INTUITION AND PHILOSOPHICAL METHODOLOGY

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Abstract

Intuition serves a variety of roles in contemporary philosophy. This paper provides a historical discussion of the revival of intuition in the 1970s, untangling some of the ways that intuition has been used and offering some suggestions concerning its proper place in philosophical investigation. Contrary to some interpretations of the results of experimental philosophy, it is argued that generalized skepticism with respect to intuition is unwarranted. Intuition can continue to play an important role as part of a methodologically conservative stance towards philosophical investigation. I argue that methodological conservatism should be sharply distinguished from the process of evaluating individual propositions. More significantly, intuition is not always a reliable guide to truth and experimental philosophy can serve a vital ameliorative role in determining the scope and limits of our intuitive competence with respect to various areas of inquiry.

1. Introduction

Many philosophers want to claim a role for intuition in the generation or in the support of our beliefs about basic philosophical problems. Intuition is usually characterized in propositional attitude terms; agents are described as having the intuition that p, or as intuiting that p, where p is understood to be some proposition. While intuition is widely regarded as a source of belief, the manner in which intuition plays this role is obscure. Broadly speaking, the idea is that something akin to a faculty of intuition might support

our accounts concerning basic conceptual matters insofar as it somehow serves as a guide for the agent in deciding between accepting and rejecting propositions. In addition to serving a variety of evidential roles in philosophical arguments, intuitions are sometimes thought of as hypotheses or as marks of conclusiveness. At bottom, most contemporary accounts of intuition characterize it as an especially authoritative way of *seeming that*.[1]

In order to clarify what contemporary philosophers mean by 'intuition' this paper presents both a historical and a conceptual line of inquiry. The first involves tracking some of the reasons for the reappearance of the term in the 1970s. The second involves distinguishing some of the competing roles assigned to intuition in the recent literature. From there, it will be possible to determine which of these roles we can salvage from the wide variety of contemporary uses of intuition.

Contemporary accounts of intuition oscillate between the folksy and the rarefied: Intuition is sometimes understood to be a peculiarly aprioristic faculty while elsewhere it is portrayed as the most ordinary, commonsense level of thinking; accessible to all of us. George Bealer describes intuition as a *sui generis* propositional attitude which, at the same time, serves as the source of all (non-stipulative) a priori knowledge. (2002, 73) Elsewhere, we find "intuition" and "commonsense" being used interchangeably. Saul Kripke, for example, contrasts intuitions with 'philosopher's notions' and regularly identifies intuitive content as the kind of thing to which the folk would readily agree. (1980, 42) Contemporary accounts which identify intuition with various kinds of competence develop this more traditional identification of intuition and commonsense. Ernest Sosa, for example, characterizes philosophical intuition as roughly equivalent to competence with respect to the relevant subject matter while distinguishing intuitive insight from conceptual analysis. (Sosa, 2007)

The notion of commonsense has a venerable heritage and is entangled with some of the most basic methodological presuppositions of the analytic tradition.[2] So, for

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[1] Given the obscurity of the notion of intuition and the variety of roles it plays in philosophical reasoning it is tempting to agree with Timothy Williamson's charge that "[w]hen contemporary analytic philosophers run out of arguments, they appeal to intuition." (2004, 109)

[2] There are some connections between the use of commonsense in the analytic tradition and some of the arguments one finds in the Scottish Enlightenment or the 18th century Common Sense tradition. Thomas Reid's view of Common Sense has striking parallels with G.E. Moore's for instance. However, the term 'common sense' has a far more ancient origin. The notion of a *sensus communis* in medieval philosophy of mind has its roots in Aristotle's *De Anima* and was considered by Aquinas to be one of the soul's inner

instance, the well known list of propositions that Moore highlights in his 'A Defence of Common Sense' (1925) captures the flavor of what philosophers sometimes seem to mean by *intuitively obvious* propositions. While commonsense has served a central methodological role in analytic philosophy since at least Moore's time, the widespread identification of commonsense and intuition is a more recent phenomenon.[3] This identification becomes common after Kripke's extensive use of the notion of intuition in *Naming and Necessity.* Revisiting his use of intuition there provides a useful starting point for untangling the assumptions involved in contemporary uses of the notion and allows for detailed critical reflection on its role in philosophical methodology.

