” The above differences between philosophers' and surveys' appeals to intuition, I shall argue, constitute a problem for some versions of the experimental critique, such as Weinberg's 2007 version.

A final issue is worth addressing. In this dissertation, I describe two of Williamson's (2007) arguments—the “argument from cognitive capacities” and the “argument from non-neutrality”—as arguments against Centrality. But it is not totally clear whether this is his intention. According to an alternative interpretation, when Williamson asserts that philosophical evidence doesn't consist of intuition, he doesn't mean to deny Centrality; instead, he means that philosophers *shouldn't* use intuitions as evidence.<sup>4</sup> I maintain that Williamson's target is Centrality, for he explicitly claims that his “rethinking of philosophical methodology” concerns “how philosophy is actually done” (2007, p. 6). But there is still a crucial difference between Williamson and other critics of Centrality like Deutsch and Cappelen, both of whom are inclined to adopt the extreme view that intuition *never* plays any evidential roles in philosophy. Cappelen (2012), for example, aims to argue that “it is not true that philosophers rely extensively (or even a little bit) on intuitions as evidence” (p. 1). Also, Deutsch (2015) claims that “philosophical arguments never appeal to the intuitiveness of a judgment about a case in order to justify belief in that judgment” (p. 76–77). In contrast, Williamson's position seems to be more moderate. He thinks philosophers sometimes do treat intuitions as evidence, especially when they are under the pressure to “psychologize” their evidence. He admits that a

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<sup>4</sup> Cappelen (2012, p. 204), for instance, assumes such an interpretation of Williamson's view.

misconception of philosophical methodology “does more than distort philosophers’ descriptions of philosophy” and “alters their first-order philosophizing” (2007, p. 213). This suggests that intuition has some non-central evidential role in philosophy, mainly because beliefs about Centrality have changed part of philosophical practice. In any event, in the sections where I discuss the arguments Williamson offers, my goal will be to examine whether one could reasonably reject Centrality based on these arguments, whatever Williamson’s intended target is. Similarly, my aim in those sections will be to examine whether Williamson’s arguments undermine the experimental critique, no matter whether Williamson himself intends to reject the experimentalists’ project on the basis of anti-Centrality arguments.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Williamson doesn’t *explicitly* use the arguments against Centrality to criticize experimentalists. Instead, he has two other worries about the experimental critique: (i) It leads to an unsustainable form of “judgment skepticism” and (ii) it relies on data reporting variation of intuition among lay people rather than trained philosophers. However, one might easily understand Williamson as *implicitly* criticizing experimentalists from the denial of Centrality. This is why I included Williamson as one of the main proponents of the anti-Centrality response.

## Chapter 2

### How Exceptional is Philosophy?

This chapter examines two arguments provided by proponents of the anti-Centrality response: the “argument from linguistic practice” and the “argument from cognitive capacities.” After describing the two arguments (Section 1 and Section 2), I will discuss a common objection involving a distinction between “thick” notions and “thin” notions of intuition (Section 3). The most obvious response available to anti-Centrality people is to maintain that Centrality is useful to experimentalists only when it is true as a form of philosophical exceptionalism (Section 4). As a response, I contend that, though a “skeptical” version of the experimental critique does assume that philosophers distinctively make use of intuitions (Section 5), more moderate versions do not depend on this assumption (Section 6). According to the moderate interpretations, experimentalists can appeal to several other claims, instead of Centrality, as forms of philosophical exceptionalism; alternatively, they might turn to a position that doesn’t need philosophical exceptionalism at all.

#### 1. The Argument from Linguistic Practice

One natural approach to back up Centrality is to allege that intuition plays an evidential role because philosophers frequently use “intuition” and similar terms (e.g., “intuitively,” “seems,” and “apparently”) in their texts. Cappelen (2012) rejects this approach and argues for the opposite—philosophers’ linguistic practice involving “intuition”-terminology seldom supports Centrality. This isn’t a knock-down argument against Centrality; for even if philosophers’ “intuition” talk doesn’t indicate a reliance on intuition, there might still be an implicit reliance. Yet, it does



pose a challenge to Centrality's defenders, since the argument, if true, would undermine an obvious reason for endorsing Centrality. Call this argument by Cappelen the "argument from linguistic practice." Note that Cappelen does give some arguments against the view that philosophers implicitly make use of intuitions. I won't cover them in the current chapter, for I will primarily deal with the main argument among them—the "argument from reasoning"—in Chapter 3.

Cappelen starts from the observation that there is a sharp difference in the use of "intuition"-terminology between ordinary speakers and "intuition theorists"—those philosophers who work on the nature and/or epistemology of intuition. According to him, most theorists of intuition regard intuition as having at least one of the following three features. First, intuitions always come with a special phenomenology. This suggests the notion of intuition as "intellectual seeming"; intuitions have their characteristic phenomenal properties just as perceptual experiences have their characteristic phenomenal properties. Second, intuitions are based on nothing but the conceptual competence of the subject. That is to say, one forms an intuition about a proposition  $p$  merely on the basis of understanding  $p$  or grasping the concepts involved in  $p$ . Third, intuitions justify, but they themselves don't need further justification; this implies that intuition has some fundamental rock-bottom justificatory status.

Nevertheless, Cappelen finds that, in their everyday conversation, ordinary speakers almost never use terms like "intuitive" and "intuitively" to refer to a mental state with any of the above three features. They almost never use these terms to refer to, for instance, a mental state that has to be based solely on one's conceptual competence. Instead, as Cappelen observes, the ordinary usage of "intuition"-terminology is quite "thin." Ordinary speakers talk of a variety of different kinds of

acts and entities as being intuitive, such as chess playing, music, and iPhone operating systems. People frequently say, for example, a web application has an “intuitive user interface.” There is almost nothing in common among all these uses, except that there is usually “some kind of ease, effortless, or spontaneity involved” (Cappelen, 2012, p. 33). Cappelen also makes two other interesting observations: First, ordinary speakers often use “intuition”-terminology to express a hedge attitude towards a judgment. They frequently say “intuitively,  $p$ ” in cases where they are unsure of the judgment that  $p$ , flagging a weaker commitment to their claim. Second, the ordinary usage of “intuitive” and “intuitively” is context-sensitive. In particular, “intuitive” is gradable in the sense that a proposition can be intuitive to a certain degree. As a gradable adjective, according to Cappelen, “intuitive” is context-sensitive because whether it is true of something depends on the comparison class—which is fixed by the context.

After noting these remarkable differences between intuition theorists and ordinary speakers, Cappelen proceeds to discuss most philosophers’ “intuition”-talk. On his view, the use of “intuition”-terminology by most philosophers is much more similar to ordinary speakers’ use than to intuition theorists’. Most philosophers are not intuition theorists; they primarily work on first-order philosophical topics rather than metaphilosophical topics. Those philosophers normally do not have a particular theoretical model of intuition in mind; they might not even know of the various theories offered by intuition theorists. It is thus unlikely that their use of “intuition”-terminology is radically different from the ordinary use. One might maintain that it is possible that philosophers interested in first-order issues use “intuition” as a technical term, even if they don’t endorse or know of any particular theory of the term. However, Cappelen argues that “intuition” doesn’t share the features of a

typical technical term. Among intuition theorists, there is little consensus as to what intuitions are, how to define intuition, or what the paradigm cases of intuition are. As a result, there is also no unified subcommunity of experts for a user of “intuition” to defer to. Yet, according to Cappelen, for a technical term, there is usually (i) a clear definition, (ii) some agreed upon paradigms, or (iii) a unified subcommunity of experts to defer to. He then infers that most philosophers use “intuition”-terminology in a non-technical manner; hence, they use “intuition”-terminology just with their ordinary English meanings.<sup>6</sup> Just as ordinary speakers, most philosophers rarely use “intuition”-terminology to speak of the mental state that most intuition theorists use “intuition” to denote. Given that defenders of Centrality take intuition to have the features that intuition theorists usually take it to have, Cappelen concludes that most philosophers’ “intuition”-talk does not give any support to Centrality.

## **2. The Argument from Cognitive Capacities**

While the argument from linguistic practice focuses on what philosophers say in their texts, the “argument from cognitive capacities” examines how philosophers think in making a judgment. Williamson provides such an argument against Centrality in his book *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (2007). Consider a “stopped clock” type of Gettier case: Alice sees and believes that a 12-hour clock reads two o’clock, but, unbeknownst to Alice, the clock stopped working twelve hours ago. What are the important cognitive capacities underlying the thought-experimental judgment that Alice doesn’t know that it is two o’clock? Williamson contends that there are at least two interrelated kinds of capacities involved: those concerning

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<sup>6</sup> See Bengson (2014) for an objection to this step of inference. Bengson maintains that one can use “intuition”-terminology in a way differing both from the technical use and from the ordinary use.

*evaluation of counterfactuals* and those concerning *application of concepts*. Neither of these is obviously equivalent to “intuition” as used by intuition-theorists.

The judgment made in the Gettier case, according to Williamson, is a counterfactual judgment. It has as its content the counterfactual conditional that “if a thinker were Gettier-related to a proposition, he/she would have justified true belief in it without knowledge” (Williamson, 2007, p. 195). To refute the JTB theory, philosophers also need another proposition concerning modality, namely the proposition that it is possible for a thinker to be Gettier-related to a proposition. On Williamson’s view, however, the epistemology of modality “is simply a special case of the epistemology of counterfactual thinking” (2007, p. 178). Counterfactuals thus have a central position in his account of philosophical thought experiments. As Williamson argues, the psychological mechanisms underlying counterfactual judgments can involve a broad range of cognitive processes including imagination, reasoning, prediction, etc. Indeed, he claims that “our capacity to evaluate counterfactuals recruits *all* our cognitive capacities to evaluate sentences” and that “there is no uniform epistemology of counterfactual conditionals” (2007, p. 152).

Though counterfactual reasoning plays a central role in thought experiments, Williamson does not regard it as essential in some examples, e.g., the Gettier case. He notes that there is nothing to prevent an imaginary Gettier case from being realized in the actual world. Our judgments in response to a real-life stopped clock case plausibly do not depend on any counterfactual thinking; still, the real-life case has almost the same degree of philosophical significance as the hypothetical one. This implies that there are some philosophically important mental capacities that are applied both in the hypothetical and in the actual Gettier cases. Williamson holds that such capacities concern *applications of concepts*.

Williamson seems to think that, once one understands the intricate nature of philosophical thinking, one can see that intuition doesn't possess any distinctive status in philosophical inquiry. On his view, the judgment that Alice doesn't know in the Gettier scenario stems from broadly the same kind of psychological mechanisms as those underlying everyday counterfactual judgments. He states that the epistemology of counterfactuals in philosophy requires "no dedicated faculty of intuition" (2007, p. 178); it is merely an application of the epistemology of counterfactuals in general. Similar things can be said about capacities concerning applications of concepts—they are simply broadly the same kind of capacities involved in ordinary conceptual applications. So Centrality is inaccurate because it fails to characterize the *domain-general* character of philosophical cognition. Further, the psychological basis of thought-experimental judgments, according to Williamson, is far more complex than "the brute simplicity which the term 'intuition' may suggest," for one usually uses the term to "pick out a special psychological or epistemological kind" (2007, p. 216). While intuition is often used to refer to a homogeneous psychological kind, philosophical judgments are made on the basis of various and heterogeneous psychological processes.<sup>7</sup> Centrality is therefore inaccurate again, because it fails to capture the *heterogeneous* feature of philosophical cognition. In a nutshell, Williamson seems to suggest that, because intuition (in the sense of a simple, homogeneous psychological kind) has no significant psychological role in thought experiments, it has no significant epistemological status in thought experiments either.

Some theorists of intuition hold that intuitions are just those judgments formed solely on the basis of conceptual competence. Now one might think that their notion

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<sup>7</sup> See Nado (2014) for a defense of the heterogeneous view of intuition.

of “conceptual competence” is simply what Williamson considers to be capacities of conceptual application. One might thus infer that, since intuition is the very judgment based on the important psychological capacities underlying philosophical thinking, it still has a central role in philosophical methodology. However, it is important to distinguish conceptual competence from what Williamson thinks of as capacities to apply concepts. For intuition theorists like Bealer (1998), Ludwig (2007), and Grundman (2010), conceptual competence usually denotes the abilities involved in the mere grasping, possessing, or understanding of the relevant concepts. The notion is typically used to ground non-empirical or a priori knowledge in a certain sense. By contrast, Williamson is concerned with a much wider class of capacities. He claims that the applications of concepts are not “especially intimately connected to grasp of the relevant concepts” (2007, p. 216). Those who fail to correctly apply the concepts might as well grasp all the concepts involved; instead, “what they lack is a skill in applying those concepts which goes beyond mere possession” (Williamson, 2007, p. 216). Williamson also rejects the idea that concept application skills are non-empirical or a priori. The distinction between a priori and a posteriori, he argues, is “too rude to be of much epistemological use” (2007, p. 169).

