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Lame Methodology: An Analysis of Intuition

0.

I argue that there is no theory of intuition that can out-compete another without relying on a question begging argument or an epistemic regress. I'm not arguing that one *must* be a skeptic regarding theories of intuition. Rather, if the theory of intuition that one wants is a theory whereby intuition confers epistemic status, then one must also look outside the standard purview of philosophical methodology. I show here that standard methodology alone is insufficient for these ends. Though, at the end of the paper, I make some gesture towards the means that would be appropriate.

1.

Timothy Williamson has significantly helped shape the current debate regarding intuition (2004, 2007). Williamson argues that skeptical theories of intuition amount to radical skeptical objections to judgment in general (2004). Thus, the intuition-objector's theory has theoretical consequences that are difficult (if not impossible) to accept. In reply, the intuition-objector needs to present a non-radical-skepticism-entailing argument that impugns intuitions but not judgment in general.

Jonathan Weinberg (2007) attempts such a reply. He argues that intuitions fail to meet independent epistemic criteria that would make them 'hopeful' epistemizers.¹ Note that Weinberg here is objecting to what philosophers *do*, rather than the intuitions that they have. This is a not-so-subtle shift in tactics from the experimental philosophy crowd, whose previous tack was to show that intuition-*simpliciter* is unreliable (Haidt et al., 1993; Stich & Weinberg 2001; Nisbet et al. 2001; Weinberg et al. 2001; Nichols 2004; Machery et al. 2004; Nichols & Ulatowski 2007; Swain et al. 2008). However, whether what they are objecting to is something philosophers *have* or something

¹ A source of evidence is hopeless when it is 'unmitigatedly' fallible, i.e., "a fallibility uncompensated by a decent capacity for detecting and correcting errors that it entails" (323).

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philosophers *do*, at the root of the objection is that intuition is unsuccessful at whatever philosophers take it to be doing.

In this paper, I offer a characterization of the debate regarding intuition's epistemic status from a broader methodological standpoint. It thus subsumes most arguments regarding intuitions role in philosophy, including the debate between Weinberg and Williamson. I take it that answering the question 'what is intuition?' has been an ongoing project of conceptual analysis. Frank Jackson has recent influence on the way philosophers have come to understand conceptual analysis (1998). He offers that "conceptual analysis is the very business of addressing when and whether a story told in one vocabulary is made true by one told in some allegedly more fundamental vocabulary" (1998, 28). Jackson's account is, however, indicative of the sort of problem I offer here. It requires in its preliminary steps that one identify the ordinary notion of a concept, the deliverance of which is through intuitions. "Intuitions about how various cases, including various merely possible cases [...] are precisely what reveal our ordinary concept[s]" (1998, 31). But, if the conceptual analysis is itself aimed at the concept of intuition, to stipulate that intuitions are the deliverers of folk concepts of intuition is to beg the question. This is the crux of the problem I develop here. The conceptual analysis of the "intuition" is the philosophers attempt to craft an account of what it is they seem do be doing when they rely on *non-inferential epistemizers*. Now, what precisely a 'non-inferential epistemizer' *is* is just the question about what intuition *is*.

2.

The philosophical investigation of intuition assesses a standard set of exemplars. Intuition is generally understood as that which is central to realizing the veracity of Gettier's argument that justified-true-belief is insufficient for knowledge, i.e., that one does not have knowledge cases where one has only justified-true-belief (1963); realizing the veracity of Hillary Putnum's Twin-Earth Argument for the truth of externalism, i.e., XYZ is not water (1973, 1975); realizing the veracity of David Chalmers' argument against physicalism, i.e., zombies are possible (1996); and, realizing the veracity of John Rawls' arguments for the concept of justice, i.e., that various cases instantiate

fairness (1971). These paradigms ostensibly locate instances of the referent of “intuition”. Furthermore, they show that intuitions have bearing on a variety of core philosophical themes: here, cases, concepts, and possibility. However, these paradigms capture only a small portion of the various attributions that are made to “intuition”.

Indeed, Intuitions are quite common to philosophical arguments, and essential to philosophical methodology. Anyone that has read a philosophical a script will have an idea of the sort of thing an intuition is, or, at least, what role it is intended to play. Needless to say, there are a plethora of examples.² These sorts of utterances occur frequently. However, what is it that they are making claim to?³ *It is certainly clear* that there is some sort of positive epistemic claim.⁴ This general observation about the nature of intuition divides into two *primary* camps of theory. There are, on the one hand, intellectual seemingsists: philosophers such as Joel Pust (1998; 2000; 2001), George Bealer (1992; 1998), and Michael Bedke (2008). Here is Bedke’s account of intuition:

² Here are a few. Consider that someone says,
“P just seems obvious”,
“Obviously P”, or
“Anyone would just see that P”.