In recent philosophy, appeals to intuition often invoke a community of agents with competence in some domain. In this sense, an appeal to the intuitive acceptability of a proposition is equivalent to claiming that each of member of the competent community would assent to the proposition in question. Resting an argument on consensus is usually a problematic enterprise, as Gopnik and Schwitzgebel note. (1998) Such appeals lack any evidential role whatsoever when it is shown that the supposed consensus does not exist. In recent years empirical tests of the alleged universality of some basic philosophical intuitions by a group of self-described experimental philosophers has provided convincing evidence that many of the assumptions relied upon by in moral philosophy

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senses. In addition to the five outer senses Aquinas described memory, imagination, common sense and *vis cogitativa* and common sense as specialized cognitive faculties. Roughly speaking, for medieval philosophers, *sensus communis* was the faculty which coordinated the outer senses such that different sensory modalities could be thought of as providing information concerning a single external object. Interestingly, many of the contemporary roles served by intuition and commonsense that are discussed in the Twentieth Century would not have been served by *sensus communis* but rather by what Aquinas called *vis cogitativa.* Aquinas understood *vis cogitativa* to be the inner sense by which humans recognized relevance in sensory experience. As Anthony Kenny points out, *vis cogitativa* plays the role that the estimative power (*vis aestimativa*) plays in animals by instinct. (1994, 36) Thus, *vis cogitativa* would seem closer than Aquinas and Aristotle's *sensus communis* to our modern notion of intuition as something like *intelligent seeming.* It is worth remembering also that *sensus communis* generally referred to a power which is specifically located in one of the ventricles in the brain wherein information from the different sensory modalities is combined. In this sense, the medieval account has a far more naturalistic flavor than contemporary approaches to commonsense.

[3] Although there are examples in early analytic philosophy where philosophers make this identification. For example, in Russell's response to Poincaré he writes: "Poincaré clamours for the use of 'intuition' in reasoning, we may concede that positive errors are less likely to emerge if we only apply our rules where 'intuition' (i.e. common sense) suggests that we may safely do so." (1973, 196)

and epistemology do not reflect anything close to a genuine consensus and instead are subject to varying cultural or economic factors.[4]

How deeply do the lessons of experimental philosophy challenge contemporary philosophical methodology? Clearly, empirical results must force philosophers to clarify the evidential role of their uses of the notion of intuition. However, while I argue that experimental philosophy will be critical to the development of a viable notion of philosophical intuition, the current set of empirical findings described by the experimentalists do not support the kind of generalized skepticism with respect to intuition that is sometimes claimed. For instance, it is worth noting that most advocates of intuition in philosophy have a broadly fallibilist conception of the a priori disciplines and are not in principle averse to revising their intuitions.[5] More importantly, as I shall argue below, it may be possible to distinguish a plausible role for intuition in philosophical methodology which is independent of the truth or falsity of propositions favored by intuition.

The possibility of arriving at a useful notion of intuition largely depends on distinguishing the faculty of intuition from propositions. Once we have made this distinction, a new, ameliorative project emerges. Rather than trusting blindly in our intuitive powers, the scientific study of commonsense or intuitive judgment holds the possibility of providing an informed understanding of the way that this faculty functions. This ameliorative project is applicable even where we *have* consensus with respect to some judgment. We already know quite a bit about the pitfalls of our shared intuitive or commonsense judgments. We know a great deal, for example, concerning the systematically irrational features of our gut feelings concerning probability which Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman describe. (1974) As we study our motivation for irrationally but systematically opting for falsehoods by failing to apply the basic axioms of choice theory and by ignoring the laws of probability will lead us to understand

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[4] Among the first paper to make an experimental case against the assumed consensus with respect to some philosophical intuition is Jonathon Weinberg, Shaun Nichols, Steven Stich (2001) on normative intuitions. In a recent paper Swain, et al, (forthcoming) conduct experiments on epistemic intuitions to similar effect. See their blog at http://experimentalphilosophy.typepad.com

[5] George Bealer, for example, sees the revisability of intuition as central to its role in the a priori disciplines. (2002, 74)

something about our tendencies to seek certain kinds of salient features over others.[6] The kinds of errors in judgment that Tversky and Kahneman highlight are for the most part, widely distributed in the general population, and are relatively insensitive to educational and socio-economic factors. Herbert Gintis (2000) and others have noted that the heuristics governing our probabilistic judgments are ordinarily reliable given the demands of everyday decision making. In combination, or in more complex settings, these heuristics may lead to the kinds of systematic irrationality that we find in some of the standard cases. (Gintis 2000, 248)