### **3. The Objection from Thinness**

This section examines a common line of objection to the above two arguments against Centrality. Some philosophers have drawn a distinction between “thin” and “thick” notions of intuition. According to Weinberg and Alexander (2014), for instance, the “thin” conceptions “identify intuitions as merely instances of some fairly generic and epistemological uncontroversial category of mental states or episodes,” while the “thick” conceptions “add to this thin base certain semantic,

phenomenological, etiological, or methodological conditions” (p. 189). Assuming something like this distinction, several philosophers (e.g., Chalmers, 2014; Weinberg, 2014; Weatherson, 2014) have responded to Cappelen by claiming that his argument is too theory-laden; he assumes an overly thick theory of intuition.<sup>8</sup> The three intuition features he examines—having a distinctive phenomenology, being based solely on conceptual competence, and providing fundamental justification—are true of intuition only according to some thick notions of intuition. By contrast, the versions of Centrality that assume thin notions of intuition remain untouched.

The following are some thin views of intuition. Gopnik and Schwitzgebel (1998) define intuition as any judgment that “is not made on the basis of some kind of explicit reasoning process that a person can consciously observe” (p. 77). Devitt (2012) endorses a similar view, according to which intuitions are immediate and unreflective judgments but not based on any conscious reasoning. Intuitive judgments, according to Devitt, are “empirical theory-laden central-processor responses to phenomena” (2012, p. 25). As another example, Nagel (2012) borrows Mercier and Sperber’s (2009) distinction between the intuitive and the reflective. On this view, intuitive judgments are caused by “processes that take place inside individuals without being controlled by them” (Mercier & Sperber, 2009, p. 153). Finally, assuming a dual process theory of cognition, De Cruz (2014) claims that intuitions are just “typical outputs of Type 1 cognition” (p. 5). Type 1 cognition is usually “automatic, fluent, and effortless,” while Type 2 cognition is usually “slower, less fluent, deliberate, and effortful” (De Cruz, 2014, p. 5). None of the above accounts requires intuition to have any of the three intuition features discussed by

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<sup>8</sup> Their objections mainly concern Cappelen’s argument against what he calls the “argument from philosophical practice”; by contrast, my focus in this section is mainly on his argument from linguistic practice.

Cappelen (e.g., to have a special phenomenology). This contradicts his assumption that most intuition theorists grant intuition at least one of those three features.

The above views of intuition are “thin” in two senses. First, they do not rely on theoretically heavy notions like unique phenomenology, conceptual competence, and fundamental justification. A variety of different theories have been proposed to understand, say, conceptual competence, but all these theories remain highly controversial. One’s understanding of conceptual competence can vary significantly depending on one’s theoretical commitment. Second, the thin views use “intuition” to refer to a more general psychological kind than the thick views. Results of Type 1 cognition, for instance, can involve a number of various and heterogeneous beliefs and judgments. There is empirical evidence showing that the so-called Type 1 cognition actually consists of “multiple kinds of type 1 processes” (Evans, 2008, p. 271). By contrast, the thick notions denote a much narrower psychological kind. For example, one might wonder whether there is even one single psychological state that is based on nothing but one’s conceptual competence.

Once we appeal to some thin conception of intuition, it remains plausible that ordinary speakers at least sometimes use “intuitive” and “intuitively” to describe this sort of mental state. For example, intuition being immediate and unreflective judgment is a quite everyday notion. The thin accounts also fit in well with Cappelen’s observations about the ordinary usage of “intuition”-terminology. Consider the notion of intuition as typical outputs of Type 1 cognitive processes—the cognitive processes that are fast, automatic, and unreflective. As De Cruz (2014, p. 5) notes, this notion explains well why Cappelen observes a kind of “ease, effortlessness, or spontaneity” in ordinary speakers’ “intuition”-talk. It can also explain why “intuition”-terminology is frequently used to express a hedge attitude: It



is natural to be cautious about one's judgment if one arrives at the judgment in an automatic and effortless manner. Further, since an actual judgment can depend more or less on Type 1 cognition, it can be more or less intuitive too—this explains why Cappelen finds “intuition” gradable and context-sensitive in its everyday usage. Hence, we can agree with Cappelen that most philosophers use “intuition” just in the ways ordinary speakers use it, while maintaining that philosophers' “intuition”-talk does give support to the thin forms of Centrality.

I think we could give a similar objection to Williamson's argument from cognitive capacities. Remember that Williamson seems to hold that Centrality is unable to characterize the domain-general feature and the heterogeneous feature of philosophical cognition. While some thick versions of Centrality might not be able to capture these two features, thin versions of Centrality can. As Evans (2008) argues, the so-called “Type 1 cognition” is actually based on a heterogeneous kind of cognitive processes. Also, although Type 1 cognition is standardly characterized as being domain-specific in the sense of being contextualized, we can agree that it is “domain-general” in the following sense: There is no principled distinction between the psychological capacities underlying Type 1 cognition in philosophy and those underlying Type 1 cognition in everyday contexts. If we take intuitions to be typical outputs of Type 1 cognition, then it is unsurprising that mental capacities concerning evaluating counterfactuals and applying concepts play crucial roles in forming an intuitive judgment. With a thin account of intuition, we don't need to assume any “dedicated faculty of intuition” or use intuition to pick out “a special psychological or epistemological kind.” We could thus maintain that intuition occupies a central psychological role as well as a central epistemological role behind philosophical thinking. To summarize, both the argument from linguistic practice and the argument

from cognitive capacities assume some thick conception of intuition. If we adopt some thin conception of intuition, however, Centrality remains a plausible thesis. Call this the “objection from thinness.”

#### **4. Centrality and Philosophical Exceptionalism**

In this section, I shall outline the most obvious way in which critics of Centrality might respond to the objection from thinness. The response will be related to the thesis of *philosophical exceptionalism*. As I’ll use the term, philosophical exceptionalism is the claim that there are deep methodological differences between philosophy and other disciplines. Proponents of the anti-Centrality response might argue that experimentalists need to assume some sort of philosophical exceptionalism. Note that experimentalists are different from what we might call “global skeptics,” who deem it impossible to achieve knowledge in any field of inquiry; the experimentalists’ worry is specific for *philosophical* inquiry. They have no intention to raise an objection against other disciplines such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology. Indeed, since their own work is typically based on methods borrowed from experimental psychology or cognitive science, they cannot be as skeptical about the standard method of those areas as they are about philosophical method. If experimentalists want to avoid both global skepticism and the potential self-defeat problem, then they need the assumption that philosophical method has its own unique features which give reason for concern.

Philosophical exceptionalism claims that there are deep methodological differences between philosophy and other disciplines. What does this exactly mean? Several points:

1. The claim only concerns *methodological* differences between philosophy and other disciplines. Methodology refers to the established procedure of conducting intellectual activities in a discipline; it should be distinguished from other aspects of the discipline, such as its subject matter, goal, and progress<sup>9</sup>. This doesn't mean that those aspects are irrelevant to debates about methodology. Differences in subject matter, goal, and progress between philosophy and other disciplines might give rise to methodological differences, thus indirectly supporting philosophical exceptionalism.

2. The expression "other disciplines" invites scrutiny. One might naturally ask whether it refers to all disciplines except for philosophy, or merely some specific disciplines. I take it that philosophical exceptionalism is true as long as philosophical methodology is deeply different from the standard methodology of *some* legitimate academic disciplines. Though there are deep methodological differences between philosophy and illegitimate disciplines like astrology and alchemy, they will not suffice to back up the assumption that experimentalists need. Typically, the relevant disciplines are what experimentalists regard as instances of good inquiry (e.g., empirical sciences).<sup>10</sup>

3. The claim says that there are deep methodological differences, but how deep is enough? As a potential premise in the experimental critique, the claim should make it at least initially plausible that the differences can lead to a methodological deficiency only in philosophy but not in the other relevant disciplines. For instance, if philosophy were mostly done on Tuesdays but psychology were mostly done on

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<sup>9</sup> The term "philosophical exceptionalism" might be used to refer to deep differences in those aspects, but this is not the version of exceptionalism that I intend to target.

<sup>10</sup> In discussions about philosophical exceptionalism, empirical sciences are usually taken as the exemplars of good inquiry. But one can choose other exemplars as well, such as mathematics and logic. Ichikawa and Jarvis (2013), for example, argue against philosophical exceptionalism by claiming that philosophical inquiry is continuous with other instances of "pure rational thinking."

Wednesdays, then this would hardly constitute an even initially plausible reason to criticize only philosophy. In contrast, if philosophy were primarily done a priori but psychology were primarily done a posteriori, then, given the experimentalists' findings, it would be at least initially plausible that only philosophy is in trouble. Note that some forms of philosophical exceptionalism, even if true, might not ultimately favor the experimentalists' position; they only make the experimental critique initially plausible.

4. The claim seems to assume that there is some unified methodology of philosophy, but that is not what I have in mind. Philosophical methodology can involve a motley of different procedures. It is assumed here, however, that one or some of those procedures are standard or central in philosophy, and the relevant methodological differences are between those standard procedure(s) of philosophy and the standard procedure(s) of other disciplines.

In the face of the objection of thinness, an opponent of Centrality like Cappelen might reply that, though thin notions of intuition make Centrality true, they don't make it true as a form of philosophical exceptionalism—philosophers don't *distinctively* rely on intuitions as evidence. But if so, then the experimentalists' argument cannot work. Given that both philosophy and other legitimate disciplines involve reliance on intuition, it might be suggested, the experimental critique will inevitably be generalized to the areas that experimentalists don't intend to attack.<sup>11</sup>

In fact, Cappelen's real target is not Centrality as such, but the view that Centrality is true as an instance of philosophical exceptionalism.<sup>12</sup> He writes that,

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<sup>11</sup> Williamson (2007) argues along broadly similar lines in his refutation of "judgment skepticism".

<sup>12</sup> It is also worth noting that one main theme of Williamson's (2007) book is to reveal the "unexceptional feature of philosophy" (p. 4).

The targets in this work are those philosophers who endorse Centrality and construe it as an instance of philosophical exceptionalism (or at least exceptionalism about disciplines traditionally thought to be a priori). As a result, it will turn out to be crucial when evaluating an argument for the significance of intuitions to keep track of its scope. An argument that shows that all intellectual activity relies on intuitions as evidence, and then derives Centrality as a corollary, will not be acceptable given how Centrality is presented by its proponents. (2012, p. 16)

It's clear that Cappelen would reply to the objection from thinness by noting that the experimentalists' argument depends not just on Centrality, but on the exceptionalist interpretation of Centrality. We might thus have a more charitable answer to the question of why Cappelen examines only the intuition features presumed by the thick accounts: He takes it that the thin notions of intuition are applied in "all intellectual activity" and therefore won't be helpful anyway for those who understand Centrality as a sort of philosophical exceptionalism. Indeed, if the thin accounts of intuition are correct, then reliance on intuition won't be unique to philosophy. For instance, immediate and unreflective judgment refers to a broad kind of mental state, and it seems to play important evidential roles in almost every field of inquiry. Even in scientific papers, it is not the case that every thought defended is deliberate; scientists routinely provide uncertain hypotheses and suppositions, which serve as a basis of reasoning but are not reflective in their nature. Even if there are deep methodological differences between the disciplines, it is unlikely that philosophy involves much less reflection and deliberation than empirical sciences. As another example, consider the definition of intuition as typical outputs of Type 1 cognition. Type 1 cognition covers highly generalized kinds of mental processes, and any academic disciplines—no matter philosophy or empirical sciences—depend on a combination of Type 1 and Type 2 cognitive processes.

I agree that Centrality in the thin sense is of no use to those philosophers who aim to construe it as an exceptional feature of philosophy. However, contra Cappelen, I don't think that experimentalists need to construe Centrality in this way. As I will argue in the next two sections, while a "skeptical" interpretation of the experimental critique does assume Centrality as a form of philosophical exceptionalism, this is not true of more moderate interpretations of the critique. More moderate experimentalists can either appeal to other forms of philosophical exceptionalism, or develop a criticism without reliance on philosophical exceptionalism at all.

### **5. The Skeptical Interpretation of the Experimental Critique**

Experimentalists have collected survey data which are purported to show that philosophical intuitions vary according to irrelevant factors such as cultural background, personality, and order. They generally regard such variation among intuition as presenting a serious challenge to the long-established intuition-based methodology of philosophy; nevertheless, they are sometimes equivocal about what exactly the challenge is and what precise methodological lessons one should learn from their survey data. For example, in their classic paper, Weinberg et al. (2001) report that, while Western subjects do generally share philosophers' intuition about the Gettier case, among East Asian subjects more people attribute knowledge to the protagonist in the case than not. Weinberg et al. use their data to support the hypothesis that epistemic intuitions vary from culture and culture. They take it that, if the variation hypothesis turns out to be true, then it will constitute a serious difficulty for the methodology underlying several central epistemological projects.