³ Similar utterances that explicitly invoke “intuition” are not much more illuminative. Consider these examples:

“It just seems intuitively right that P”,
“P is just intuitive”,
“I suppose we have different intuitions, P and ~P, and we’ll just have to agree to disagree”,
Or, simply,
“I have an intuition that P”, or
“I have intuition P”.

⁴ I think most intuition theorists will agree, in its most common of uses, intuition is intended to convey the following:

- (1) The general sense of epistemic viability, that is, the content or referent of the intuition claim is in some way worthy of epistemic consideration [A stronger formulation might read ‘the content or referent can confer epistemic status’]; and,
- (2) The sense that the consideration in question presents is itself as without further epistemic support – i.e., there is no further point, reason, proposition, etc. for which its epistemic viability presently rests.

An ethical intuition that p is a kind of seeming state constituted by a consideration whether p, attended by positive phenomenological qualities that count as evidence for p, and so a reason to believe that p” (2008).

On the other hand are the *self-evidentialists*. Probably the most well known and well articulated of the self-evidential theories of intuition is Robert Audi’s theory of intuition (1998; 1999; 2004). As an important aside, Lawrence BonJour strikes me as a self-evidentialist as well (1998; 2000). I’ll make mention of both. For present purposes, let’s use Audi as exemplar of the self-evidentialist view. He advocates the theory of intuition whereby, “roughly”,

[T]he thesis that basic moral judgments and basic moral principles are justified by the non-inferential deliverances of a rational, intuitive faculty, a mental capacity that contrasts with sense perception, clairvoyance, and other possible routes to justification. (2004, 102)

There are four primary characteristics to Audi’s theory of intuition: the directness, firmness, comprehension and pretheoretical requirements.⁵ They are descriptive of the *cognitive sense* of intuition: a psychological state asserting some belief. Audi distinguishes it from the *propositional sense*. Here, a proposition is intuitive in virtue of its content: the mean of its content allows it to be understood self-evidently.⁶ I will say more on the intellectual seemingsists and the self-evidentialists

⁵ (1) Intuitions are non-inferential (directness requirement) since one's belief of an intuited proposition is not on the basis of premise(s). (2) An intuition must be a moderately firm cognition (firmness requirement). "A mere inclination to believe is not an intuition; an intuition tends to be a 'conviction' (a term Ross sometimes used for an intuition) and to be relinquished only through such weighty considerations as a felt conflict with a firmly held theory or with another intuition” (Audi 2004, 110). (3) Intuitions are formed merely on the basis of understanding the contents of the intuited proposition (comprehension requirement). And, (4) The pretheoretical requirement, “[Intuitions] are neither evidentially dependent on theories nor themselves theoretical hypotheses” (Audi 2004, 102).

⁶ In general, Audi takes self-evidence to entail that the truth of a proposition is contained 'in itself'. That is, "a proposition is self-evident provided an adequate understanding of it is sufficient both for being justified in believing it and for knowing it if one believes it on the basis of that understanding" (Audi 2004, 49). It also important to note, so as to avoid confusion, that Audi distinguishes between first-order intuitions, understanding that a proposition is true (non-inferentially); and second-order intuitions, understanding that a proposition is self-evident and as such is non-inferential and is true in itself. Thus, justifying intuitions can be twofold. There is a first-order justification that is direct, immediate, and non-inferential: apprehending qua intuition. There is also a second-order

later. Presently I want to set up the central argument: *the skeptical argument against theories of intuition*.

As a perfunctory note, I take it that the debate between theories of intuition - about what intuition *is* - is best understood as an aspect of conceptual analysis. As the analysis develops, theories of intuition emerge as contenders for the account of intuition which the analysis itself aims. I'll assume then that there is a rather basic assumption among intuition theorists. It holds that if there is a sound theory of intuition, it will out-compete all other theories of intuition. Included in these theories of intuition are also skeptical theories offered by intuition-objectors. That is, there can be two kinds of skeptics about intuition. Those intuition-objectors whose theory of intuition is a skeptical one, and those whom are skeptical about intuition because of the sort of argument I present here, whereby a theory of intuition is beyond the purview of standard philosophical methodology. I'll move to that argument now.⁷

justification that is inferred. It is on this second-order that justification of the first-order is given by apprehending the relevant properties, i.e., of being direct, immediate, and non-inferential.