While we are very likely to encounter reasons to revise our intuitions with respect to some moral, epistemic or metaphysical matters, rejection of *all* recourse to intuition in philosophical investigation is not warranted on the strength of current empirical criticisms. There are both epistemological and methodological reasons for hesitating before accepting a full-blown skeptical attitude towards intuition. As Matthew Liao (forthcoming) and Williamson (2004) note, skepticism with respect to intuition is misguided if it rests on the bad epistemic principle that we ought to always know what our evidence is before accepting some proposition. This principle, as Williamson points out, is self-defeating. (Williamson 2004, 121) Methodologically, total rejection of intuition is understood by many philosophers as equivalent to giving up on commonsense as a moderating influence in our investigations. As we shall see below, David Lewis' account of the role of commonsense assumptions is partly motivated by this kind of concern. (1986, 134-5) Lewis and others have argued that intuition (or something like it) plays a salutary role insofar as it contributes to methodological conservatism. While there is little reason to give up entirely on the kind of methodological role which commonsense or intuition serves, it is worth distinguishing methodological conservatism from uncritical acceptance of some proposition or set of propositions.

There is at least one general feature of contemporary usage that requires clarification. Conflation of the content of favored propositions with the feelings which lead us to favor those propositions figures frequently in the literature and is responsible for unnecessary obscurity. The salutary effect of distinguishing between intuitions and

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[6] Hintikka (2007) makes a roughly similar point with respect to the so-called fallacies made famous by Tversky and Kahneman.

propositions is that it clarifies the sources of justification in an argument.[7]   So, for instance, it would allow us to distinguish arguments which rest on the truth of propositions from those which rest on the authority of something like a faculty of commonsense or intuition.

While those propositions which are favored by commonsense are true or false independently of their relation to commonsense, a proposition's having the property of being favored by commonsense or intuition might count as a reason to believe that it is true. However, we could only reasonably believe that this property is a guide to truth by virtue of some additional set of propositions concerning the reliability and nature of the faculty of intuition or commonsense. To say that we need reasons to heed the voice of commonsense is not equivalent to an epistemic principle to the effect that we ought to have evidence in all cases for the propositions that commonsense provides. As we have seen, this would be the kind of self-defeating operational principle that Williamson warns against. Instead, by focusing on our reasons for heeding the faculty of intuition, we embark on a general (largely empirical) project to give an account of the faculty and its place in the philosophical enterprise. One could imagine a range of possible accounts: An evolutionary story concerning the reliability of ingrained habits of thought, some notion of subconscious processing, some inductive account of the usefulness of commonsense in the past etc. Propositions or theories of this kind would be true or false independently of whether they are favored by intuition/commonsense and one could imagine counterintuitive explanations for the reliability of intuitive reasoning. Such accounts, rather than generalized skepticism with respect to philosophical intuition, might be the lasting payoff of the emerging field of experimental philosophy. Distinguishing between the truth value of a proposition and its relation to intuition is certainly not equivalent to denying the value of intuition in philosophical investigation or justification. Rather, the distinction is a necessary step in the search for a reasonable account of why (and when) we ought to heed intuition.

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[7]Williamson diagnoses the situation in the following way: "uncritical talk of philosophy as relying, for better of worse, on 'intuitions' often manifests the misconception that our evidence in philosophy consists of psychological facts about ourselves rather than facts about the philosophical topic itself." (2005, 122)

2. Intuition's Seventies Revival

Intuitions began to play an increasingly prominent role in philosophy in the 1970s. The reappearance of intuition in philosophy is historically puzzling given the severe criticisms it had faced earlier in the twentieth century. For example, Wittgenstein's criticisms of the role of appeals to intuition in justification were well known and influential. In the explanation of rule-following, for example, he famously dismisses the appeal to intuition as "an unnecessary shuffle". (1953 §213)[8] As Wittgenstein notes, an inner guide may provide bad, as well as good guidance. Therefore resting our rule-following behavior on intuition does not provide a satisfying answer to the skeptic. While Wittgenstein provided important criticisms of justificatory uses of intuition, the ordinary language tradition continued to maintain the centrality of commonsense in philosophical method. As we shall see, the role of commonsense as a vaguely defined methodological principle was critical to the resuscitation of the term 'intuition' in contemporary philosophy. Wittgenstein's criticism was aimed at an interpretation of intuition as a psychological faculty with privileged epistemic access of some kind. This criticism does not apply directly to philosophical uses of commonsense or (more significantly) to ordinary language.