However, their argumentation is underspecified at three levels: First, the variation hypothesis itself is unclear, for it doesn't specify what degree of variation is

worrisome. Does the hypothesis suggest that epistemic intuitions are generally variable, or that only some particular intuitions are? Second, it is unclear for what exact reasons intuition variation leads to negative methodological consequences. There are several different ways for intuition variation to be problematic: One can argue that intuition is unsuitable as evidence in philosophy due to its fallibility, unreliability, unexpected sensitivity, or something else. But Weinberg et al. didn't state which specific property of intuition is the methodologically detrimental one. Third, it remains unclear how philosophers should react to the variation hypothesis. Should they eliminate the use of intuition in theorizing, or continue using intuition but with more care? In another early paper by experimentalists, Machery et al. (2004) also didn't clearly identify what precisely is wrong with intuition variation or how we should react to the problem. This pattern of argumentation is familiar, especially in early experimental philosophical work. The conclusion of the experimental critique is thus open to interpretation.

According to a natural interpretation, experimentalists are skeptical about intuition's evidential efficacy; widespread intuitive disagreements suggest that intuition is too *unreliable* to be a legitimate source of evidence.<sup>13</sup> It is then inferred that the use of intuition should be completely removed from philosophical practice. I will call this the "skeptical interpretation" of the experimental critique. According to Liao (2008), for example, experimentalists deny that "there are intuitions to which we can sometimes appeal" (p. 254) and think that "we need to abandon the use of intuition altogether" (p. 256). Also, Alexander and Weinberg (2007) suggest that, for some experimental philosophers, "experimental evidence seems to point to the

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<sup>13</sup> Note that one can have a skeptical stance on intuition that does not invoke unreliability. For example, Cummins (1998) defends intuition skepticism by arguing that intuition cannot both have independent calibration and remain useful.

unsuitability of intuitions to serve as evidence at all” (p. 63). And Chudnoff (2013) claims that one aim of experimental philosophy is to argue for “skepticism about intuition,” which is the view that “intuition experiences do not justify us in believing propositions” (p. 98).<sup>14</sup>

If the skeptical interpretation of the experimental critique is correct, then philosophers should remove intuition from their toolbox. It follows that, not only philosophy, but all disciplines using intuitions as significant evidence should radically change their methodology. On the skeptical interpretation, experimentalists are thus assuming the following version of philosophical exceptionalism:

(E1) Intuitions are given central evidential roles in philosophy but not in legitimate disciplines (e.g., empirical sciences).

Note that (E1) is just Centrality when it is taken as an instance of philosophical exceptionalism. Therefore, those experimentalists who embrace the skeptical interpretation cannot adopt the thin notions of intuition, which wouldn't vindicate (E1). Consequently, they cannot appeal to the objection from thinness in reply to the two arguments made by deniers of Centrality.

## **6. Moderate Interpretations of the Experimental Critique**

(E1) is not the only form of philosophical exceptionalism that experimentalists can appeal to. In this section, I will survey some more recent interpretations of the experimental critique. As will be seen, many experimental philosophers have shifted

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<sup>14</sup> It is worth noting that, though the skeptical interpretation is commonly made, it gains little support from textual evidence. Experimentalists rarely explicitly endorse a complete rejection of intuition. Rather, they usually overtly challenge merely a specific kind of intuition, such as epistemic intuition or semantic intuition. That being said, some early work by experimentalists (e.g., Weinberg et al. 2001; Machery et al. 2004) might be easily read as tacitly suggesting a rejection of intuition across the board. In any case, the skeptical reading has become an influential one, especially among critics of experimental philosophy.



to more moderate positions towards standard philosophical methodology. Once we give up the skeptical interpretation of the experimental critique, experimentalists don't need to assume that philosophers distinctively use intuition. Rather, they can put forward other particular forms of philosophical exceptionalism; in fact, they can even adopt a very moderate view which doesn't need to assume philosophical exceptionalism at all.

Some experimentalists have distinguished their argument from intuition skepticism. They grant that intuition is in general reliable as a source of evidence, in the sense that it on average provides a high ratio of true to false results. Their worry is not with intuition as a general class, but with the particular intuitions that philosophers grant important evidential status to. As an example, Alexander and Weinberg (2007) suggest that experimentalists can adopt the "restrictionist" position. The restrictionist targets merely "the peculiar and esoteric intuitions that are the philosopher's stock-in-trade," which "represent a fairly small portion of the entire human intuitive capacity" (Alexander & Weinberg, 2007, p. 71). According to Alexander and Weinberg, even if intuition is on balance accurate, it can still be the case that "philosophers' intuitions about typical philosophical hypothetical cases" (2007, p. 71) are unreliable. That is to say, the subset of intuitions that philosophers actually appeal to is inaccurate. On their interpretation, experimentalists assume the following version of philosophical exceptionalism:

(E2) Intuitions about typical philosophical hypothetical cases are unreliable, but intuitions used in legitimate disciplines (e.g., empirical sciences) are reliable.

Machery (2011) adopts a similar position in response to Williamson's argument from cognitive capacities. Williamson holds that there is no principled distinction between capacities underlying philosophical cognition and everyday cognition. Machery responds that, even if Williamson is correct, we still have good reasons to believe that philosophers' use of the relevant psychological capacities is beyond their proper domain. The reason is that typical philosophical hypothetical cases have some unique features. First, philosophical thought experiments usually "describe fanciful situations that are very remote from the situations that elicit everyday judgments" (Machery, 2011, p. 202). Second, philosophical cases typically "pull apart the features that go together in everyday life" (Machery, 2011, p. 203). Third, the situations are standardly "described in vivid terms" (Machery, 2011, p. 203). All these features constitute general reasons to suspect the reliability of intuitions about philosophical cases: In general, intuitive judgments are more susceptible to bias when the subject is unfamiliar with the case or when irrelevant narrative details are provided. Machery concludes that, without further information, we currently ought not to trust the reliability of intuitions about philosophical cases.

Weinberg (2007) has also provided a non-skeptical interpretation of the challenge from experimentalists. While Machery attacks the intuitions that philosophers rely on, Weinberg attacks the trustworthiness of a particular *practice*: "the current analytic philosophical practice of appealing to intuitions as evidence for philosophical claims" (2007, p. 320). Further, while Machery focuses on the *unreliability* of intuitions, Weinberg contends that the real problem is the lack of *corrigibility*, or what he calls "hopefulness", in the philosophical practice of

employing intuition.<sup>15</sup> That is to say, philosophers are short of appropriate methods to identify and correct errors in their practices. In particular, experimentalists' survey results indicate that intuitive responses to influential thought experiments can unexpectedly vary depending on irrelevant factors like cultural background. According to Weinberg, this strongly suggests that we overall have little knowledge about when people will agree or disagree in their intuitions; we are thus not in a position to use degree of intersubjective agreement as a guide to detection of errors. After arguing that its errors cannot be properly mitigated by other methods like external corroboration, Weinberg concludes that the philosophical practice of using intuition lacks corrigibility and is thus untrustworthy.

But if intuition is also used in everyday life and disciplines other than philosophy, why are only philosophical practices involving intuitions hopeless? Weinberg answers by noting the peculiarity of philosophical thought experiments. Similar to Machery, Weinberg states that philosophers frequently rely on intuitions about hypothetical cases, but usually "set no constraints on how esoteric, unusual, far-fetched, or generally outlandish any given case may be" (2007, p. 321). Weinberg seems to think that, because people are much less susceptible to bias and more prone to agreement on ordinary intuitions than on intuitions concerning far-fetched imaginary scenarios, intersubjective agreement can better mitigate errors in ordinary appeals to intuition than in philosophical appeals. In effect, Weinberg endorses the following form of philosophical exceptionalism:

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<sup>15</sup> In another paper, Alexander and Weinberg (2014) suggest that there is an ambiguity about "reliable": it can be used as a synonym for either "trustworthy" or "highly predictable." With this more precise terminology, we can say that Machery's argument invokes the sense of reliability as being highly predictable, while Weinberg's 2007 approach concerns the trustworthy sense of reliability.

(E3) Philosophers' appeals to intuitions about hypothetical cases are hopeless, but appeals to intuitions in legitimate disciplines (e.g., empirical sciences) are hopeful.

A related but different interpretation of the experimental critique concerns not the lack of error detection, but the *error-fragility* in philosophical practices. In a recent paper, Alexander and Weinberg (2014) claim that philosophers' inferential practices are highly error-fragile; their inferences are not tolerant enough of errors in the premises. Alexander and Weinberg complain that philosophers have put too high a stake on specific-case intuitions; in particular, they routinely allow counterexamples to trump general theories. As a consequence, even a fairly small number of errors in intuitions can cast doubt on the trustworthiness of philosophers' inferences. Nado (2015) presents a similar reinterpretation of the experimental critique. She argues that philosophical practices are highly *epistemically demanding*; philosophical theory-building will considerably intensify the fallibility of intuition. For example, nearly all contemporary theories of knowledge assume the standard Gettier intuition. Therefore, even if two groups of philosophers disagree only in intuition about the Gettier case, they will still probably produce radically different theories of knowledge, at least if they make inferences in ways similar to standard epistemology. This suggests that experimentalists might explicate philosophical exceptionalism as follows:

(E4) Philosophical practices involving intuitions are highly error-fragile/epistemically demanding, but practices involving intuitions in legitimate disciplines (e.g., empirical sciences) are not.

All above non-skeptical interpretations of the experimentalists' argument advocate *radical revisions* in standard philosophical methodology. These positions are more moderate than the skeptical interpretation; they suggest that philosophers' employment of intuition should be considerably restricted rather than totally removed. Because experimentalists presumably do not intend to advocate similarly radical changes in other disciplines, they still need to make a sharp contrast between philosophy and disciplines like empirical sciences. However, an even more moderate interpretation of the experimental critique might work without philosophical exceptionalism at all. Stich and Tobia (forthcoming), for example, put it in the following way:

The skepticism about the use of intuitions... should be directed primarily at intuitions that have been shown to be susceptible to irrelevant influences, and at other intuitions that are the product of psychological mechanisms that are likely to be vulnerable in similar ways.

The proposal here understands the experimental critique as aiming at locally restricting those types of intuition that have already been experimentally tested. On this view, experimental work is necessary in philosophy, even if the experimental critique doesn't guarantee any global shift in philosophical methodology. Consider Weinberg et al.'s (2001) cross-cultural study of the Gettier intuition as an example. The study alone might not suffice to indicate any general problem with epistemic intuitions; however, it presents evidence for the view that intuition about the Gettier case is sensitive to irrelevant factors. One might then infer that we shouldn't trust philosophers' use of intuition about the Gettier case. This conclusion is much more moderate than what previous interpretations of the experimentalists' argument led to; however, its philosophical significance cannot be overlooked. Given the heavy weight the Gettier case has in contemporary epistemological debates, one might

think that giving up the Gettier intuition by itself already constitutes an important change in methodology.

Further, variation in the Gettier intuition raises the question of whether other intuitions are generated by the same sort of psychological mechanisms and are unexpectedly variable for the same reasons. We cannot answer this question, however, without engaging with more experimental work. Stich and Tobia (forthcoming) conclude that experimental philosophy “must have a place at the table” and “has a crucial role to play in assessing and improving philosophical methodology.”<sup>16</sup> Stich and Tobia’s interpretation of the experimentalists’ position doesn’t depend on any assumption like philosophical exceptionalism, for non-philosophical disciplines like empirical sciences are also subject to local restrictions in their methodology, if intuitions used in those disciplines are found to be problematic. Their position is in fact a natural consequence of philosophical naturalism, according to which philosophical methodology should be continuous with the methodology of natural sciences.

I have reviewed some recent approaches to understand the experimentalists’ challenge. As have been shown, (E1) is not an essential assumption in the experimental critique. Experimentalists can appeal to some other formulations of philosophical exceptionalism such as (E2), (E3), and (E4); alternatively, they can do without philosophical exceptionalism at all, by endorsing local restrictions in philosophical practices involving intuitions. I stress that my purpose in this chapter is not to defend any particular formulation of the experimental critique; all of the non-skeptical interpretations surveyed in this section might face some further problems.

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<sup>16</sup> Nado (2015) suggests a similar approach. She claims that the experimental critique “need not even be viewed as a threat to philosophy as a discipline”; rather, it presents “an invitation to expand and refine our methods—to improve philosophy, rather than undermine it” (2015, p. 219).

Instead, I only aim to show that one cannot refute the experimental critique simply by rejecting (E1); experimentalists don't need to assume Centrality as an exceptional characteristic of philosophical inquiry. As a result, moderate experimentalists can still use the objection from thinness to respond to the argument from linguistic practice and the argument from cognitive capacities. The thin versions of Centrality remain convincing.

## Chapter 3

### Is Intuition Central in Philosophy?

This chapter defends Centrality in response to two other recent objections, which I will refer to as the “argument from non-neutrality” and the “argument from reasoning.” According to the argument from non-neutrality, we shouldn’t believe the truth of Centrality because it is ill-motivated by a particular dialectical standard of evidence. According to the argument from reasoning, philosophical practice relies on argumentation rather than intuition as its central evidence. As will be seen, both objections have different implications for different versions of Centrality. Though they constitute some *prima facie* strong reasons to deny some particular versions of Centrality, I shall argue, neither of them successfully undermines the version of Centrality that experimentalists need. Along the way, I will draw some parallels between intuition and perception.

