

This is the author's copy of a book review published in *Philosophical Psychology*.

Review of **The Myth of the Intuitive: Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Method** (MIT Press, 2015), by Max Deutsch.

According to Max Deutsch, a view now prevails regarding the role of 'intuition' in the methods of analytic philosophy. These methods frequently involve making judgments about specific cases, concerning whether something is instantiated in the case, to support or refute a general thesis. And the view is that philosophers make and accept these judgments for no other reason than that they are intuitive.

Yet this idea, Deutsch maintains, has made traditional analytic philosophy vulnerable to the critique of 'negative experimental philosophers'. In brief, these 'x-philes' argue that if certain claims are held to be true because they are intuitive, then they rest on an empirical, social-psychological assumption, namely, that people actually do find those claims to be intuitive. But philosophers have irresponsibly been content to generalize from their own case, assuming that if they find something intuitive, others will too. The negative x-phi critique then shows that this often is not true. Taking examples of well-known philosophical thought-experiments, they discovered by using survey methods that others often do not 'have the intuition' that the key claims about these cases are true, and whether they do or not can depend on factors that are irrelevant to the truth of the claims, such as the test-subjects' cultural background. But if intuitions are subject to 'truth-irrelevant variability' (p. 33), this raises questions about their evidential worth for philosophy.

Philosophers have tried to defend 'armchair' philosophical method against this critique, but have typically done so from within a framework that accepts that philosophers often/must rely on intuition. In *The Myth of the Intuitive*, Deutsch attempts a more radical defence, arguing that philosophers do not rely on intuition at all. Negative x-phi misunderstands analytic philosophical method.

However, Deutsch says that there is something right about the remark that intuitions are treated as evidence in philosophy. He helpfully observes that 'intuition' has a state/content ambiguity (pp. 35-36). 'The intuition that *p*' can refer to the *psychological state/act* of intuiting, or to *what* is intuited: that *p*. And in the latter, content sense, intuitions *are* treated as evidence in philosophy. In a Gettier case for instance, that *S doesn't know that such-and-such* refutes the justified true belief (JTB) theory of knowledge.

Of course, the question will be asked how we know that such propositional contents are true. Deutsch calls this the 'evidence-for-the-evidence' question (p. 56), and it is here that some answer: in philosophy, we know such contents are true by intuiting that they are. And this, Deutsch supposes (p. xii), is to suggest that the psychological states *are the evidence* for the contents.

(Perhaps many intuition advocates treat states/acts of intuiting as evidence for what's intuited, but an alternative might be to view intuiting as akin to recognizing. For we do not treat states/acts of recognizing as evidence for what's recognized). However, Deutsch contends, as Herman Cappelen (2012) and Deutsch (2010; 2009) have done in earlier publications, that *arguments* play this role, not intuitions. Judgments about cases are supported by arguments in philosophy.

This is the book's main thesis, and Deutsch tries to support it through careful studies of some well-known thought-experiments that have been alleged to involve justificatory appeals to brute intuition, thought-experiments that have been the subject of x-phi research. Particular attention is given to Gettier's counterexamples to the JTB theory of knowledge and Kripke's 'Gödel-Schmidt' counterexample to the description theory of names. Deutsch contends that both Gettier's and Kripke's texts contain arguments for their key judgments about these cases, that arguments can also be found in the secondary literature, and that typically no explicit justificatory appeals to intuitiveness are made. So the fact that some do not find, say, the Gettier judgment intuitive is irrelevant for its assessment. What matters for that is the 'quality of the arguments marshalled in its defense' (p. 111).

Supposing that these authors base their key judgments on arguments, what about the premises of those arguments? Might the 'evidence' for those simply be their intuitiveness? Must inferential justification come to an end somewhere, perhaps bottoming out in intuitive judgments? Deutsch deals with this reply and argues persuasively that it does not help the x-phi critique of armchair philosophical method. But for the rest of this review I would like to give a sample of the things Deutsch has in mind when he says that philosophers support their judgments about cases with arguments.

Deutsch's main case-study is of the Gettier cases. The first of these is the 10 coins case (Gettier, 1963). In this case, Smith and Jones have applied for a job, and Smith has very good reason to believe that Jones got it. Smith also knows that Jones has 10 coins in his pocket, so he deduces that the man who will get the job has 10 coins in his pocket. However, unbeknownst to him he has got the job, not Jones, and he (Smith) happens to have 10 coins in his pocket too. So it's true that the man who will get the job has 10 coins in his pocket, and Smith justifiably believes this, yet he does not know that the man who will get the job has 10 coins in his pocket (call this the Gettier Judgment, or GJ).