⁷ The argument takes the following form:

1. Assume for reductio that there is some theory of intuition, Φ_x , that out-competes any other theory of intuition, Φ_y .
2. Consider what it is for Φ_1 to out-compete, or be better than, Φ_2 .
 - a. The weight of counterexamples against Φ_2 will be on the whole greater than the weight of the counterexamples against Φ_1 .
 - b. The analysis of Φ_2 will have more unacceptable theoretical consequences than the analysis of Φ_1 .
 - i. The analysis will be theoretically significant, and analysed in other theoretically significant terms.
 - c. The analysis of Φ_2 will be less simple than the analysis of Φ_1 .
3. The determination of (a) will rely on some Φ_n .
4. The determination of (b) will rely on some Φ_n .
5. The determination of (c) will rely on some Φ_n .
6. Any evaluation of the relevant strengths of Φ_1 and Φ_2 , regarding a, b, or c, (i.e. a & b, a & c, or b & c; or the consideration of a, b, & c as a whole) will rely on some Φ_n .
7. Thus Φ_1 being better than Φ_2 - i.e., for Φ_1 to out-compete Φ_2 - must rely on some Φ_n .
8. However, some independent argument must be given for why one must rely on Φ_n and not Φ_{n+1} .
9. Thus, for any Φ_y there is no Φ_x that out-competes it without offering a question begging argument regarding Φ_n .

3.

Let's look at the possibility that there is some theory of intuition that out-competes any other theory of intuition.⁸ What are the grounds for adjudicating such a winner? Though this may be a matter of debate, there are already criteria against which one judges any philosophical theory. That is, one engages the output theories of the conceptual analysis in further conceptual analyses. Accordingly, a philosophical theory (1) should stand up to the weight of counterexamples, and (2) not be impugned by too many unacceptable theoretical consequences, e.g., one would not want to reformulate the whole of formal logic in order to account for our theory of intuition. Furthermore, (3) those terms by which a particular theory is analysed should be of theoretical significance, and not just to the theory at hand; and, (4) the analysis itself should be relatively simple.⁹ Now, if one theory of intuition is going to out-compete all others, then the successful theory will satisfy these criteria better than any other.

(1) Regarding the weight of counterexamples, the philosophical disciplines of epistemology and metaphysics are seemingly the most sensitive to this criterion. Consider the analysis of what beliefs count as knowledge (cf. Shope 1983). Epistemologists are quite willing to disregard a particular theory of knowledge if the counterexamples to it are too weighty. Even if there is a possible defense against them, such a defense is charged often with being *ad hoc* – see (4). The exemplar for this is Gettier's famous paper offering two counterexamples to the justified-true-belief theory of knowledge (1963). Epistemologists took that Smith's belief that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his

⁸ Note there is a point that needs to be drawn out here regarding the emergence of particular theories from conceptual analysis. Conceptual analysis, as contemporary analytic philosophers use it, involves a transformative element. That is, the analysis itself allows that whatever is the subject of analysis be determined by the analysis itself. So, in the conceptual analysis of intuition, philosophers are attempting to get clear on whatever it is that we are calling "intuition". The conceptual analysis itself does not entail any particular theory. However, once something like the two postulates I offered above emerge from the analysis, particular theories can in turn develop. They then become part of the conceptual analysis, being rejected or accepted on the basis of how well they fit with whatever it is that we call "intuition". Now, I take it that the success of a conceptual analysis is the emergence of a theory that fits, e.g., the exemplar cases. Thus, the dialectic for arbitrating between competing emerging theories is part and parcel of the process of conceptual analysis, a point often overlooked.

⁹ Each of these criteria are suggested by Brian Weatherson(2003). The reader may think that other further or alternative criteria might be relevant. However, I am fairly certain that the present criticisms apply to those as well.

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pocket and that Smith's belief that Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Boston (or Barcelona; or Brest-Litovsk), though well-justified, do not count as knowledge. Two counterexamples were sufficient to undermine that justified-true-belief counts as knowledge.

Consider counterexamples relevant to the intellectual seemingsist/self-evidentialist debate. The intellectual seemingsist denies that intuitions are the deliverers of self-evident beliefs, necessarily. Or, put simply, intellectual seemings are not beliefs. Pust offers a number of counterexamples to this point. However, it is a point that plays positively into self-evidentialist theories of intuition (2000; cf. Plantinga 1993, 103-8). I'll mention two.