#### 1. Centrality and Evidence

I have been characterizing Centrality as the statement that intuition plays a central evidential role in philosophical inquiry. In this section, I am going to elaborate this definition by looking at recent views concerning the nature of evidence. The philosophical literature on evidence tends to cluster around the following three interrelated questions: What sort of things does evidence consist of? Under what circumstances does a subject possess  $x$  as her evidence? And, under what circumstances is  $x$  evidence for  $y$ ?<sup>17</sup> Different answers to these questions—that is,

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<sup>17</sup> See, e.g., Kelly (2008) for more about different possible ways to answer these three questions.



different accounts of the ontology of evidence, evidence possession, and evidential relations—will lead to different understandings of Centrality.

To start with, one major controversy among epistemologists concerns whether evidence always consists of propositions. Some philosophers (e.g., Williamson, 2002; Dougherty, 2011) hold that only propositions count as evidence; others adopt a broader view, according to which evidence can at least sometimes be non-propositional. Philosophers of the latter kind can read Centrality as the thesis that intuitions qua mental states are used as evidence. Even if some of them might not think of intuitions as *ultimate* evidence, they typically will agree that intuitions can at least be *derivative* evidence.<sup>18</sup> And the assumption of Centrality doesn't require that the evidential role of intuition is ultimate or foundational.<sup>19</sup>

However, for proponents of propositional views of evidence, intuitions themselves cannot work as evidence because they are mental states rather than propositions. They might understand Centrality as the view that the propositional contents of intuitions are used as evidence in philosophy—though, as I will show later, this version of Centrality is not one which supporters of the anti-Centrality response intend to reject. Alternatively, a supporter of the propositional view of evidence will probably understand Centrality as the thesis that philosophers' central evidence consists of propositions concerning intuitions, such as the proposition that this intuition exists, occurs, or the like, instead of intuitions themselves. To the extent that speakers talk of intuitions as evidence, propositional theorists of evidence might

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<sup>18</sup> Conee and Feldman (2008) appear to adopt such a view about intuitive evidence. They claim that intuitive judgments about thought experiments can “gain evidence from awareness of conceptual relations” (2008, p. 93). They seem to suggest that one's conscious experience of conceptual relations is ultimate evidence, but one's intuitive judgments can work as derivative evidence.

<sup>19</sup> By contrast, Cappelen (2012) thinks that Centrality often has this requirement, because many metaphilosophers claim that intuitions “provide evidence for other claims without themselves requiring evidence” (pp. 6–7). However, though thick theorists of intuition do sometimes make this sort of claim, thin theorists of intuition can accept that its evidential status depends on more fundamental evidence (e.g., perceptual experience).

take that to be merely an abbreviation. According to them, though it's expedient and common in ordinary language to talk of footprints, DNAs, and mental states as evidence, evidence actually consists of propositions, such as the proposition that this footprint exists. Dougherty (2011), for example, contends that speaking of experiences as evidence is a kind of loose talk, which is "innocent enough unless we take it to reveal bedrock truth" (p. 230).

Indeed, some critics of Centrality have formulated the thesis in ways which apparently assume some propositional theory of evidence. Cappelen (2012), for example, thinks of Centrality as suggesting that "it is *A* has the intuition that *p* that serves as evidence" (p. 13).<sup>20</sup> Also, according to Williamson (2007), supporters of Centrality take it that our evidence "consists of the psychological facts to the effect that we have intuitions with those contents" (p. 235).<sup>21</sup> By contrast, I will take Centrality as true if either intuitions themselves or propositions about intuitions are philosophers' central evidence. In either case, we might say that "philosophers use intuitions as evidence" but only in a loose sense. Or, to put it more rigidly, we can say that intuition plays a central *evidential role*.

Here is a rough definition: *x* plays an evidential role for a subject *S* in cases where either (i) *x* is the evidence that *S* uses or (ii) whether *x* obtains is always somehow intimately related to the evidence that *S* uses.<sup>22</sup> I stress that this is just a sketch of a definition, rather than a full definition of evidential-role. In particular, there are multiple ways to spell out the notion of a "somehow intimate" relation

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<sup>20</sup> It is unclear whether this is really how Cappelen interprets Centrality, for in another place (2012, p. 14) he also says that he is neutral on whether only propositions can be evidence.

<sup>21</sup> Some might want to distinguish between facts and propositions. Williamson (2007), however, explicitly uses "fact" as a synonym for "true proposition" (p. 209).

<sup>22</sup> Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009, pp. 91–92) offer the definition that intuition plays an evidential role if and only if intuition is treated as evidence. My definition of evidential-role is broader than theirs, for, on my definition, intuition has an evidential role to play in cases where what is treated as evidence is a proposition describing an intuition instead of the intuition itself.

between two things. It might be defined as, for instance, some sort of truth-making relation or causal relation. So far as I can tell, nothing in this dissertation hangs on the exact definition of evidential-role; the provisional definition is sufficient for my purposes. This definition is compatible with both the propositional and the non-propositional theory of evidence. If the non-propositional theory is correct, then intuitions can play an evidential role by themselves being the evidence that philosophers use. But if the propositional view is correct, then intuitions can play a key evidential role as long as philosophers use propositions describing intuitions as their central evidence, since there is always an intimate relation between intuitions and propositions describing those intuitions. The definition also excludes the versions of Centrality that critics do not intend to reject, such as the “content” reading: “many philosophical arguments treat the contents of certain intuitions as evidence” (Deutsch, 2015, p. 36). On this reading, the absence of an intuition isn’t always relevant to philosophical evidence, since philosophers might use the propositional content of an intuition as evidence due to reasons having nothing to do with the intuition itself (e.g., theoretical arguments).

It is worth noting that Cappelen (2012) also considers an alternative way to understand Centrality: “*p* is the evidence and the source of that evidence is *that A has an intuition that p*” (p. 13). This interpretation is added to include a view like Bealer’s (1998), according to which intuition itself is not evidence but a source of evidence; it is rather the propositional content of intuition that counts as evidence. I will not focus on this interpretation, mainly because I find the notion of “source of evidence” rather obscure. Note that, for supporters of Centrality, it is not enough for intuition to be a merely causal source of philosophical evidence. If any distinction between the context of discovery and the context of justification can be made in

philosophical inquiry, then a causal source of evidence might not be granted any important epistemological status.<sup>23</sup> However, it's far from obvious how to interpret such a notion of "source of evidence" as not merely the causal source, but neither Bealer nor Cappelen analyses the notion in further detail.

Another related debate in epistemology concerns the nature of evidence possession. For supporters of propositional theories of evidence, it is natural to think that, in order for *e* to be one's evidence, one has to believe the truth of *e*. But this might not be sufficient for evidence possession; Williamson (2002), for example, sets a stricter requirement that *e* has to be part of one's total knowledge. Williamson develops the E = K theory of evidence, which "equates S's evidence with S's knowledge, for every individual or community S in any possible situation" (2002, p. 185). Assuming that evidence is what justifies belief, the E = K theory entails that "knowledge, and only knowledge, justifies belief" (Williamson, 2002, p. 185). On the other hand, for non-propositional theories, mental states like experiences and intuitions count as one's evidence only if one has those mental states; but again, merely having a mental state might not be enough for possessing it as evidence, and therefore additional conditions (e.g., being relatively easy to bring to awareness) might be added. Centrality, as the claim that intuition serves as philosophers' central evidence, seems to presume that philosophers possess intuitions (or propositions about intuitions) as genuine evidence, but it doesn't. Note that, if a subject possesses *x* as her evidence, then *x* has legitimate evidential status for her. Yet, a subject can use *x* as evidence even if *x* doesn't have legitimate evidential status for her. For instance, if Williamson's E=K theory is correct, then one cannot possess the

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<sup>23</sup> Both Deutsch (2010) and Cappelen (2012, p. 230) make a similar point. I stress that a causal source of evidence might, and probably often does, play some important evidential role or other non-evidential epistemological role in philosophical practice. The point made here is only that the causal source is not always important when it comes to debates about methodology.

propositional contents of any false beliefs as one's evidence; they don't have legitimate evidential status because the subject doesn't know them. However, plausibly, one can still *use* them as evidence. Centrality only holds that philosophers use intuitions as central evidence; whether they genuinely possess intuitive evidence is a further question.

That being said, evidence possession might have a bearing on the question of what it is for one to use  $x$  as evidence. Given the E=K theory, for example, it is natural to think that to use  $x$  as evidence is just to treat  $x$  as if it were known. This implies that one can only use the contents of one's beliefs as evidence, for, plausibly, if one doesn't believe  $x$  then one is not treating it as a piece of knowledge.<sup>24</sup> By contrast, if one's evidence is limited to a special kind of mental states, then one might hold that only one's mental states can be used as evidence and that to use a mental state as evidence for one's belief is just to "base" one's belief on that mental state.<sup>25</sup> In any case, my definition of Centrality will be neutral on the issue of what conditions one needs to satisfy in order to use something as evidence.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, Centrality implies that intuition plays *strong* evidential roles in the evaluation of philosophical theories, but differing views on evidential relation will disagree as to what exactly this means. Some have adopted Bayesian approaches, according to which evidential relations can be put in probabilistic terms; by contrast, some (e.g., Conee and Feldman, 2008) insist that the evidential relation is best

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<sup>24</sup> Williamson (2002) thinks the reverse is also true: if one doesn't treat  $x$  as knowledge then one doesn't believe  $x$ . He thereby adopts the view that "to believe  $p$  is to treat  $p$  as if one knew  $p$ " (2002, p. 46).

<sup>25</sup> See Neta (2011) for a variety of approaches to characterize this "basing" relation.

<sup>26</sup> It is important to distinguish between *using*  $x$  as evidence and *thinking of*  $x$  as evidence. Though the former notion is restricted by theories of evidential possession, the latter notion isn't. For example, even if the E=K theory is correct, one can still think of a mental state as evidence. There might be a sense of "use" according to which Centrality is true as long as philosophers think of intuitions as central evidence. But this will not be the relevant version of Centrality here; the current chapter considers whether intuitions are used as evidence, no matter whether we are thinking of them as such.

understood as an abductive relation. I will stay neutral on this issue, but one point frequently made in the Bayesian context is worth highlighting, namely the distinction between the *balance* and the *weight* of evidence. There are two senses in which a piece of evidence  $x$  is “strong” evidence for a philosophical theory  $t$ . One can say that the *balance* of the evidence is strong, in cases where  $x$  makes  $t$  a highly probable theory. Alternatively, one can say that  $x$  has strong evidential *weight*, in cases where it provides a substantial size of evidential data.<sup>27</sup> We might therefore ask whether Centrality is the claim that intuitions (or propositions about intuitions) are given strong balance or weight. In my view, Centrality is false if either intuition is treated as having rather weak balance or rather weak weight relative to the other kinds of philosophical evidence. Intuition’s importance in philosophical practice will be undermined, if either it only very slightly raises a philosophical theory’s probability, or it is thought of as providing a rather small size of relevant information.<sup>28</sup>

## 2. The Argument from Non-Neutrality

Williamson (2007) argues against Centrality by claiming that it is ill-motivated. According to Williamson, the idea that philosophical evidence consists of intuitions is driven by the principle of “Evidence Neutrality,” which he defines as follows:

Whether a proposition constitutes evidence is in principle uncontentiously decidable, in the sense that a community of inquirers can always in principle achieve common knowledge as to whether any given proposition constitutes evidence for the inquiry... in a debate over a hypothesis  $h$ , proponents and opponents of  $h$  should be able to agree

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<sup>27</sup> See, e.g., Joyce (2005) for more about the balance/weight distinction.

<sup>28</sup> The balance/weight distinction is seldom made in debates about intuitive evidence, probably because a traditional non-Bayesian framework of epistemology is often assumed. An exception is Weatherson (2014), who defends Centrality by claiming that intuition provides strong but rather fragile evidence. However, since Weatherson takes intuitive evidence to have rather weak evidential weight, his position doesn’t vindicate Centrality, as I use the term.

whether some claim **p** constitutes evidence without first having to settle their differences over **h** itself. (2007, p. 210)<sup>29</sup>

Note that this is not the claim that evidence is always known by participants of the debate; it is rather the claim that evidence is always *in principle* known, which means that inquirers can achieve common knowledge if they overcome all the “accidental mistakes and confusions” (Williamson, 2007, p. 210). This suggests that evidence plays the role of *neutral arbiter* between rival theories: one cannot argue from a piece of evidence which presupposes the falsity of the opponent’s position. Take the debate between supporters of the descriptivist theory of reference and supporters of the causal theory as an example. According to Evidence Neutrality, one cannot reject the descriptivist theory by putting forward evidence which presupposes the truth of the causal theory, for in that case the descriptivist will never, even in principle, accept that piece of evidence.

To illustrate why Williamson thinks Evidence Neutrality might lead to Centrality, consider the Gödel case, which is frequently cited as a thought experiment against the descriptivist theory of reference. Suppose that Schmidt rather than Gödel actually proved the incompleteness of arithmetic. Also suppose that we only associate one description “the prover of incompleteness” with the name “Gödel.” What evidence does this case provide? Consider the following two propositions:

(G1) “Gödel” does not refer to Schmidt.

(G0) It is intuitive that “Gödel” does not refer to Schmidt.

