

Introduction

1. The Ubiquity of Appeals to Intuition

Some areas of contemporary analytic philosophy in which appeals to intuition are made:

- a. *epistemology*: debates about the nature of knowledge (Gettier cases, fake barn examples) and justification (Norman the clairvoyant, evil demon victims);
- b. *philosophy of mind*: debates about dualism (zombies), behaviorism (Putnam's super-spartans), functionalism (multiple realizability arguments, Block's China brain, Searle's Chinese room), externalism about mental content (Twin Earth scenarios, Burge's arthritis example), intentionality (Davidson's Swampman), and physicalism (Jackson's Mary example);
- c. *philosophy of language*: debates about the causal theory of reference (Kripke's Schmidt/Gödel and Jonah cases) and Gricean accounts of meaning (Searle's American soldier example);
- d. *philosophy of science*: debates about the nature of explanation (the flagpole and its shadow);
- e. *metaphysics*: debates about personal identity (teletransporters, memory erasures, fissions/fusions), the analysis of causation (causal epiphenomena, preemption, trumping), theory of action (Davidson's climber), and free will (Frankfurt cases);
- f. *meta-ethics*: debates about motivational internalism (the amoralist) and internal vs. external reasons (Owen Wingrave);
- g. *normative ethics*: debates about utilitarianism (killing the one to save the five, sacrificing an innocent to appease the angry mob, Williams' story about Jim and Pedro), Kantianism (the axe-murderer at the door, timing/coordination maxims, maxims of non-reciprocal action), and hedonism (Nozick's experience machine);
- h. *applied ethics*: debates about abortion (Thomson's violin player), our duties to the distant needy (Singer's drowning victim), and the doctrine of double effect (trolley cases).

Usually authors react to these cases as follows:

- If a theory *comports* with our intuitions about a given case, that is taken to be *evidence for* the theory.
- If a theory *conflicts* with our intuitions about a case, that is taken to be *evidence against* the theory.

But what is the basis for these reactions? What entitles us to trust our intuitive verdicts about a given case? Why should we take our case-specific intuitions to be generally reliable? Despite the prevalence of appeals to intuitions in contemporary philosophizing within the analytic tradition, one might be shocked to learn that there is no general consensus about the correct answer to any of these questions.

On the other hand, suppose one grows suspicious of the evidential status of appeals to intuition. What, then, is the alternative to making use of such appeals? Does one allow some uses of intuition but not others? In that case, what separates the legitimate uses of intuition from the illegitimate ones? Or, more radically, does one renounce all references to intuition in one's philosophical theorizing? If so, then what would one's philosophical methodology look like? Is it even possible to completely extirpate any appeal to intuition?

In one sense, our subject matter will be vary narrow: our primary focus will be on the epistemic standing of a certain class of items (intuitions about cases).

In another sense, our subject matter will be incredibly vast: these sorts of issues easily spiral out of control into the "How is philosophy possible?" project.

2. Some Issues We Will Be Addressing

We need to disentangle several different sorts of questions that we'll be asking. These include:

- *the metaphysics of philosophical intuition*: What is the nature of philosophical intuition? That is, what exactly are these things we call "intuitions"?
- *the epistemology of philosophical intuition*: What is the epistemic status of philosophical intuitions? That is, are philosophical intuitions epistemically justified, or sources of epistemic justification?
- *the meta-epistemology of philosophical intuition*: What explains why philosophical intuitions, or beliefs based on philosophical intuition, have the epistemic status that they do? That is, what makes it the case that philosophical intuitions (or beliefs based on philosophical intuition) are justified or unjustified, reasonable or unreasonable, trustworthy or untrustworthy?
- *the role of intuition in philosophical methodology (descriptive)*: What role *do* appeals to intuition play in contemporary philosophical theorizing? That is, what is the *actual role* of appeals to intuition in contemporary philosophical practice, as a matter of anthropological fact?
- *the role of intuition in philosophical methodology (prescriptive)*: What role *should* appeals to intuition play in contemporary philosophical theorizing? That is, what is the *proper role* of appeals to intuition in philosophy-as-it-should-be-practiced?

We will also touch on the following issues, which could have been the subject of their own seminar:

- *the nature of philosophical analysis*: What is philosophical analysis? That is, what are philosophers trying to do when they provide an analysis of some philosophically central notion?
- *the importance of philosophical analysis*: How important is analysis to philosophical inquiry, and how important is it overall?

Along the way, we will spend some time thinking about the proper interpretation of the method of reflective equilibrium, and about the recent "experimental philosophy" movement.