Pust asks his reader to remember the Muller-Lyer illusion. One line seems longer than the other even though one has seen the image many times and has the belief that the lines are the same length. "The appearance that p [...] is impenetrable by belief and even though I have the belief that not p , p still perceptually *seems* true" (Pust 2000, 33). In another example drawn from Plantinga (1993), Pust asks his reader to imagine the case where one is informed by a reliable mathematician that a particular mathematical axiom is false, yet one still finds it 'intuitive'. In these cases, "I may believe not p while it still seems to me necessarily true that p " (Pust 2000, 33). Pust thinks that these counterexamples are decisive in showing that intuitions *qua* intellectual seemings are not beliefs.

Counterexamples are a quintessential aspect of philosophical dialog. They are part of the mechanism by which theories are measured for both internal and external consistency. In the discourse that each of these counterexamples occurs, they weight against some theory. Weak counterexamples might only demand a clearer re-articulation of the original theory. Or, in the case of epistemology, strong counterexamples will undermine the significance of a theory altogether.

(2) The second criterion requires that a theory 'not be impugned by too many unacceptable theoretical consequences'. I mean this not quite literally. 'Unacceptable' does not require that one could not in some way reconcile with such theoretical consequences. I will give a couple of examples, one regarding intellectual seemingsist and one regarding self-evidentialist theories.

Let's consider a self-evidentialist theory. BonJour argues for a theory of intuition that allows that one can have *a priori* knowledge (1998). In the course of laying out his theory of intuition, he must account for how it is that one can have *a priori* beliefs that entail beliefs about the external world.

BonJour's project (1998) closely parallels Audi's attempt to establish the viability of a moral intuitionism (2004). *A priori* justification amounts to something like an intuitive process of apprehending that a proposition is true self-evidently.¹⁰ BonJour writes,

I am able to see or grasp or apprehend in a seemingly direct and unmediated way [intuitively] that the claim in question cannot fail to be true - that the nature of redness and greenness are such as to preclude their being jointly realized. It is this direct insight into the necessity of the claim in question that seems, at least *prima facie*, to justify my accepting it as true. (1998, 101)

Having an intuition thus provides the basis for *a priori* epistemic justification. However, problematic for BonJour is the role of experience in intuitive knowledge and *a priori* justification.¹¹ BonJour must reconcile direct, non-inferential insight with the required component of understanding the self-evident proposition that relies on empirical observation. However, since one must have had some particular experience to understand 'redness' and 'greenness', the proposition seems to lose its *a priori* character. Propositions as such are contingent on the agent having some particular *a posteriori* knowledge or empirically grounded beliefs. To put it in another way, if in the process of intuitively apprehending some proposition one infers the truth of that proposition (or that the proposition is

¹⁰ "A *a priori* justification occurs when the mind directly or intuitively sees or grasps or apprehends (or perhaps merely seems to itself to see or grasp or apprehend) a necessary fact about the nature or structure of reality" (BonJour 1998, 15-16).

¹¹ BonJour makes an important point concerning the distinction between *a priori-a posteriori* and *necessary-contingent*. Sometimes that a proposition is known *a priori* is taken as meaning also that it is necessary. And, conversely, that a proposition is known *a posteriori* is taken as meaning also that it is contingent. BonJour points out that the *a priori-a posteriori* is an *epistemological* distinction having to do with the way in which a claim or assertion is epistemically justified. The necessary-contingent distinction is a *metaphysical* distinction having to do with the status of a proposition in relation to the ways the world might have been (having no immediate bearing on knowledge or justification. (11)

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true) from experiential beliefs, then whatever is derived is not *a priori*. Nor thus is it intuitive. For example, one cannot know what the color red is without having an experience of 'red'. Thus, for such self-evident propositions like 'Nothing can be both red and green all over and at the same time,' truth is inferred from experience because one could not have a concept of red *a priori* (if not 'truth' directly, then the meaning of the color red has to be inferred). Thus, BonJour must exclude *a posteriori* knowledge from intuitive *a priori* justification.

BonJour's solution is to argue that the contents of experiences imprint themselves on the mind by one forming beliefs of them. One can then apprehend their content without the empirical ground that formerly served as their justification. The contents of one's experiences are no longer only knowable by experience *qua* experience. Divorced of their empirical grounding, they are now merely aspects of cognition - *a priori* in character. BonJour follows in the tradition of Kant specifying, "a proposition will count as being justified *a priori* as long as no [positive] appeal to experience is needed for the proposition to be justified *once it is understood*, where it is allowed that experience may have been needed to achieve such an *understanding*" (1998, 10).

Note that Audi too has a requirement of 'understanding':

[A] proposition is self-evident provided an adequate understanding of it is sufficient both for being justified in believing it and for knowing it if one believes it on the basis of that understanding. (Audi 2004, 49)

Now, there are two problematic theoretical entanglements for BonJour. The first, also so for Audi, is the requirement that in order for the proposition in question to be justified, it must rely on a theory of understanding; moreover, it requires a theory whereby *understanding* provides justification.

