

IS INTUITION CENTRAL IN PHILOSOPHY?*

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Some experimental philosophers criticize standard philosophical methodology on the basis of survey data reporting variation of intuition according to irrelevant factors like culture and order. I will refer to them as “experimentalists” and their critique as the “experimental critique.” Recently, a few philosophers (e.g., Williamson, Deutsch, and Cappelen) have responded by noting that the experimental critique relies on the “Centrality” assumption—the thesis that intuition plays a central evidential role in philosophical inquiry.¹ They then deny the Centrality thesis and claim that, therefore, intuition variation has no significant implications for philosophical methodology. In this paper, I defend Centrality in response to two recent objections: the “argument from non-neutrality” and the “argument from reasoning.” According to the argument from non-neutrality, we should not 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.

UNDERSTANDING CENTRALITY

Centrality, roughly put, is the statement that intuition serves as philosophers’ central evidence. In this section, I am going to elaborate this definition by

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¹ I borrow the term “Centrality” from Cappelen. See Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 3.

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 ?² Different answers to these questions—that is, 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 hold that only propositions count as evidence;³ 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.⁴ And the assumption of Centrality does not require that the evidential role of intuition is ultimate or foundational.⁵

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 critics intend to reject. Alternatively, a supporter of the propositional view of evidence might 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

² For more about different possible ways to answer these three questions, see Thomas Kelly, "Evidence: Fundamental Concepts and the Phenomenal Conception," *Philosophy Compass* 3.5 (2008): 933–55.

³ See, for example, Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002).

⁴ Conee and Feldman 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." 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. See Conee and Feldman, "Evidentialism," *Epistemology: New Essays*, ed. Q. Smith (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008) 93.

⁵ By contrast, Cappelen thinks that Centrality often has this requirement, because many metaphilosophers claim that intuitions "provide evidence for other claims without themselves requiring evidence." See Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 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). For the distinction between thick and thin views of intuitions, see Weinberg and Alexander, "The Challenge of Sticking with Intuitions through Thick and Thin," *Intuitions*, eds. A. Booth and D. Rowbottom (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2014) 187–212.

talk of intuitions as evidence, propositional theorists of evidence might take that to be merely an abbreviation. According to them, though it is 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, 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.”⁶

Indeed, some critics of Centrality have formulated the thesis in ways which apparently assume some propositional theory of evidence. Cappelen, for example, thinks of Centrality as suggesting that “it is A has the intuition that p that serves as evidence.”⁷ Also, according to Williamson, supporters of Centrality take it that our evidence “consists of the psychological facts to the effect that we have intuitions with those contents.”⁸ 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 central evidence” but only in a loose sense. Or, to put it slightly more rigidly, we can say that Centrality is true if and only if intuitions play a central *evidential role* in philosophical inquiry.

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.⁹ 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 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 paper 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

⁶ Trent Dougherty, “In Defense of Propositionalism about Evidence,” *Evidentialism and its Discontents*, ed. T. Dougherty (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2011) 230.

⁷ Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 13. It is unclear whether this is really how Cappelen interprets Centrality, for in another place (14) he also says that he is neutral on whether only propositions can be evidence.

⁸ Timothy Williamson, *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 235. Some might want to distinguish between facts and propositions. Williamson, however, explicitly uses “fact” as a synonym for “true proposition.” See *ibid*: 209.

⁹ Earlenbaugh and Molyneux 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. See Joshua Earlenbaugh and Bernard Molyneux, “Intuitions are Inclinations to Believe,” *Philosophical Studies* 145.1 (2009): 91–2.

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.”¹⁰ On this reading, the absence of an intuition is not 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 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*.”¹¹ This interpretation is added to include a view like Bealer’s,¹² 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.¹³ However, it is 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, 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.”¹⁴

¹⁰ Max Deutsch, *The Myth of the Intuitive* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015) 36.

¹¹ Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 13.

¹² George Bealer, “Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy,” *Rethinking Intuition: The Psychology of Intuition and its Role in Philosophical Inquiry*, eds. M. DePaul and W. Ramsey (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998) 205.

¹³ Both Deutsch and Cappelen make a similar point. See Max Deutsch, “Intuitions, Counter-examples, and Experimental Philosophy.” *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1.3 (2010): 447–60; Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 230. 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.

¹⁴ Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 185.

Assuming that evidence is what justifies belief, the E = K theory entails that “knowledge, and only knowledge, justifies belief.”¹⁵ Conversely, 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 does not. 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 does not have legitimate evidential status for her. For instance, if Williamson’s E = K theory is correct, then one cannot possess the propositional contents of any false beliefs as one’s evidence; they do not have legitimate evidential status because the subject does not 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 does not believe x then one is not treating it as a piece of knowledge.¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ In any case, my definition of Centrality will be neutral on the issue of what conditions one needs to satisfy to use something as evidence.¹⁸

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,

¹⁵ Ibid: 185.