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<sup>29</sup> Williamson assumes in this paragraph that some propositional theory of evidence is correct. In the current section, I will follow Williamson in this assumption. However, the assumption is essential neither to Williamson’s argument nor to my points made in this section; similar points can be made if one endorses a non-propositional theory of evidence.

According to Evidence Neutrality, one cannot use (G1) as evidence against descriptivism. The descriptivist theory entails that “Gödel” refers to Schmidt, and therefore the descriptivist will never, even in principle, accept that (G1) is true. By contrast, (G0) seems to be a better candidate; even the descriptivist can agree that (G1) is intuitive, while insisting that this intuition doesn’t falsify descriptivism. The above sort of consideration, according to Williamson, “tempts one to retreat into identifying evidence with uncontentious propositions about psychological states” (2007, p. 211). To satisfy Evidence Neutrality, one needs to start with premises with which even one’s opponents might agree. And it seems that the psychological premises describing people’s intuitions best satisfy this condition.

Williamson denies the principle of Evidence Neutrality by pointing out that even psychological premises don’t meet its requirement. One might face an opponent who is committed to saying that we cannot even have the intuition that “Gödel” does not refer to Schmidt. Some radical eliminativists, for instance, will not accept that there are intuitions at all. On their view, attributions of folk psychological mental states like intuition are false in the consideration of researches in neurophysiology. (G0) doesn’t comply with Evidence Neutrality, because these eliminativists will never, even in principle, accept that (G0) is true. Williamson infers that Evidence Neutrality is false, for the notion of Evidence as a neutral arbiter between participants lays us “open to exploitation by ruthless opponents” (2007, p. 238). We shouldn’t limit our evidence simply because the opponent insists “an impoverished skeptical starting-point”; rather, we sometimes must “abandon skeptics to their fate” (Williamson, 2007, pp. 238–239). There is thus no need to retreat into psychological premises like (G0). Williamson concludes that “our evidence in philosophy consists of facts, most of them non-psychological, to which we have appropriate epistemic



access” (2007, p. 241). I will refer to Williamson’s above argument against Centrality as the “argument from non-neutrality.”

Even if Centrality is not well-motivated, however, this doesn’t mean that it is false. Both Alexander (2010) and Brown (2011) have responded to Williamson by providing reasons to accept Centrality without appealing to Evidence Neutrality. Also, Weinberg (2009) argues that the experimentalists’ challenge doesn’t need to assume Evidence Neutrality in any event. Though I have some worries about their arguments, I am inclined to endorse the general idea: the principle of Evidence Neutrality is not essential to the experimental critique. My reason is this: the version of Centrality that Evidence Neutrality initially seems to give rise to is indeed much stronger than what experimentalists need. As Williamson puts it, Evidence Neutrality “exerts general pressure to psychologize evidence” (2007, p. 211); since non-psychological premises never pass the Evidence Neutrality test, supporters of Evidence Neutrality will contend that *only* psychological premises play important evidential roles in philosophy. Thus, they will conclude that only intuitions (plus maybe some other psychological states) serve as philosophers’ central evidence. But supporters of Centrality don’t need to stick to such a strong conclusion. Instead, they can accept that both psychological premises and non-psychological premises are granted central evidential status. Thinking of intuitions as constituting central philosophical evidence doesn’t need to exclude other sorts of evidence as equally central.

This weak version of Centrality is enough for most experimentalists’ purpose. Those who adopt one of the moderate versions of the experimental critique usually aim to argue that the standard philosophical methodology should be significantly revised, and they can achieve this purpose as long as one of the central tools in

philosophy is shown to be in trouble. Even the skeptical version of the experimentalists' argument is compatible with the above weak version of Centrality. Experimentalists can accept a skeptical attitude towards intuitions, but not towards other kinds of evidence in philosophical practice. Admittedly, experimentalists occasionally sound as if they think that, if intuition doesn't qualify as evidence, then the whole discipline of philosophy is undermined. However, this sort of radical claim is not essential to their critique, and surely their experimental data can have important methodological implications without being able to dismiss the discipline as a whole.

Indeed, Williamson's two other related worries with Centrality are also only effective against the strong version of Centrality. First, he argues that Centrality can be "self-defeating." Williamson seems to think that, *ceteris paribus*, supporters of Centrality prefer those explanations of intuitions on which the intuitions are true to those explanations on which the intuitions are false.<sup>30</sup> He then questions what justifies this preference. Even if it is justified by an intuition, it is unclear why this particular intuition has such a special privilege that we adopt "a methodology that assumes its truth" (Williamson, 2007, p. 236). But this problem is merely true of the strong version of Centrality, according to which only intuitions work as philosophical evidence. Supporters of the weak version of Centrality, by contrast, can claim that the above preference is justified by non-psychological considerations rather than intuitions. One might suggest that, for instance, intuitions are more likely to be true than false as a result of evolutionary pressure. It is also worth noting that Williamson's self-defeating problem is nothing unique to philosophy; empirical

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<sup>30</sup> Note that this argument is not intended against experimentalists, for they don't have such a preference. Instead, the targets of this argument are those philosophers who support Centrality and also think that intuition has legitimate evidential status in philosophy.

sciences face a similar problem of why, *ceteris paribus*, we prefer the explanations on which the observational data come out true. This problem, however, obviously doesn't constitute any good reason against what we might call "P-Centrality", the thesis that perception plays central evidential roles in the empirical sciences. It is thus unclear why a similar objection in the case of intuition should be considered as a serious problem with Centrality.

This leads to another point made by Williamson, which is precisely based on an analogy between philosophy and the sciences. He puts it as follows:

If Evidence Neutrality psychologizes evidence in philosophy, it psychologizes it in the natural sciences too. But it is fanciful to regard evidence in the natural sciences as consisting of psychological facts rather than, for example, facts about the results of experiments and measurements... The psychologization of evidence by Evidence Neutrality should be resisted in the natural sciences; it should be resisted in philosophy too. (2007, p. 212)

Williamson might be right that the tendency of *generally* psychologizing evidence should be resisted both in the natural sciences and in philosophy. However, it is absurd to deny that the psychological occupies at least one of the central kinds of evidential roles in scientific practice. It remains highly plausible that perceptions or observations play key evidential roles, and experimental data reporting extensive observational bias are definitely relevant to the methodology of the sciences. If we take the analogy between philosophy and the sciences seriously, then we have good reason to believe that intuitions are granted central (though probably not the only central) evidential status in philosophy and that the experimentalists' results are relevant to philosophical methodology.

To conclude, I share with Williamson the concern that experimentalists as well as their opponents have sometimes exaggerated the importance of intuition in

philosophy. Philosophers, just as empirical scientists, can and have appealed to a wide range of non-psychological evidence. However, I think Williamson goes too far when he says that *most of* the evidence used in philosophy is non-psychological in its nature. Though we don't need to always start from intuitive evidence in philosophical theorizing, it remains plausible that we do start from intuitive evidence in some central types of cases. But none of the arguments considered in this section succeeds in refuting that weaker claim.

### **3. The Argument from Reasoning**

Another line of attack on Centrality involves the claim that philosophers use *reasoning* rather than intuition in the evaluation of theories and hypotheses. Both Deutsch (2009, 2010, 2015) and Cappelen (2012) have appealed to this approach in refuting Centrality. In this section, I will mainly focus on Deutsch's view. Take the Gödel case as an example again. Remember that Williamson seems to think that evidence offered in this case is the thought-experimental judgment (G1): "Gödel" doesn't refer to Schmidt. Further, he seems to suggest that philosophers don't need to use any further evidence to back up the premise (G1). Deutsch, by contrast, suggests that philosophers need and have actually used further evidence—namely, arguments—to support thought-experimental judgments like (G1).<sup>31</sup>

More specifically, he contends that Kripke presents the following arguments for (G1) in the original presentation of the Gödel case. The first argument is based on analogy with several real-life examples. "Einstein," for instance, doesn't refer to the inventor of the atomic bomb, despite the facts that some speakers associate with

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<sup>31</sup> Deutsch agrees with Williamson that (G1) is our evidence, but insists that the evidential status of (G1) is derived from the arguments provided.

“Einstein” only one description “the inventor of the atomic bomb” and that Einstein didn’t invent the atomic bomb. The second is the “immunity to error” argument. If descriptivism is correct, then it follows that people can never make mistakes when they assert sentences like “Gödel is the prover of incompleteness.” Since this consequence is false, there is good reason to believe that descriptivism is false too; however, descriptivism is “the only reason to make the opposing judgment [that Gödel refers to Schmidt]” (Deutsch 2015, p. 110). The immunity to error argument thereby constitutes an indirect argument for (G1). For similar reasons, Kripke’s objections to the descriptivist theory of meaning and positive arguments for his own causal-historical theory (or “picture”) of reference also count as indirect arguments for the judgment that Gödel doesn’t refer to Schmidt.

According to Deutsch, none of the arguments above starts from premises stating people’s intuitions; the premises concern *facts* about reference rather than intuitions about those facts. Both Deutsch (2010, 2015) and Cappelen (2012) have defended similar conclusions in a series of important philosophical thought experiments, such as Gettier cases, the Truetemp case, and the Trolley case. They both conclude that Centrality is a misconception of philosophers’ practice and that intuition seldom, if ever, plays significant evidential roles in philosophy. Call the above argument against Centrality the “argument from reasoning.”

Some philosophers (e.g., Ichikawa, 2013; Brogaard, 2014) have responded by claiming that, contra Deutsch and Cappelen, arguments for the relevant thought-experimental judgments do depend on intuitive evidence. Even supposing Deutsch is right that our intuition about (G1) doesn’t serve as evidence, it is sometimes suggested, some other intuitions do and must play evidential roles at some stage of the argumentative chain for (G1). Deutsch (2015) refers to this as the “relocation

problem” (p. 58). In what follows, I will raise a different objection to Deutsch. In contrast to the relocation problem, my objection doesn’t assume the strong claim that intuition *must* serve as evidence in philosophical arguments; rather, it is merely intended to show that Deutsch doesn’t provide any good argument against Centrality. I will focus on the following point, which is central to Deutsch’s argument:

(R) Philosophical arguments seldom start from premises stating people’s intuitions.

Here is my strategy. Instead of arguing against (R), I will claim that there are indeed several at least *prima facie* strong arguments for it. But I will further contend that we shouldn’t respond to those arguments by rejecting Centrality. The reason is as follows. There are similar arguments for a parallel claim (P-R) in the case of perception. Depending on what theory of evidence one has, one might respond differently to these arguments. However, almost no philosopher in the literature of perception responds by rejecting P-Centrality (the view that perception plays a central evidential role in empirical sciences). It thus seems unclear why similar arguments for (R) should motivate us to discard Centrality.

There are at least three apparently strong arguments for (R). First, philosophers usually don’t mention “intuition” and its cognate terms in their writings. Both Cappelen and Deutsch have emphasized this point; they examine the original texts surrounding famous thought experiments, and observe that philosophers very occasionally use “intuition”-language. This is actually the main reason why Deutsch thinks (R) is correct. Admittedly, sometimes one doesn’t mention the premises in one’s argument, such as in the case of hidden premises. However, if philosophers often start their arguments from statements concerning intuitions, then it is unlikely

that “intuition”-talk would happen so rarely in philosophical practice. Second, one might worry how one could infer from a premise describing intuition to a conclusion concerning non-psychological philosophical subject matter. Williamson (2007) raises such a problem, claiming that there is a gap between psychological premises like (G0) and non-psychological conclusions like (G1) and the gap “is not easily bridged” (p. 211). Third, philosophers often don’t even consider their own intuitions at the time of philosophical writing. When one writes about the philosophy of reference, one considers what names refer to and what the general nature of reference is; but one seldom considers one’s intuitions about the nature of references. This seems to suggest that they rarely hold beliefs about their own intuitions. One might not believe one’s premises in some cases of hidden premises, but in most cases one does hold beliefs about the premises one uses. There is thus a prima facie good reason to think that philosophers do not use premises about intuition in their arguments at all.

No matter how strong the above arguments are for (R), it is important to note that one can make analogous arguments for the following judgment in the case of perception:

(P-R) Arguments in the empirical sciences seldom start from premises stating people’s perceptual experiences.

To start with, one can defend (P-R) by claiming that scientists seldom use “perception”-language in their academic writings. For example, Williamson (2007) takes it that “when scientists state their evidence in their publications, they state mainly non-psychological facts” (p. 212). One can thus argue that, if scientists usually start from premises about experiences, then it is inexplicable that “perception”-talk happens so rarely in scientific publications. Moreover, one can

complain that there is a gap between the psychological and the non-psychological in the case of perception too. Brown (2011) points out that, on some accounts of perceptual evidence, there is a problem of how one can infer from the proposition that “one is having an experience as of p” to the conclusion that “p is the case” (p. 506). She then responds to Williamson’s gap objection by arguing that an externalist approach to bridging the gap in the case of perception could be well applied to the case of intuition too. Finally, one can also contend that (P-R) is true because empirical scientists plausibly often don’t even consider their own perceptual experiences. This suggests that scientists seldom hold beliefs about perception, and thus their argumentation seldom begins with the contents of those beliefs. These reasons support (P-R) in ways similar to how the parallel reasons support (R) in the case of intuition.