In addition to its roles in Twentieth Century philosophy, the term 'intuition' is associated with the work of central figures in the earlier history of philosophy. It is useful to distinguish contemporary usage of 'intuition' from other, more traditional roles of the term in the history of early modern philosophy. For example, to take just one prominent case, there are significant differences between current uses of intuition and Kant's account of intuition (*anschauung*). For Kant, intuitions are immediate relations between the agent and particulars (1787, A320/B377) which are combined with concepts by imagination in judgments. Contemporary uses differ fundamentally from Kant's insofar as intuitions are seen as sources of insight and illumination in themselves apart from the additional machinery of concepts and imagination that Kant invoked. For Kant, intuitions considered in isolation from concepts are unintelligible. (1787, B.75-6)

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[8] Although as Mark Steiner (2000) points out Wittgenstein also had positive things to say about the role of intuition in mathematical practice and discovery.

By rejecting traditional accounts of intellectual intuition and insisting on non-enthymatic justifications in mathematics Gotlob Frege sets the tone for much of the attitude towards intuition in the Twentieth Century in analytic philosophy.[9] Frege's work marks a break between the Kantian role for intuition in philosophy of mathematics and the approaches to justification favored in the analytic tradition. Bertrand Russell continues to use the notion of intuition in his work to characterize the commonsense judgments of mathematicians, but like Frege, he insists on the fallibility of these judgments. (Russell 1973 195)

Given the break with Kant in the analytic tradition, the revival of intuition as a central part of philosophical methodology in the 1970's is striking. There are few detailed discussions of intuition's recent history in the literature. Among the most substantial is Jaakko Hintikka's paper 'The Emperor's New Intuitions'. (1999) There, Hintikka describes the role of linguistics in the reemergence of intuition-talk. The principal purpose of Hintikka's paper is to criticize Kripke's arguments in *Naming and Necessity*. Since Hintikka's goal is not to provide a detailed history of intuition, he does not examine the role of commonsense and the influence of ordinary language philosophy on post-Kripkean philosophical methodology. It is therefore necessary to expand on his examination of the role of intuition in Kripke's work. In doing so, we can clarify and analyze the function and characteristics of intuition in arguments that have played a central role in the formation of recent philosophy. In Kripke's lectures, intuition is at the heart of the attempt to save modal discourse from naturalistic criticisms. It is therefore worth unpacking Kripke's use of intuition as a way of getting clear on its role in contemporary philosophical methodology.

As mentioned above, Hintikka provides one of the few (albeit incomplete) attempts at providing a historical explanation for the reappearance of intuition. In his account, he emphasizes the analogy between the role played by intuition or *Sprachgefühl* in post-Chomskian linguistics and the rise of intuition in analytic philosophy. (1999) He

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[9] Tyler Burge describes Frege's attitude towards intuition in the following way:
"...Frege thought that mathematical and logical intuition and judgment, even in outstanding mathematicians and logicians, is thoroughly fallible. Let me codify this point in two principles. He thought (a) that the fact that a mathematical or logical proposition is found obvious by competent professionals at a given time provides no infallible guarantee that it is true, much less a basic truth. He thought (b) that there is no guarantee that true mathematical or logical principles (including basic truths) will be found to be obvious by competent professionals at a given time." (1998, 328)

describes how the current penchant for intuition in philosophy has at least some of its roots in an influential reading of Noam Chomsky's early methodology. Philosophers and some linguists understood the goal of generative linguistics to be the construction of grammars that produce acceptable sentences as judged by competent native speakers. As Hintikka points out, this interpretation can be traced to Robert B. Lees influential review of *Syntactic Structures.* (1957) There, Lees describes the linguist's own "*Sprachgefühl*, this intuitive notion about linguistic structure, which together with the sentences of a language, forms the empirical basis of grammatical analysis." (1957, 379) This 'intuitive notion about linguistic structure' was understood to be the cause of a competent native speaker's capacity to recognize the difference between grammatical and ungrammatical sentences. The linguist's own feeling for her language is taken to be empirical evidence favoring one prospective formalization of her native language over another.

According to Hintikka, philosophers began to use intuitive acceptability as a standard for the evaluation of their own endeavors by analogy with what they saw as a successful methodology in linguistics. Soon, philosophers began treating intuition as a guide to the character of concepts and the semantic features of terms, thus extending intuition beyond judgments concerning the grammaticality of sentences. By 1971, for example, Jerrold Katz made extensive use of intuition in his approach to language. Specifically, Katz lets his *Sprachgefühl* guide the characterization of the semantic relationships between concepts in the following passage:

> Our linguistic intuitions that "unmarried bachelor" is semantically redundant and that "He is a bachelor again" is not semantically anomalous tells us that one component of this sense of "bachelor" is the concept of being in an unmarried state. Our linguistic intuition that "aunt," "sister," "mother," "spinster," etc., differ semantically from "uncle," "brother," "father," bachelor," etc., only with respect to the conceptual distinction between femaleness and maleness tells us that another component of the sense of "bachelor" is the concept of maleness. (Katz 1971, 102)