¹⁶ Williamson thinks the reverse is also true: if one does not treat x as knowledge then one does not believe x . He thereby adopts the view that “to believe p is to treat p as if one knew p .” See *ibid*: 46.

¹⁷ For a variety of approaches to characterize this “basing” relation, see Ram Neta, “The Basing Relation,” *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, eds. S. Bernecker and D. Pritchard (New York: Routledge, 2011) 109–18.

¹⁸ 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 is not. 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; this paper considers whether intuitions are used as evidence, no matter whether we are thinking of them as such.

according to which evidential relations can be put in probabilistic terms; by contrast, some insist that the evidential relation is best 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.¹⁹ 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 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.²⁰

THE ARGUMENT FROM NON-NEUTRALITY

Williamson 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 whether some claim p constitutes evidence without first having to settle their differences over h itself.²¹

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,

¹⁹ For more about the balance/weight distinction, see James M. Joyce, “How Probabilities Reflect Evidence,” *Philosophical Perspectives* 19.1 (2005): 153–78.

²⁰ 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, who defends Centrality by claiming that intuition provides strong but rather fragile evidence. See Brian Weatherson, “Centrality and Marginalisation,” *Philosophical Studies* 171.3 (2014): 517–33. However, since Weatherson takes intuitive evidence to have rather weak evidential weight, his position does not vindicate Centrality, as I use the term.

²¹ Timothy Williamson, *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 210. He 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.

which means that inquirers can achieve common knowledge if they overcome all the “accidental mistakes and confusions.”²² 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.

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, but insists that this intuition does not falsify descriptivism. The above sort of consideration, according to Williamson, “tempts one to retreat into identifying evidence with uncontentious propositions about psychological states.”²³ To satisfy Evidence Neutrality, one needs to start with the 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 do not 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 due to general theoretical problems with folk psychology. (G0) does not 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

²² Ibid: 210.

²³ Ibid: 211.

a neutral arbiter between participants lays us “open to exploitation by ruthless opponents.”²⁴ We should not limit our evidence simply because the opponent insists “an impoverished skeptical starting-point”; rather, we sometimes must “abandon skeptics to their fate.”²⁵ 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.”²⁶ 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 does not mean that it is false. Both Alexander and Brown have responded to Williamson by providing reasons to accept Centrality without appealing to Evidence Neutrality.²⁷ Also, Weinberg argues that the experimentalists’ challenge does not need to assume Evidence Neutrality in any event.²⁸ 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”;²⁹ 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 do not 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 does not need to exclude other sorts of evidence as equally central.

This weak version of Centrality is enough for most experimentalists’ purpose. Experimentalists 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. They can accept a skeptical attitude towards intuitions, but not towards other kinds of evidence in philosophical practice. Admittedly, experimentalists occasionally sound as if

²⁴ Ibid: 238.

²⁵ Ibid: 238–39.

²⁶ Ibid: 241.

²⁷ See Joshua Alexander, “Is Experimental Philosophy Philosophically Significant?” *Philosophical Psychology* 23.3 (2010): 377–89; Jessica Brown, “Thought Experiments, Intuitions and Philosophical Evidence,” *Dialectica* 65.4 (2011): 493–516.

²⁸ See Jonathan Weinberg, “On Doing Better, Experimental-Style,” *Philosophical Studies* 145.3 (2009): 455–64.

²⁹ Timothy Williamson, *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 211.

they think that, if intuition does not 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.³⁰ 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."³¹ 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 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 does not constitute any good reason against what we might refer to as "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.³²

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

³⁰ Note that this argument is not intended against experimentalists, for they do not 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.

³¹ *Ibid.*: 236.

³² *Ibid.*: 212.

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.

A final issue is worth addressing. Though I have been describing the argument from non-neutrality as an argument against Centrality, it is not totally clear whether this is Williamson's intention. According to an alternative interpretation, when Williamson asserts that philosophical evidence does not consist of intuition, he does not mean to deny Centrality; instead, he means that philosophers *shouldn't* use intuitions as evidence.³³ I maintain that Williamson's target is Centrality, for he explicitly claims that his "rethinking of philosophical methodology" concerns "how philosophy is actually done."³⁴ 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, for example, aims to argue that "it is not true that philosophers rely extensively (or even a little bit) on intuitions as evidence."³⁵ Also, Deutsch claims that "philosophical arguments never appeal to the intuitiveness of a judgment about a case to justify belief in that judgment."³⁶ In contrast, Williamson's position seems to be more moderate. He admits that unawareness of failures of Evidence Neutrality "does more than distort philosophers' descriptions of philosophy" and "alters their first-order philosophizing."³⁷ This suggests that intuition has some non-central evidential role in philosophy, mainly because beliefs about Evidence Neutrality have changed part of philosophical practice. In any event, the current section discusses whether one could reasonably reject Centrality based on the arguments Williamson offers, whatever Williamson's intended target is. Similarly, this section examines the question of whether the argument from non-neutrality undermines the experimental critique, no matter whether Williamson himself intends to reject the experimentalists' project on the basis of this argument.³⁸

³³ Cappelen, for instance, assumes such an interpretation of Williamson's view. See Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 204.