Deutsch claims that Gettier presents reasons to support this judgment and that this has been overlooked. Gettier appeals, among other things, to the fact that the subject's belief is true due to luck: It is true because Smith, *by sheer coincidence*, has the same amount of coins in his pocket as Jones (pp. 83 & 88). This in itself, however, is just drawing our attention to a certain feature of the case. What's needed to make a valid argument is another premise in the form of a general statement that, when combined with the mentioned singular statement, allows us to deduce GJ. Deutsch

claims that such a premise is ‘all but explicitly proposed’ (p. 89) in the text, and effectively attributes the following argument to Gettier for GJ:

P1: Smith has a justified true belief that *p*, and that belief is luckily true.

P2: ‘If *S*’s belief that *p* is (also) knowledge that *p*, then *S*’s belief that *p* is not luckily true’ (p. 88).

GJ: Smith has a justified true belief that *p*, but does not know that *p*.

Deutsch also points out that neither ‘intuition’, ‘intuitive’, nor any plausible synonym appear anywhere in Gettier’s paper.

Some will dispute that Gettier’s remarks amount to giving an argument for GJ (Chudnoff, forthcoming), but even granting that something like this is implicit in Gettier’s text, Deutsch faces another challenge, which understands it not as an argument to *support* GJ, but as an abductive argument or argument to the best explanation (pp. 95-99). On this view, ‘the order of explanation goes from the truth of the Gettier judgments to the probable truth of the principle intended to explain their truth, not from the truth of the principle to the truth of the Gettier judgments’ (p. 96). That Smith doesn’t know that *p* is here treated as a datum, perhaps simply because it’s intuitive, which P2 then is brought in to explain.

Cappelen also wrestled with this possibility (2012, pp. 122-124), and it is here that Deutsch is most concessive to his opponents. He says that studying the language philosophers use when discussing their thought-experiments often does not help us decide whether to interpret such arguments abductively or not, and sometimes they might be at least partially abductive; sometimes ‘the order of explanation goes *both* ways’ (p. 96). (This interesting yet puzzling suggestion deserved further elucidation in the book). Yet he claims that this is not usually how things stand with these judgments about cases, for a number of reasons. One is that the denial of the judgment, for instance of GJ, ‘is always, to some extent, a live option’ (p. 97), especially in light of the JTB theory’s initial plausibility. Another is that philosophers never explicitly say that they are arguing abductively, so there is no reason to interpret them this way (Ibid.).

However, perhaps it would be better to ask the comparative question here: is the falsity of GJ *more* of a live option than the falsity of P2 (P1 seems fairly secure, being simply a built-in feature of the case). Which, in other words, can we be surer of, GJ or P2? If P2 seems more certain than GJ, then we can view P2 as featuring in an argument to support GJ. But if GJ is more of a sure thing than P2, then the argument should be viewed abductively. A conclusion cannot be supported by a premise that is less certain than itself.

Regarding this comparative issue, if I had to put my money on either GJ or P2, I would choose GJ. For one, P2 is a *universal* claim, ranging over all cases of factual knowledge, while GJ

is singular. P2 is thus much more ambitious than GJ (indeed, P2 includes and entails GJ, but GJ doesn't entail P2), hence P2 is more vulnerable. It could be falsified by a counterexample (while GJ cannot), and can we be sure there are no counterexamples to P2? This seems like a good reason to interpret the argument abductively. Furthermore, P2 is an abstract claim, and it is often difficult to assess such claims, and even to understand their meaning sometimes, without reflecting on concrete cases that illustrate them. So for instance, it could be that we comprehend and become convinced of P2 by reflecting on illustrative cases such as Gettier's. But then it would be odd to view P2 as something that can be adduced to *support* a Gettier judgment.

So perhaps the abductive argument response has more going for it than Deutsch thinks. I do not want to suggest, however, that this applies to all the arguments that Deutsch says underpin judgments about cases in philosophy. The arguments that Deutsch presents as supporting judgments about cases are heterogeneous.

I have only focused on some key aspects of what is a rich, lively, and well-structured book. Deutsch presents a stimulating challenge to some common views of philosophical method and he persuaded me that it is simplistic to think that philosophers have nothing more to say to justify their judgments about cases than to say that they are intuitive. It is a valuable contribution to a topic of deep importance to a broad range of philosophers.

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References

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Kevin Lynch