However, at the time BonJour and Audi articulated their accounts, no theory of understanding was adequate to make the theoretical move required.¹² Thus, BonJour asks his reader to accept a theory

¹² Presently, however, there are a couple of accounts of 'understanding'. Linda Zagzebski (2001) had an available account of understanding. However, I don't see how it would connect up with what

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of intuition on the grounds of a theory of understanding that he neither elucidates nor is it elsewhere available. BonJour is further confounded by a rather strange conception of *a priori* knowledge.

Accordingly, one has *a priori* knowledge that it is raining only if one's knowing that it is raining is not based on the experience that it is raining. Once that experience is committed to memory it can lose its experiential justification. Isn't that just to say that anything that I remember - so far as its justification is not an experience - is *a priori* in character? Wouldn't that make most, if not all, of my memories *a priori*? It suffices to say that few philosophers would accept as much.

It seems fair that I should also show that an intellectual seemingsist incurs unacceptable theoretical consequences as well. Consider Pust's account of intuition:

At t, S has a rational intuition that p IF AND ONLY IF (a) at t, S has a *purely intellectual experience*, when considering the question whether, that p; and (b) at t, if S were to consider whether p is necessarily true, then S would have a *purely intellectual experience* that necessarily p. (Pust 2000, 46, *emphasis added*)

A consequence of Pust's theory of intuition is – similar to that of BonJour's theory – that it relies on theory that is either opaque or unavailable. Pust asks his reader to imagine a 'purely intellectual experience' when it is unclear what sort of theory would support such a thing; moreover, it is unclear that there is such a thing as a 'purely intellectual experience'.

Now, if one were to evaluate the respective strengths of the seemingsists and the self-evidentialists theories of intuition regarding the theoretical consequences that impugn their plausibility, how one do so? One strategy is to offer an argument that the failure in the seemingist's theory is much less problematic than the failure in the self-evidentialist's theory, or vice-versa. Either argument will have its marks and deficiencies. Nevertheless, inevitably, one is faced with yet another evaluation, this

Audi says about self-evidence, nor to BonJour's attempts to free the contents of experience from the *a posteriori* justification. There are more recent attempts at understanding 'understanding'. Namely, Duncan Prichard (2008), Jon Kvanvig (2008), and Wayne Riggs (2003). However, none of these theories gets BonJour or Audi what they need from a theory of intuition.

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time of the respective strengths of these arguments. Another strategy is to adopt a formalized method where one asserts a metric on which to evaluate the respective deflationary weight of the theoretical consequences. For instance, the metric requires that epistemic theoretical consequences - such as lack of an adequate theory of understanding, as it is the case for the self-evidentialists – are more severe failings than other failings – such as the opaque theory of ‘purely intellectual experience’. However, formal methods of this sort admit too much of arbitrariness. What is it that makes the metric a fair evaluative standard? I’ll suggest a route below, but presently I will leave the question open, at a satisficing point whereby purely arbitrary metrics are unacceptable.

(3) is in part a constraint on (2), and in part a independent criterion of evaluation. The constraint is that the analysed concepts (re: (2)) are theoretically significant, and the further criterion is that other theoretically significant terms are used for the analysis. Weatherson suggests that this is a precondition for theories having a “serious” classificatory scheme. Classificatory schemes require that one have a language that reflects the relevant concepts - concepts that the analysis ultimately aims (Weatherson 2003, 9). In the case at hand, the analysed concepts courting unacceptable theoretical consequences are ‘understanding’ and ‘purely intellectual experience’. The criterion requires that those aspects of a theory that engender scrutiny should be of sufficient conceptual stature. Perhaps, it is prudent to draw out a point that I made in a footnote above. The assessment of competing theories of intuition is part of analyzing the concept of intuition; it is an aspect of conceptual analysis whereby from the analysis one is attempting to extract the most viable theory or account of the analysandum.

Weatherson’s point is that one should be concerned with the most theoretically significant terms. That is why, for instance epistemologists’ primary concern in the conceptual analysis of knowledge is ‘knowledge’ and not ‘believing’. Knowledge is theoretically more significant. However, the criterion is not so conservative that it only asks that the analysandum is theoretically significant, but aspects of the particular theory under evaluation are theoretically significant. For present purposes, I’ll call these intra-theoretical terms.