What would philosophers of perception regard as the consequences of these prima facie strong arguments for (P-R)? I take it that few philosophers will think that, because those arguments support (P-R), they also constitute good reasons for the view that perceptual experiences play no central evidential roles in scientific practices. In what follows, I will present a dilemma: no matter whether a philosopher accepts a propositional or a non-propositional theory of evidence, they don’t reject P-Centrality on the basis of the above reasons for (P-R). Take the last argument for (P-R) as an example, which has been discussed frequently in recent debates about the nature of perceptual evidence. For instance, Kelly (2014) writes that,

... some philosophers maintain that in typical cases of perception, one does not form beliefs about how things appear to one, or about how one’s perceptual experience presents things as being: rather, in response to one’s experiences, one simply forms beliefs about the external world itself.



In a similar vein, Pollock and Cruz (1999) argue that “the beliefs we form are almost invariably beliefs about the objective properties of physical objects—not about how things appear to us” (p. 61). According to them, we don’t possess beliefs about our own perceptual experiences in standard cases. One might thus allege that we rarely argue from premises stating perceptual experiences either, for we typically hold beliefs about our premises. This potential argument for (P-R) has exactly the same structure as the last of the above arguments for (R).

The crucial point is that Neither Kelly nor Pollock and Cruz argue that, because we seldom have beliefs about perception, perception has no evidential status. Instead, they both infer that perception has an evidential role to play—it is just that propositional theories of evidence fail to account for that role. They claim that the propositional view is overly demanding and hyper-intellectual; for, in order to characterize the evidential status of perception, the propositional theory requires one to form a higher-order belief regarding one’s own perceptual experience. Indeed, (P-R) contradicts P-Centrality only if one assumes some propositional theory of evidence. But if the non-propositional view of evidence is correct, then (P-R) is in fact compatible with P-Centrality. For, according to the non-propositional view, a perceptual experience can be used as evidence for a premise without itself being presented in the premise. Take Conee and Feldman’s (2004) evidentialism, which is an influential non-propositional theory of evidence, as an example. They argue that evidence includes “one’s private experiences” and that “such evidence could not be put into an argument in any useful manner” (2004, pp. 2–3). On such a view, we can accept that (P-R) is true—arguments in sciences seldom start with propositions describing perceptions—but insist that perception plays its evidential role in some other way.

There seems to be nothing to prevent us from giving the same sort of reply in the case of intuition. We can agree with Deutsch that (R) is true: philosophical arguments rarely have their starting points as propositions presenting intuitions. However, that is not the only way in which intuitions can play a central evidential role. If the non-propositional view of evidence is true, then intuitions are used as evidence for the premises in the arguments, but they themselves don't appear in those premises. Centrality thus remains cogent despite Deutsch's arguments for (R), assuming that evidence can be non-propositional in its nature.

Further, in my view, even if evidence must be propositional, the argument from reasoning still doesn't give any good reasons for rejecting Centrality. Consider the case of perception again. As I said above, some philosophers cast doubt on the propositional theory of evidence by arguments for (P-R). But importantly, even those who support the propositional theory don't reply by denying P-Centrality; instead, they choose to reject (P-R) by undermining the apparently strong arguments for it. For instance, Williamson, a proponent of the propositional theory, claims that we usually believe "the proposition that things appear to be that way" (2002, p. 198) and that propositions like this describe our perceptual experiences. He admits the fact that in typical cases we don't *consider* such proposition; however, according to Williamson, we still often have beliefs and knowledge about these propositions, because "one knows many propositions without considering them" (2002, p. 199). One doesn't need consideration to believe or even know a proposition, because "knowing is a state, not an activity" (Williamson, 2002, p. 199). In other words, while critics of the propositional theory of evidence condemn it as being hyper-intellectual, Williamson maintains that beliefs about one's own mental states are not as hard to achieve as the critics suppose it to be. On his view, to achieve such beliefs,

the subject doesn't even need to grasp the notion of perception. One only needs to grasp the notion of appearing by having "some inkling of the distinction between appearance and reality" (Williamson, 2002, p. 199).

Again, there seems to be nothing to stop us from making a similar reply in the case of intuition. We can respond to Deutsch by stating that, despite the fact that philosophers usually don't consider propositions about intuitions, they can still possess beliefs about those propositions, because knowledge is a state but not an activity. We might also add that, for Centrality to be true, philosophers don't even need to grasp the notion of intuition. They only need to grasp the notion of appearing, since propositions like "things appear to be that way" standardly describe one's intuitions in philosophical contexts. And if they believe such propositions, then it remains plausible that such propositions are hidden premises in philosophical argumentation.

The point is basically this. Though there are some *prima facie* strong arguments for (P-R), virtually no one in the literature of perceptual evidence denies P-Centrality on the basis of these arguments, no matter whether one supports the propositional or the non-propositional theory of evidence. Quite the opposite, it is a crucial aim for any plausible theory of evidence to capture perception's evidential role. As shown by Deutsch and Cappelen, there are similar *prima facie* strong reasons for accepting (R). If one reacts in ways similar to how philosophers react in the case of perception, then one should claim that the argument from reasoning doesn't undermine Centrality, whatever account of evidence is correct. It is rather the other way around: any plausible theory of evidence had better be able to take account of intuition's potential evidential role. Since critics of Centrality don't give any reason why one should react differently in the case of perception and the case of

intuition, it remains convincing that intuition plays a central evidential role in philosophical practice.

## Chapter 4

### How Do Philosophers Use Intuitions?

I have defended Centrality in response to some recent objections in the previous two chapters. In the current chapter, I am going to develop my own criticisms of the experimentalists' argument. My main target will be Weinberg's 2007 version of the experiment critique, though I expect that similar objections can be applied to other moderate versions too. As I discussed in Chapter 2, Weinberg (2007) attacks the philosophical practices surrounding use of intuition rather than intuition itself. Though Weinberg's approach avoids overall skepticism towards intuition, his focus on practices raises the question of whether the judgments being studied by experimentalists genuinely reflect philosophical practices.<sup>32</sup> I will argue that experimental surveys' appeals to intuition differ from philosophers' appeals in the following two respects. First, experimentalists mostly investigate *case intuitions*, that is, intuitions about whether a notion is applicable in a given particular case; but philosophical practices more frequently depend on *general intuitions*, that is, intuitions about the truth of a general principle or about a connection between abstract notions.<sup>33</sup> Second, when philosophers do treat case intuitions as evidence, they typically provide more contextual information than what experimentalist surveys have thus far provided. These two differences, I shall argue, undermine the

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<sup>32</sup> Indeed, in his response to the "relocation problem," Deutsch (2015, p. 125) suggests a similar line of argument against the experimental critique. He claims that, even if philosophers ultimately rely on intuitions as rock-bottom evidence, experimentalists don't have actual empirical data that show that there are some difficulties in this reliance.

<sup>33</sup> There are multiple ways to spell out this rough distinction between the two kinds of intuition. For example, one might distinguish them in terms of the generality of the propositional content of an intuition or in terms of whether an intuition concerns concrete or abstract matters. So far as I can tell, nothing in this chapter hangs on how the distinction is exactly made.

plausibility of Weinberg's argument. Along the way, I will contrast my position with the anti-Centrality response and the "expertise defense."

I stress that my purpose is not to defend "armchair" philosophical methodology. Indeed, if experimentalists design surveys in ways that more accurately represent philosophical practices, they might be able to generate data favoring Weinberg's conclusion. I aim to show only that most current experiments are not conducted in such ways and thereby cannot justify Weinberg's criticism of standard philosophical methodology.

### **1. Case Intuition and General Intuition**

For a proponent of the skeptical approach, intuitions are treated as a single problematic class, and therefore any study of intuition is potentially relevant. By contrast, Weinberg's version of the argument crucially relies on the assumption that the practices examined in experimental surveys are representative of the philosophical practices involving uses of intuition as evidence. Yet, I suspect that they are fairly unrepresentative. In virtually all their survey designs, experimentalists seek to prompt respondents' intuitions about *particular cases*.<sup>34</sup> They ask questions like "Does Bob really know that Jill drives an American car, or does he only believe it?" (Weinberg et al., 2001, p. 443) or measure respondents' degree of agreement with statements like "John decided to kill his wife of his own free will" (Feltz & Cokely, 2009, p. 345). In contending that such investigations should motivate

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<sup>34</sup> Schwitzgebel and Cushman's (2012) study is an exception, which elicits participants' judgments about abstract moral principles. Yet, even in this study, specific-case judgments are still the main focus; it includes 17 questions concerning particular scenarios but only 5 questions concerning moral principles. There are a few more investigations on general intuitions in experimental philosophy, such as Nichols and Knobe (2007) and Nahmias, Coates, and Kvaran (2007); nonetheless, these studies are aimed at neither discovering intuitive bias nor developing the experimental critique.

dramatic revisions in philosophers' appeals to intuition, Weinberg seems to presume that philosophical practice involves primarily reliance on specific-case intuitions.

Indeed, this assumption appears to be common in current metaphilosophical debates. For instance, Bealer (1998) writes that "it is intuitions about concrete cases that are accorded primary evidential weight by our standard justificatory procedure; theoretical intuitions are by comparison given far less evidential weight" (p. 205). Also, Jackson (1998) claims that the "only possible answer" to the question of how we should identify our ordinary conception is by appeal to "intuitions about possible cases" (p. 31). And Weinberg et al. (2001) even characterize an epistemic intuition as "simply a spontaneous judgment about the epistemic properties of some specific case" (p. 432). When it comes to a metaphilosophical problem about the use of intuition, there is often a tendency to identify the problem as simply a problem concerning the use of case intuition.

Nevertheless, philosophers seldom offer any reason why particular-case intuition deserves this epistemic priority. Certainly, they have attempted to defend the evidential efficacy of particular-case intuition; however, they seldom tell us why particular-case intuition deserves a stronger evidential status than general intuition. As Kagan (2001) points out, "it is far from clear what, if anything, makes it legitimate for us to give these [case specific] intuitions the kind of priority we typically give them" (p. 46). At present, we simply know too little about psychological mechanisms underlying intuition to judge which kind of intuition has a more important epistemic status. Kagan argues that, since the priority of specific-case intuition lacks justification, our practice is seriously misguided. However, I want to draw a different conclusion. The fact that this priority is hard to justify, I think, gives us a *prima facie* reason to doubt whether philosophers really give

specific-case intuition this priority. If philosophical practice, under this interpretation, is so obviously ungrounded, then there is a reason to carefully reconsider the accuracy of this interpretation.<sup>35</sup>

A closer look at philosophical practice, nonetheless, reveals that the alleged epistemic centrality of case intuitions is an exaggeration. Philosophers often grant significant evidential roles to *general intuitions*—intuitions about general principles or about connections between abstract philosophical notions. For example, epistemologists almost universally share the intuition that knowledge requires truth, and nearly all proposed theories of knowledge depend on this general intuition. Also, Sosa (1980) takes the main support for “formal foundationalism” to be the intuitive plausibility of the idea that “epistemic justification is subject to the supervenience that characterizes normative and evaluative properties generally” (p. 15). In philosophy of mind, Chalmers (2010) dismisses “Type-A Materialism” because it makes a “highly counterintuitive claim” (p. 114) that consciousness does not need further explanation once all the functions are explained. These examples could be easily multiplied. The use of general intuition constitutes an important aspect of philosophers’ intuition-based methodology; this aspect, however, has been overlooked in most experimental surveys.

At this stage, Weinberg might retreat and claim that experimentalists aim to criticize only philosophical practices involving *thought experiments*. It might be suggested that, although philosophers frequently rely on general intuitions, their thought-experimental judgments are mainly based on case intuitions. This weaker claim, however, is still dubious. One reason to suspect it comes from the argument

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<sup>35</sup> This style of argument takes its inspiration from Deutsch. Deutsch (personal communication) argues that we don’t treat intuitions as evidence because it is so obvious that we shouldn’t treat them as such.



from reasoning, one of the anti-Centrality arguments I discussed in Chapter 3.

Deutsch (2009, 2010, 2015) and Cappelen (2012) suggest that thought-experimental judgments are often supported by *philosophical arguments* instead of intuitions. For example, according to Deutsch (2010), Gettier's (1963) judgment that Smith lacks knowledge is primarily based on arguments like the following: Smith does not know because his belief is true due to a lucky coincidence. Both Cappelen and Deutsch go further and claim that, since experimentalists wrongly assume that thought experiments rely on intuitive evidence, experimental surveys have little philosophical significance.

I am sympathetic to their idea that philosophers usually give strong evidential weight to arguments concerning thought experiments. However, I do not endorse their further view that thought experiments do not rely on *any* intuitions as evidence. Instead, I maintain that the arguments provided in thought experiments are often grounded in general intuitions—they start from intuitively plausible premises about principles or about connections between abstract concepts. As both Ichikawa (2013) and Brogaard (2014) have pointed out, supporters of the anti-Centrality response have difficulty explaining our epistemic access to the premises of philosophical arguments. For example, Gettier's argument mentioned above relies on the following premise: if one's belief is true as a matter of luck, then one does not know. This premise is most naturally understood as being supported by a general "anti-luck" intuition; other possible interpretations, such as that Gettier stipulates the premise without any evidence or that he relies on further reasons for accepting the premise without stating them, seem uncharitable.