³⁴ Timothy Williamson, *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 6.

³⁵ Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012) 1.

³⁶ Max Deutsch, *The Myth of the Intuitive* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015) 76–7.

³⁷ Timothy Williamson, *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 213.

³⁸ Williamson does not *explicitly* use the argument from non-neutrality 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 Evidence Centrality.

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 do not 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.

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 and Cappelen have appealed to this approach in refuting Centrality.³⁹ 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" does not refer to Schmidt. Further, he seems to suggest that philosophers do not 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).⁴⁰

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, does not refer to the inventor of the atomic bomb, despite the facts that some speakers associate with "Einstein" only one description "the inventor of the atomic bomb" and that Einstein did not 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]."⁴¹ The immunity to error

³⁹ See Max Deutsch, "Experimental Philosophy and the Theory of Reference," *Mind & Language* 24.4 (2009): 445–66; Max Deutsch, "Intuitions, Counter-Examples, and Experimental Philosophy." *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 1.3 (2010): 447–60; Max Deutsch, *The Myth of the Intuitive* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015); Herman Cappelen, *Philosophy without Intuitions* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2012).

⁴⁰ Deutsch agrees with Williamson that (G1) is our evidence, but insists that the evidential status of (G1) is derived from the arguments provided.

⁴¹ Max Deutsch, *The Myth of the Intuitive* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015) 110.

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 does not 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 and Cappelen have defended similar conclusions in a series of important philosophical thought experiments, such as Gettier cases, Lehrer's 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 have responded by claiming that, contra Deutsch and Cappelen, arguments for the relevant thought-experimental judgments do depend on intuitive evidence.⁴² Even supposing Deutsch is right that our intuition about (G1) does not 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 refers to this as the "relocation problem."⁴³ In what follows, I will raise a different objection to Deutsch. In contrast to the relocation problem, my objection does not assume the strong claim that intuition must serve as evidence in philosophical arguments; rather, it is merely intended to show that Deutsch does not 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 should not 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 do not mention "intuition" and its cognate terms in their writings. Both

⁴² See, e.g., Berit Brogaard, "Intuitions as Intellectual Seemings," *Analytic Philosophy* 55.4 (2014): 382–93; Jonathan Ichikawa, "Review of Philosophy without Intuitions." *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 21.1 (2013): 111–16.

⁴³ Max Deutsch, *The Myth of the Intuitive* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015) 58.

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 does not 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 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.”⁴⁴ Third, philosophers often do not 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 reference. 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 takes it that “when scientists state their evidence in their publications, they state mainly non-psychological facts.”⁴⁵ 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 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.”⁴⁶ She then responds to Williamson’s gap

⁴⁴ Timothy Williamson, *Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007) 211.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*: 212.

⁴⁶ Jessica Brown, “Thought Experiments, Intuitions and Philosophical Evidence,” *Dialectica* 65.4 (2011): 506.

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 do not 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 do not reject 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 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.⁴⁷

In a similar vein, Pollock and Cruz argue that “the beliefs we form are almost invariably beliefs about the objective properties of physical objects—not about how things appear to us.”⁴⁸ According to them, we do not 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, 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

⁴⁷ Thomas Kelly, “Evidence,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Fall 2014 Edition), ed. E. N. Zalta. The Metaphysics Research Lab, 21 Sept. 2014. Web. 1 June 2016. URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2014/entries/evidence/>>.

⁴⁸ John L. Pollock and Joseph Cruz, *Contemporary Theories of Knowledge* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999) 61.

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 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."⁴⁹ 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 do not 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 does not 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 do not 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"⁵⁰ and that propositions like this describe our perceptual experiences. He admits the fact that in typical cases we do not 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."⁵¹ One does not need consideration to believe or even know a proposition, because "knowing is a state, not an activity."⁵² 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 does not even need to grasp the notion of perception. One only needs to

⁴⁹ Earl Conee and Richard Feldman, *Evidentialism: Essays in Epistemology: Essays in Epistemology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004.) 2–3.

⁵⁰ Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002) 198.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*: 199.

⁵² *Ibid.*: 199.

grasp the notion of appearing by having “some inkling of the distinction between appearance and reality.”⁵³

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 do not 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 do not 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 does not 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 do not 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.

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⁵³ *Ibid.*: 199.