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For instance, one should not concern oneself with the analysis of ‘reason to believe p’, to use Bedke again (2008). This is a rather benign intra-theoretical term. The analysis of intra-theoretical terms, such as ‘purely intellectual experience’, should, as Pust suggests, be offered in terms of occurrent or episodic psychological states, i.e., theoretically significant explananda. The analysis should sufficiently explain the concept in question. However, if there is some other competing similar concept, say for example that the self-evidentialists’ notion of ‘understanding’, which, (hypothetically) has independently been defeated by another concept of ‘understanding’ - one that fits better on the whole with one’s conceptual framework -, then the analysed is not theoretically significant if it is not sufficiently explained by the better concept of understanding. Furthermore, if the so analysed have no theory to which they pertain or refer, then they are not theoretically significant.

(4) ‘Ockham’s Razor-esque’ criteria are widely accepted. Most fields and disciplines have the *prima facie* requirement that analyses be simple. Simplicity is, of course, relative to the concept or theory in question. More complex theories will usually require more complex analysis. Since the evaluation of simplicity is with respect to the complexity of a particular theory, the evaluation whether one theory’s analysis is more or less simple than another’s analysis will encounter the same difficulties as evaluations in regard to (2), a merely arbitrary metric will not suffice. Furthermore, it seems to be a widely accepted criterion of simplicity that adequate theories must lack *ad hoc* postulates: aspects of the theory that are merely ‘added on’ to account for a given contingency or counterexample. *Ad hoc* postulates count against the simplicity or elegance of a theory.

Thus far, I’ve suggested that there are a number of criteria on which theories of intuition can be evaluated in respect to one another. Just to reiterate: a theory of intuition will out-compete another (1) if the counterexamples against it weigh less against it than those that weigh against its competitor, (2) if its theoretical consequences make it less dubitable than its competitor’s theoretical consequences, (3) the terms of analysis are theoretically significant, and (4) if the analysis is simple. Note that one might also make the evaluation of two theories of intuition *on-the-whole*, that is, taking into consideration all of the criteria together. Thus, it’s possible that a theory be deficient in regard to one criteria but make it up in another so it’s *on-the-whole* better than its competitor.

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It may not be clear at this point, but I hope to make it so shortly: Each of the evaluations in (1), (2), (3), and (4) rely centrally on some theory of intuition. Furthermore, so does any evaluation of their respective weights, or any evaluation *on-the-whole*. It is not necessary that any theory of intuition in particular be implicated in the evaluations. I only need to show that the evaluations are dependent on some theory of intuition. I needn't even argue that the reliance on intuition is necessary since one may accept some formal metric or method for evaluation. Though, I have already argued that any formal metric will not be sufficient since its adoption will be arbitrary.

4.

Regarding (1), it should suffice to say that counterexamples rely on intuition since this is a rather bald fact about philosophical methodology. Moreover, if counterexamples did not rely on intuition, then what's all the fuss over intuitions? One may reply, following Williamson, and suggest that the relevant phenomena that warrant counterexamples aren't necessarily intuitions but just aspects of judgment. That is, intuitions can be reformulated as tiered modal judgments. I'll call this the 'modal theory of intuition'. Consider what the Gettier intuition would be:

First, we must make a judgement of possibility: the case could have occurred (as described neutrally, without use of 'know' or cognate terms). Second, we must make a counterfactual conditional judgement: if the case had occurred, then the subject would have had a justified true belief that Q without knowing that Q. Together, these two judgements entail another judgement of possibility: that there could have been someone who had a justified true belief that Q without knowing that Q. (Williamson 2004, 110)

Now, let's consider the case where the modal theory of intuition is what one rests the epistemic status of counterexamples to the justified-true-belief theory of knowledge. The epistemic status of the counterexample thus rests not on an intuition but on a stepwise judgment. So it is not exactly question-begging. However, it must also, like any theory of intuition, rest on an epistemizing substratum.

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There must be something that makes the set of modal judgment worthy of conferring epistemic status. It is hence subject to the same evaluative criteria as any philosophical theory, namely those that are the present concern. Taking a closer look at the nature of the judgments in question, the modal theory of intuition rests on rather shaky ground. Williamson himself points out the problem: “The epistemology of modal thought is notoriously problematic. Neither conceivability nor consistency is a safe guide to possibility” (Williamson 2004, 111). ‘Possibility’ is thus subject to evaluation via (2), courting unacceptable theoretical consequences.