A further reason to believe that the anti-luck intuition has a central epistemic status in the Gettier literature is as follows. Note that epistemologists—even those

who defended the standard theory of knowledge as justified true belief before Gettier published his paper—almost unanimously agree that Gettier successfully refuted the JTB theory.<sup>36</sup> This sudden shift of opinion seems abnormal, not least because people commonly have a psychological tendency to disregard or underweight evidence that could disconfirm their old views. Philosophical practices are commonly described as involving a mutual adjustment of theories and data. If case intuitions are central evidence for Gettier judgments, it is hard to explain why nearly every philosopher has chosen to revise the theory rather than to revise judgments about Gettier cases. Intuitions are typically regarded as providing merely *prima facie* evidence; it is unclear why case intuitions alone were thought, in this case, to almost uncontroversially override all the theoretical advantages (e.g., simplicity) of the JTB account.

To explain this abnormality, I suggest that philosophers' central justification for their Gettier judgments comes from the general anti-luck intuition, an intuition which epistemologists had been using even before Gettier's paper. Importantly, epistemologists relied on the anti-luck intuition as evidence for the justification condition of the JTB theory. As Pritchard (2012) notes, the "standard response" (p. 247) to the question of why knowledge has to be justified is that mere true beliefs can be formed as a result of luck. The JTB theory is bankrupt, not only because of Gettier's counterexamples, but because the counterexamples are novel applications of the anti-luck intuition, which was previously thought of as a main reason for accepting the JTB account. Since the JTB theory is undermined by the very general intuition that was once standardly thought of as supporting it, it is to be expected that

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<sup>36</sup> Weatherston (2003) is a notable exception.

epistemologists suddenly abandoned this theory in the face of Gettier's counterexamples.

Another case in point is Lehrer's (2000) "Truetemp" case against externalist theories of knowledge. In this thought experiment, scientists insert into Mr. Truetemp's brain an accurate temperature recording device. The device reliably causes him to possess and accept thoughts about the temperature, but Mr. Truetemp himself knows neither that the device has been inserted nor that his thoughts about the temperature are reliable. Cappelen (2012) observes that Lehrer provides several arguments to support his judgment that Mr. Truetemp does not know what the temperature is. The central idea of those arguments, I think, is that Mr. Truetemp does not know because "the correctness of the thought is opaque to him" (Lehrer, 2000, p. 187). This argument relies on what I will call the "opacity principle" that, if the correctness of a thought is opaque to a person, then she does not know the content of that thought. That is to say, for a thought to count as knowledge, the thinker needs to have at least some rough background information about why her thought is correct, such as information about the underlying cognitive mechanism or about the truth frequency of her thought processes. In the absence of any such background information, according to Lehrer, Mr. Truetemp fails to know what the temperature is.

Cappelen claims that the Truetemp case is not based on any intuition. Again, I disagree with this claim, for the opacity principle is most obviously understood as expressing a general intuition regarding the nature of knowledge. I take it that Lehrer's main putative evidence against externalism consists of this general intuition. This can be seen from his reaction to modified accounts of externalism, which exclude the Truetemp case as a case of knowledge. Lehrer responds that "the

fundamental difficulty remains” (2000, p. 188) and then turns to another example to illustrate this difficulty. In this example, a person is told that Mr. Haller is in her office, yet she has no idea whether the person telling her this is reliable or not. Lehrer then uses an argument based on the opacity principle to defend his conclusion that the person does not know that Mr. Haller is in her office. However, the lack of knowledge in the Mr. Haller case appears far less intuitive than it is in the Truetemp case. Individuals trust the testimony of strangers all the time, for instance, when they get lost and ask for directions. It thus seems unlikely that most people will deny testimonial knowledge in the Mr. Haller case, at least if they are not already thinking of the general opacity principle. Therefore, any intuitive plausibility of Lehrer’s judgment about the Mr. Haller case to a great extent comes from the general intuition. The fact that Lehrer maintains the fundamental difficulty remains in this example strongly indicates that his argument against externalism relies more on the general intuition about the opacity principle than on specific-case intuitions.

I have argued above that general intuitions play a substantial evidential role in both Gettier cases and the Truetemp case. This constitutes a serious challenge to Weinberg’s formulation of the experimental critique, for a series of influential experimental studies on those cases (e.g., Weinberg et al., 2001; Swain et al., 2008; Weinberg, Alexander, Gonnerman, & Reuter, 2012) all focus on intuitions about particular cases while ignoring general intuitions. Similar emphasis on general intuitions can be found in many other philosophical thought experiments, especially, I think, in cases where the author refers to the case intuition as providing merely “prima facie” evidence.

It is common for a philosopher to claim that intuition about a particular thought experiment constitutes merely prima facie evidence, but what do they exactly mean

by “prima facie”? The first possibility is that they mean that intuition provides a *defeasible* reason for accepting the thought-experimental judgment. This is how Pollock (1987) defines prima facie reasons:

P is a prima facie reason for S to believe Q if and only if P is a reason for S to believe Q and there is an R such that R is logically consistent with P but (P & R) is not a reason for S to believe Q. (p. 484)

However, I don't think this is all what philosophers mean when they refer to a case intuition as giving a prima facie reason. Putting logical reasons aside, one might wonder whether there is any single type of reason that provides non-defeasible justification. Even logical inferences might be defeasible, given the existence of non-standard logical systems. It is thus unclear why philosophers much more frequently refer to case intuitions as providing prima facie reasons than referring to other sorts of evidence as being so. They much less frequently say, for instance, that an abductive argument or an argument from analogy has prima facie justificatory status, though such arguments are far from non-defeasible.

On an alternative interpretation, philosophers mean “weak justification” by “prima facie justification.”<sup>37</sup> Namely, they hold that intuition about a particular thought experiment offers fairly weak evidential support for the thought-experimental judgment. This interpretation, if correct, would lead to skepticism about the significance of negative experimental philosophy. Their data mainly concern case intuitions; but if case intuitions are treated as fairly weak evidence, then the philosophical importance of the experimental critique will be fairly marginal. In any event, I take it that there is a better interpretation of philosophers' use of “prima facie” when they are talking about case intuitions. They mean that a case intuition

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<sup>37</sup> Deutsch (personal communication) holds this view and uses it to challenge the experimental critique.

*provides weak evidential support for a judgment unless the judgment is grounded in more general considerations.*<sup>38</sup> This implies that the case intuition provides easily defeasible justification; the justification can be defeated by general considerations supporting the opposite judgment. The general considerations, I suppose, are often supported by our general intuitions about them. Thus, contrary to what experimentalists assume, general intuitions are frequently given a more important evidential status than case intuitions are.

An example is Block's (1978) China-brain thought experiment, in which a billion people in China communicate with one another in the ways that are functionally equivalent to a human mind. After appealing to the intuition that the China-brain lacks mentality, Block notes that this provides merely *prima facie* doubt against functionalism. He emphasizes that he will "not rest on this appeal to intuition" because this kind of reliance on intuition is "notoriously fallible" and "far from decisive" (1978, p. 278). He then argues that the content of the intuition has "a rational basis" and that this basis provides "a good reason for doubting that Functionalism is true" (1978, p. 278). This rational basis rests on the general principle that "mentality depends crucially on psychological and/or neurophysiological processes and structures" (1978, p. 282). The argument goes that, since the China-brain need not resemble the human mind psychologically or neurophysiologically, it need not have mentality. Therefore, there is at least one possible China-brain system without mental states. Block maintains that the general principle is "a highly plausible assumption" (1978, p. 282) and that the case intuition is at least partially controlled by it. Though he doesn't clearly specify the epistemic grounds for the

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<sup>38</sup> I emphasize that this is not how I use "prima facie" in other places of this dissertation. When I claim that there are *prima facie* reasons to think that we seldom argue from premises stating our own intuitions, for instance, I only mean that these reasons are defeasible.

general principle, on a natural understanding it is supported by our general intuition concerning mentality. As the starting point of Block's argumentation, the China-brain case intuition might have a more important rhetorical role (e.g., in raising the readers' interest); nevertheless, it is the general intuition that plays the more important evidential role in this thought experiment.

A final objection to the methodological centrality of case intuition is as follows. To fully appreciate the epistemic significance of a thought experiment, it doesn't suffice for one to share the particular case intuition. Moreover, one usually needs to be able to construct similar cases based on the same general rationale. Take Jackson's (1982) case of Mary as an example. Mary is a brilliant scientist who obtains all the physical information about human color vision in a black and white room. According to Jackson, after Mary is released from the room, it seems "just obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it" (1982, p. 130). This original case concerns only visual experience. Yet, if one really understands Jackson's point, then one should be able to think of similar cases, e.g., a similar Mary case about smell, taste, or hearing. Importantly, one should be able to know that those similar cases present the same general line of objection to materialism, namely, the knowledge argument.

But how do we achieve the knowledge that the cases are offering the same general objection? We cannot know it by case intuitions alone. Also, we cannot know it only because the cases are similar. As one can learn from the post-Gettier literature, two cases closely resembling each other can express two very different worries with a theory. On my view, general intuitions have a crucial role in achieving knowledge of the above kind. The original Mary case, I think, reflects an intuitive general principle about knowledge, and we are able to grasp that principle by

considering the particular case. The grasp of that general principle enables us to construct similar cases and to know that the cases are based on the same rationale. Though the general principle can have divergent epistemic grounds, I take it that in many cases it is mainly supported by a general intuition. Hence, to the extent that the above kind of knowledge is philosophically important, general intuition often has a prominent epistemic status in the use of thought experiments.

One might wonder what the relevant principle is in the Mary case. In my view, though we might not be able to articulate what exactly the principle is, we can put it roughly as follows: the principle that the subject will learn something new in *Mary-style* cases. Intuition about this principle is what really matters in the knowledge argument, instead of intuition about any particular Mary-style case. In general, experimentalists have exaggerated case intuitions' role in philosophers' use of intuitions. Their experimental surveys generally target unrepresentative samples of intuitions; thus, they have in effect been testing a different sort of practice than the one that occurs in philosophy. Note that this is a more serious problem for Weinberg's account than for the skeptical account. A skeptic about intuition regards all intuitions as a class and rejects them wholesale; as a result, she can appeal to any study of intuition for support. By contrast, Weinberg tries to reject only philosophical uses of intuition; therefore, only studies of intuition that resemble philosophical practices closely can lend support to his critique.

Experimentalists might reply that case intuitions and general intuitions are generated by the same mental capacity and are thus likely to be subject to the same biases. As a result, it might be suggested, survey data indicating biases in case intuitions are indirect evidence for biases in general intuitions. However, the "homogeneity" assumption that the same psychological mechanism is responsible for



both case intuitions and general intuitions is a substantial empirical hypothesis—one which experimentalists have gathered little evidence for. In fact, as have been seen in Chapter 2, there is good reason to think that intuition in the thin sense is based on a heterogeneous kind of cognitive processes. Moreover, the few extant studies on general intuitions in experimental philosophy seem to count against the homogeneity assumption. For example, Schwitzgebel and Cushman (2012) report that, while the order of presentation influences non-philosophers’ intuitions concerning particular moral scenarios, it shows little impact on their intuitions concerning moral principles. Further, Nichols and Knobe (2007) suggest that case intuitions about moral responsibility are more inclined to be affected by emotion than general ones. In the absence of evidence supporting the homogeneity assumption, we currently have no reason to think that experimentalists’ data imply anything about philosophers’ use of general intuitions.<sup>39</sup> In the next section, I will argue that their data also fail to cast doubt on philosophical practices involving case intuitions.

## **2. Context-Poor Intuition and Context-Rich Intuition**

In the last section, I have argued that experimentalists overestimate the methodological importance of specific-case intuitions. In spite of this, I think case intuition still plays some evidential role in philosophical practice. At this point, Weinberg might maintain that current experimental results should at least lead to substantial revisions in philosophical practices involving specific-case intuitions. However, there is still a key difference between philosophers’ and surveys’ use of

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<sup>39</sup> See Nado (2014) for more psychological evidence against the homogeneity assumption. Though my main target here is Weinberg’s interpretation of the experimentalists’ argument, it is worth noting that the homogeneity assumption also seems to underlie the skeptical interpretation. Indeed, Nado argues that, since intuitions are fairly heterogeneous, the entire experimentalist project of evaluating intuition seems misguided.

case intuitions: philosophical texts usually provide more *contextual information* than experimental surveys do. Throughout this section, I will limit my discussion to intuitions about particular cases.

To get clear on my proposal, it is useful to compare it with a recently popular “expertise defense” of standard philosophical methodology. This defense says that philosophers only treat as evidence intuitions of those who possess a certain degree of philosophical training or expertise. Proponents of this approach have postulated the existence of different types of philosophical expertise, such as being better at understanding and interpreting descriptions of scenarios (Horvath, 2010), being better at making judgments based solely on conceptual competence (Ludwig, 2007; Kauppinen, 2007), or an expertise analogous to expertise in other disciplines like physics and psychology (Devitt, 2011). They speculate that such expertise can reduce or eliminate the cognitive biases found in experimentalists’ surveys, most of which investigate intuitive judgments of non-experts.

In order to test this speculation about philosophical expertise, experimental philosophers have conducted a number of surveys directly on philosophers. Contrary to what the expertise defense predicts, philosophers are found to be no less susceptible to intuitive bias than laypeople. Their so-called “expert” intuitions vary dramatically according to factors like personality (Schulz, Cokely, & Feltz, 2011), order (Schwitzgebel & Cushman, 2012), and the subject’s linguistic background (Vaesen, Peterson, & Van Bezooijen, 2013). Though such results are far from decisive, they do seem to constitute a strong challenge to proponents of the expertise defense, who have provided little experimental data in support of their thesis.

Supporters of the expertise defense allege that experimentalists’ early surveys are mistaken in what *individuals* they should test. By contrast, I think the more

serious problem for most surveys, whether of laypeople or of professional philosophers, is that they are mistaken in what *practices* they should test. Note that this is a problem especially pressing for Weinberg's account of the experimental critique, which is aimed at challenging the philosophical practice of using intuition, instead of intuitions themselves. Weinberg needs to show not only that intuitions are unstable, but that they are unstable in practices similar enough to philosophers' appeals to intuition. However, current experimental surveys mostly generate intuitions through vignettes that provide little contextual information, or in a "context-poor" way; thus, they are not testing the philosophical employment of case intuition, which typically involves more substantial contextual information, or is "context-rich."

By contextual information, I mean the information that philosophers provide in the text surrounding a thought experiment.<sup>40</sup> For instance, this can involve explicit calling attention to a particular aspect of the scenario, reasoning about the relevant thought-experimental judgment, or comparisons between different cases. Such information can perform many functions; for instance, Cullen (2010) has argued that surveys' lack of explicit "conversational contexts" can lead to *misunderstanding* of both the vignette and the question.<sup>41</sup> In this section, I will focus on another function of contextual information that will be particularly important for the purpose of

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<sup>40</sup> That is to say, contextual information includes both what is explicitly stated and what is tacitly implied in the text.

<sup>41</sup> There is an important difference between Cullen's argument and mine. Cullen complains that, since experimentalists do not apply the correct survey methodology, their findings demonstrate variations in survey responses but not in intuitions. By contrast, I am neutral on whether experimental studies elicit intuitions; I claim only that the practices they study are significantly different from philosophical practices.

evaluating Weinberg's argument: contextual information frequently *highlights the ordinary aspects* of a far-fetched imaginary scenario.<sup>42</sup>

Take Lehrer's Truetemp case as an example again. Though this thought experiment primarily relies on a general intuition, the independent fact that the particular case intuition is in agreement with Lehrer's views provides some extra evidential support. In eliciting this case intuition, Lehrer explicitly draws readers' attention to the fact that Mr. Truetemp "has no idea whether he or his thoughts about the temperature are reliable" (2000, p. 187). The reasoning from the opacity principle highlights the same fact: one main reason to believe that the correctness of the thought is opaque to Mr. Truetemp is exactly that he does not know whether his thoughts are reliable or trustworthy. This aspect of the case is made still more evident in comparisons between different cases. For instance, a later appearance of the Truetemp case in Lehrer's book is immediately followed by an ordinary case, in which one reads an accurate thermometer at a gas station but has no idea whether the thermometer is trustworthy or not.<sup>43</sup> Surveys on this thought experiment, however, do not stress the above fact. Take Swain et al.'s (2008) Charles case, which is modeled after the original Truetemp case, as an example. While the vignette provides information like that "Charles is unaware that his brain has been altered" and that "apart from his estimation, he has no other reasons to think it is 71 degrees" (Swain et al., 2008, p. 154), it does not emphasize the specific fact that Charles has no idea about the reliability or trustworthiness of his thoughts. This aspect of the case is

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<sup>42</sup> In fact, in a response to Cappelen, Weinberg (2014) makes a similar point that Lehrer's arguments work as "textual cues," which steer us "towards what he takes to be the proper viewing conditions for the case" (p. 552). However, as I argue in this section, this view is not friendly to Weinberg's own account of the experimental critique, for current experimental studies seldom present useful textual cues to respondents.

<sup>43</sup> By using such contextual information, Lehrer also means to bring the reader's attention to the general intuition about the opacity principle—the intuition which, as I argued in the last section, constitutes Lehrer's main evidence against externalism.

neither explicitly called to attention nor highlighted by reasoning or comparison between cases.<sup>44</sup>

The aspect that Lehrer emphasizes is *ordinary*, in the sense that it is more familiar to most people than the Truetemp case itself. While no one encounters anyone exactly like Mr. Truetemp in real life or knows of any thermometer that can give rise to beliefs, most people frequently experience cases where one believes a certain proposition without knowing the reliability of one's source. For instance, readers of tabloid newspapers frequently believe what is said in the papers without giving a thought to the publication's reliability. Lehrer's ordinary case about the thermometer is another example.<sup>45</sup> Since most important philosophical cases are unusual to a certain extent, it is to be expected that philosophers frequently provide contextual information to lay stress on more usual features of the esoteric scenarios. Remember that Weinberg regards ordinary uses of intuition as more corrigible and trustworthy than the philosophical use. Since one main function of contextual information is to make salient the ordinary sides of thought experiments, philosophers' appeals to intuition turn out to be more "ordinary" than Weinberg supposes. As a result, by Weinberg's own criteria, there is good reason to think that philosophers' appeals to intuition are more trustworthy than the context-poor uses of intuition that experimentalists have tested.

One might reply that, even if contextual information can reduce the degree of variation found in context-poor intuitions, context-rich intuitions might still be

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<sup>44</sup> One might respond that a reader could infer this information from the vignette; it is a simple inference from "Charles is unaware that his brain has been altered" to "Charles does not know that he is reliable at temperature estimation." However, even simple inferences can be easily neglected when they are not made salient to a reader.

<sup>45</sup> This case might appear unintuitive. However, Lehrer seems to think that it is an intuitive case of non-knowledge and uses it to stress the ordinary aspects of the Truetemp case. The purpose here is not to defend Lehrer's use of the Truetemp case, but to illustrate one important role of contextual information that is common in philosophy but is often missing from experimental research.

widely subject to cognitive bias. In response, I agree that even context-rich intuitions *might* vary substantially according to irrelevant factors. But the experimental critique needs psychological data showing that philosophical practices involving context-rich intuitions are *actually* unstable. Merely stating the possibility of systematic variation is not enough to challenge standard philosophical methodology. A few recent experimental studies (Starmans & Friedman, 2012; Nagel et al., 2013; Turri, 2013) have started to test more context-rich intuitions on Gettier cases by asking more comprehension questions, providing well-structured control cases, or dividing the story into several stages. Importantly, these studies highlight the element of luck in Gettier cases. Yet, none of them reports any statistically significant variation as a function of factors such as age, gender, or ethnic background; on the contrary, subjects are shown to have a broad consensus on knowledge attribution.

The skeptical interpretation of the experimental critique targets intuition as a general kind. In a sense, any particular finding of intuitive bias adds some degree of confirmation to this criticism, though one might think that its conclusion is ultimately too strong to be successful. By contrast, Weinberg's interpretation has a more modest conclusion, for he criticizes only the philosophical employment of intuition. However, Weinberg's approach faces a different problem: his conclusion cannot be justified by extant survey data. Experimentalists' surveys generally test context-poor intuitions about particular cases, but philosophers more frequently appeal to general intuitions and context-rich intuitions as evidence. Though the surveys might show that intuitions are sometimes variable, they have not shown that philosophers' appeals to intuitions are problematically sensitive. Still, I think Weinberg's interpretation outlines a more promising empirical project than the skeptical interpretation. The message from this chapter is not that we should

disregard the negative program of experimental philosophy altogether, but that those who work on this program must modify their research methodology. They need to more carefully examine how philosophers actually use intuition in the evaluation of theoretical claims.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

The main theme of this dissertation is to show that experimentalists need to more carefully examine their metaphilosophical assumptions regarding philosophical practice. Even the widely accepted assumption that intuition plays a central evidential role in philosophy deserves scrutiny. I argued that Centrality remains plausible, but it is important to keep in mind that there are some theoretical limitations. First, Centrality is plausible only if we adopt a thin notion of intuition. Supporters of the anti-Centrality response have offered some convincing reasons against the view that intuition, in the thick sense, occupies any central evidential status in philosophy. Most philosophers engaged in first-order philosophical issues are unlikely to use the term “intuition” in the thick sense. Further, intuition in this sense doesn’t figure in the psychology of philosophical thinking.

Second, we shouldn’t understand Centrality as an exceptional feature of philosophy. Some critics of Centrality, especially Cappelen, seem to assume that supporters of Centrality treat it as a form of philosophical exceptionalism. However, intuition in the thin sense plausibly plays a central evidential role not only in philosophy, but also in other disciplines like empirical sciences. In response, I surveyed different approaches to explicating the experimentalists’ argument. While the skeptical interpretation of the experimental critique does depend on the assumption that philosophers distinctively make use of intuitions, more moderate interpretations do not. This suggests that the experimentalists’ project is more promising given a moderate interpretation; they should aim to contend not that



intuition is generally unreliable, but that some particular types of intuitions or some particular types of activities involving intuitions are untrustworthy.

Third, we shouldn't understand Centrality as implying that intuition plays the only central evidential role in philosophical inquiry. The view that philosophical evidence only consists of intuition is untenable. Williamson argues that this view may stem from the false principle that evidence has to work as a neutral arbiter between different sides of the debate. The falsity of the "intuition-only" view of philosophical evidence suggests that experimentalists should conceive of themselves as challenging a central part of philosophical methodology, instead of challenging philosophical methodology as a whole.

Fourth, we should understand Centrality as a claim neutral to whether the propositional theory or the non-propositional theory of evidence is correct. Centrality merely claims that intuition plays a central evidential role, but what exactly that role might be can depend on which specific theory of evidence turns out to be true. The same thing is true of perception. Though theorists differ as to how precisely perception plays its evidential role, almost no one denies that perceptual experiences occupy a central evidential role in empirical sciences. Based on an analogy between intuition and perception, I argued against Deutsch's argument from reasoning. An argument in the case of perception, with the same structure as Deutsch's argument, doesn't offer a good reason against the view that perception plays a central evidential role. Therefore, it remains unclear why we should reject Centrality on the basis of the argument from reasoning.

I also argued that experimentalists have relied on false assumptions concerning how philosophers make use of intuitions. Experimentalists assume that, when philosophers appeal to intuitions, they usually appeal to specific case intuitions. In

contrast, I have presented several arguments for the claim that it is general intuition that plays a more prominent evidential role in philosophical practice: (i) The claim is supported by philosophers' use of "prima facie" when they are talking about case intuitions; (ii) general intuitions are frequently used to support philosophers' theoretical arguments for thought-experimental judgments; and (iii) general intuitions explain well why we are able to know that different thought experiments are based on the same rationale. Especially, I contend that general intuitions explain well the persistence of the specific intuition in the Gettier case. Further, I argued that general intuitions play a key role in some other famous thought experiments, including the Truetemp case, the China-brain case, and the Mary case.

Still, I take it that philosophers sometimes do grant case intuitions a substantial evidential role. Yet, the surveys that experimentalists have conducted so far usually elicit intuitions in a context-poor way; subjects report their intuitions in response to vignettes with little contextual information. Experimentalists thus seem to assume that the use of case intuition in philosophy is typically also context-poor. I argued against this assumption by showing that philosophers normally elicit case intuitions through texts providing a substantial amount of contextual information.

The above two differences between philosophers' and surveys' appeals to intuitions lead to negative consequences for the experimentalists' argument. In particular, I argued that these two differences raise a serious problem with Weinberg's 2007 interpretation of the experimental critique: there is currently not enough experimental data to support his argument. This is particularly worrying for experimentalists given that they seem to need a non-skeptical interpretation and that Weinberg's 2007 version is one of the most worked-out examples in the literature. There is no denying that future experimental studies, by representing philosophical

practice more accurately, might ultimately favor Weinberg's conclusion. At present, however, this remains nothing but a possibility.

I finally stress that all the above metaphilosophical assumptions that I have examined are general empirical hypotheses, and to defend or criticize them requires more work than what has been done in this dissertation. I don't take myself as having already offered knock-down arguments for or against the above hypotheses. However, I intend this dissertation to provide sufficient reasons to motivate experimentalists to rethink the accuracy of their descriptions of the philosophical practices involving uses of intuitions. Indeed, empirical methods borrowed from other disciplines (e.g., statistics) can be helpful in systematically investigating the use of intuition in philosophy. Given the complexity of the issue and its close relevance to the experimental critique, experimental philosophers might be motivated to pursue a new research project in the future, which concerns how philosophers *actually* use intuitions rather than how they *should* use them in the evaluation of philosophical theories.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> There are already few studies working on this direction. Andow (2015), for example, examines the use of "intuition"-terminology in journal articles through the JSTOR database.

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