(2) requires that one rely on intuition as a means of evaluating the respective deflationary weight of the unacceptable theoretical consequences of competing theories of intuition, or that one rely on some arbitrary metric for evaluation. I’ve already argued that one cannot simply rely on a *merely* arbitrary metric for such evaluations. I’ll now try to show that to do otherwise is to rely on a theory of intuition. The crux of my argument relies on seeing that judgments of the weights of respective ‘theoretical significance’ involve making evaluations of differences in quality and quantity. These are the same sorts of evaluative choices that Derek Parfit is forced into when making evaluations of the Non-Identity Problem (1984). Parfit offers that one must choose between same-people choices, same-number choices, and different-number choices, regarding levels of happiness in future states of affairs. Parfit relies on intuition to make the evaluative judgment, adjudicating which ought to be pursued. I take it that any judgment that involves differences in kind or both differences in quality and quantity rely on intuition. Intuition is thus required to adjudicate between whether the intellectual seemingsist or the self-evidentialist does better in regard to (2). That is, both have deficiencies. The self-evidentialist problematically relies on an unavailable account of ‘understanding’, the intellectual seemingsist on a opaque notion of a ‘purely intellectual seeming’. The deficiencies are different in kind, the evaluation of the respective weights of those deficiencies, insofar as the impugn the respective theory, involve quality and quantity, the latter more so if there is more than one unacceptable consequence. If not some merely arbitrary metric, I see no other way of making the judgment about which theory wins out. Note that the evaluation of (3), that is, the theoretical significance of analysed terms, may or may not require intuition. However, whether a particular term

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is theoretically significant is a contextual issue, contextualized to the theory at hand and other theories the at-hand theory engages. Whether the intellectual seemingist terms or the self-evidentialist terms are more theoretically significant will be a rather moot point. However, in close races, it may be significant. Nevertheless, I take it the judgment will involve intuition in the same sense as in (2).

(4) is simply (pun intended) an intuitive judgment. Nowhere are there universally accepted criteria for what counts as a simple analysis of a theory. Judgments of simplicity are, like aesthetic judgments, without formal criteria. Furthermore, following Richard Swinburne, the proof that theory analysis should be simple itself is intuitive (1997). When one judges that a analysis or theory is simple, or elegant, it is an assessment that is intuitive in nature. There is no appeal to rules or procedures for justification. It is the sort of judgment where one either sees it or not.

Now, any evaluation of the relevant strengths one theory of intuition has over another, regarding (1), (2), (3), or (4), will rely on some theory of intuition, whether individually or *on-the-whole*. Thus, for any theory of intuition to out-compete any other, it must rely on some theory of intuition. The self-evidentialist and the intellectual seemingsist are at a methodological stalemate. If either is going to be able to out-compete the other, then some independent argument must be given for the theory of intuition that justifies that one is better than the other. However, any such argument will require yet another similar argument to justify that it is the relevant theory of intuition and not some other – and so on and so forth. An unattractive epistemic regress is thus required for any theory of intuition to out-compete another. Furthermore, to stipulate a theory of intuition that is seemingly adequate to buttress the epistemic regress would simply be to beg the question about which theory of intuition one should go with.

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Thus, the intuition debate seems to meet a rather ill fated end. To evaluate which theory is the best, one must either rely on a method that require an epistemic regress; some merely arbitrary metric for evaluation; or beg the question, stipulating without argument some theory of intuition to do the epistemic work in the evaluation of the best competitor. None these options is attractive. That is to say that there are no options. In the final section of this paper, I'll gesture briefly at a course that can be taken, one that attempts to satisfy the interests of all the competitors. In the next section, I take up two strong responses: first, pace Williamson, the skeptical argument against theories of intuition is skeptical about judgment in general and, second, intuitions are themselves basic sources of evidence and hence need no further grounds to provide for their epistemic status.

5.

'The skeptical argument against theories of intuition is skeptical about judgment in general'. I don't want to spend too much space elaborating this argument. Williamson articulates it well enough (2004). It is important to note, however, that Williamson starts from the position that intuition is just an aspect of our capacity for judgment. That is, an intuition is simply a type of judgment.

Williamson's response – that such one must also be skeptical of judgment more generally - is quite an easy move for him to make. I have not assumed so much regarding the nature of intuition. Thus, it's not obvious that the argument I offer requires that one also be skeptical about judgment. I think this is sufficient to extricate my position from the sort that Williamson's charging. The second objection, however, and as it turns out, is not so easily dismissed. I turn to it now.

One sort of response to the argument that I've offered is to deny that there needs to be a theory of intuition so that intuitions can play an epistemizing role in philosophical methodology. Rather, intuitions are a sort of basic or primitive evidence. Conceived as such, they are just the stuff that one either uses – or doesn't – in one's normal thinking and reasoning processes. But hasn't this objector merely asserted some theory of intuition that provides an end to the regress; moreover, on an account of intuition that can confer epistemic status? Perhaps not. The objector is not presuming to assert intuition *as a theory* but rather as a brute fact about the capacities that one actually has for

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reasoning and judging. Intuition is merely an artifact of the way one thinks. No theory is required for that to be the case. Thus, no question is begged. Rather a fact of the matter is pointed out.

This certainly has the feeling of a strong objection, but despite observances to the contrary, it does end up begging the question. If intuition is ‘a brute fact about one’s capacities to reason and to judge’, then it’s the fact at which the conceptual analysis of intuition is aimed. Now, if it is the case that intuition is a ‘brute fact’, then the theory of intuition that emerges victorious from the conceptual analysis should then describe that fact. One cannot assume an account of intuition qua brute fact or qua theory in order to show that intuition is as such.

Suppose now that the objector still finds this sort of reply insufficient, citing literature on basic knowledge. It holds that one can come to have a knowledge-level belief from a reliable belief forming process without also knowing that the process is itself reliable. There is corollary with the case at hand. One could know that intuition yields reliable evidence without also knowing that intuition is the sort of thing that does so. The fact that it does is enough. However, as Stewart Cohen points out, the fact that it is is not sufficient for knowing that it does if one’s knowing is dependent on knowing that fact via the same mechanism that one knows. That is, knowledge of the reliability of a belief forming process cannot rely on that same belief forming process (2005, p 417n1). Some other mechanism is required for establishing that fact. Now, if I am to be successful in undermining this further objection, I must show that intuition (qua non-inferential epistemizer) is the only source of evidence that can provide evidence for its epistemizer status. That is, on a minimal epistemology, I should be able to show that the evidence of intuition’s being evidence is itself intuitive evidence, and not some other sort of evidence such as that provided by sense experience or modes of reasoning.

I’m not sure how one might go about mounting such a reply; moreover, that such a reply would be convincing. I take it that the answer to the question ‘What is intuition?’ is an existential one. It will be an answer that reveals the facts of the matter regarding the nature of intuition. Thus, any theory

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which emerges as competitor from the conceptual analysis will have as one of its tenants 'Intuition is as such'. Thus, the sort of evidence that will be grounding for any such an account will be factual evidence. Any competitor emerging from the conceptual analysis that aims at such an account will accept that the evidence is grounding and fundamentally determining adjudicator of theory of intuition that out-competes any other. By these lights, it would be insignificant for me to argue that intuitive evidence is the only sort of evidence that is at play when empirical evidence is acceptable for all competitors. Presumably, at the very most, all I could successfully argue is that it is an open question regarding whether intuitive evidence is the only sort of evidence that the conceptual analysis of intuition relies.

6.

Given this, and what I've said thus far, how might one resurrect a method for arriving at a viable theory of intuition? I've been careful to articulate that the sort of arbitrariness that is unacceptable in adjudicating the theory of intuition that out-competes any other is the sort that is *merely* arbitrary, the sort that would be brute in character or make the playing field unfair amongst competitors. It is the sort of unfairness that choosing a theory of intuition would introduce since any such choice would favor itself over others in the competition. For example, the sort of unfairness that assuming that intuitions are the deliverers of folk concepts introduces in Jackson's kind of conceptual analysis. It would be similarly arbitrary to choose a metric on which to base judgments of the weightiness of counterexamples, the significance of unacceptable consequences, or whether one theory or analysis is more simple than another. That is not to say, however, that there could be no appeal to arbitrariness that is unacceptable. Like rules for any competition, arbitrariness is unacceptable if it favors one competitor over another. If there were some grounds for justification which would regard all competitors equally or that all competitors could agree to, then such grounds would, in one sense, be *arbitrary* but not in way that undermined the aim of the conceptual analysis. They wouldn't be *merely* arbitrary. As I've argued, all competitors are presumably open to empirical evidence. The epistemically significant will likely be empirical evidence arrived at through scientific methods. And the most relevant of that vast array of evidence would be evidence from the cognitive sciences that

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directly assesses the nature of intuition. It is this sort of evidence that rests beyond the purview of standard philosophical methodology – beyond the reach of the armchair, as some might not-so-courteously put it. Now, one may think that I've taken the reader on a wild ride, only to end-up where one was at when they began - with the empirical evidence of the experimental philosophy crowd. I should not be mistaken as implying that this is the evidence we are left with. Rather, I think that there is a much broader and robust array of empirical results that have by-and-large been untapped by intuition-theorists. This evidence includes direct empirical observation of cognitive mechanisms that are attributed to intuition, behavioral studies, and various models of intuition mechanisms. It is on these sorts of empirical evidence that an intuition theory must satisfy and ultimately rest for their epistemizing status.