The role of linguistic intuition here seems to confirm Hintikka's reading. Intuitions about the semantic features of terms are taken by Katz as the content for philosophical analysis. Katz's assumption is that the job of conceptual analysis is to make our semantic intuitions as explicit and rigorous as possible. By the late 1960s worries about synonymy, so central to Quine's critique of analyticity were no longer a serious concern for analytic philosophers. Instead, intuitions were seen as allowing the mind to grasp synonymy relations.   In place of Quine's naturalistic scruples and extensionalist approach to semantics, intuitions had become familiar tools of the philosophical trade.

Since traditional Aristotelian or Platonic accounts of intuition were rejected by Twentieth Century thinkers, Hintikka argues that the only source of support for intuition that remained was the linguist's use of *Sprachgefühl*. Apart from this analogy with linguistic practice, he writes, "contemporary thinkers' practice of appealing to intuitions in philosophical argumentation is without any justification whatsoever." (1999, 132). However, the triumph of intuition-talk is not fully explained via the tendency to imitate linguists. Hintikka's account cannot be applied directly, for example, in the case of his paper's principle opponent – Saul Kripke. As discussed below, the analogy with linguistics misses the influence of ordinary language philosophy on the reemergence of metaphysics and the accompanying proliferation in uses of the notion of intuition.[10]

Uses of the notion of intuition have sprawled well beyond the relatively hygienic realm of conceptual analysis and semantics to the point where, by 2007 it becomes increasingly difficult to see where the limits of intuition lie. Responding to the critique of philosophical 'armchair intuitions' by experimental philosophers, Ernest Sosa complains:

> It is often claimed that analytic philosophy appeals to armchair intuitions in the service of "conceptual analysis." But this is deplorably misleading. The use of intuitions in philosophy should not be tied exclusively to conceptual analysis. Consider some main subjects of prominent debate: utilitarian versus deontological theories in ethics, for example, or Rawls's theory of justice in social and political philosophy, or the externalism/internalism debate in epistemology; and many

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[10] This chain of influence would connect more recent intuition talk via John Austin and Ludwig Wittgenstein with the influential emphasis on commonsense which we find in G.E. Moore.

others could be cited to similar effect. These are not controversies about the conceptual analysis of some concept. …The questions involved are about rightness, or justice, or epistemic justification. Some such questions concern an ethical or epistemic subject matter, and not just our corresponding concepts. (2007, 100)

By 2007 it is possible for Sosa to regard the role of intuition in conceptual analysis as a misleading distraction from its real business. On the view represented by Sosa, intuition reaches far beyond our competence with respect to concepts and semantic relations touching now on the topics themselves. On Sosa's account, when a philosopher discusses her intuitions concerning some ethical or epistemic matter, she is voicing the way that things *seem* to her *qua* competent moral agent or *qua* reasonable person. Thus, in recent philosophy, intuition becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish from some general notion of *seeming*.[11] Sosa's account derives the authority of philosophical intuition from our competence with respect to the various subject matters of interest. "When we rely on intuitions in philosophy, then, in my view we manifest a competence that enables us to get it right on a certain subject matter, by basing our beliefs on the sheer understanding of their contents." (2007, 102) The notion of competence at work here, while it makes reference to the contents, is distinguished somehow from concepts and is attached directly to the moral, epistemic or metaphysical facts themselves. While Sosa's articulation of the relationship between intuition and the content of the subject matter is not articulated in any precise way, his intention is clear. For Sosa and philosophers like him, our cognitive faculties are suited to get the story about moral, epistemic and metaphysical matters right. The reasons we are so suited is because we are competent navigators of those domains. While the appearance of question-begging here is difficult to avoid, it is possible to save Sosa's position by articulating some of the reasons which might warrant the claim that we are suited to some particular domains. The problem here for Sosa's position is that such reasons will not be arrived at via a priori reasoning. Instead, as we shall see, the only convincing kind of support that Sosa's

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[11] Bealer says so quite directly: ' By intuitions here, we mean *seemings*; for you to have an intuition that A is just for it to *seem* to you that A' (2002, 73)

view of intuition is likely to receive will come from his opponents in experimental philosophy.

Contemporary notions of intuition are tied to competence, but in a far more general way than we might expect from the kinds of Chomskian considerations that Hintikka identifies. Understanding this widened scope for intuition along with the notion that intuition allows a direct relationship between agents and 'subject matters' requires some attention to the role of ordinary language philosophy in the emergence of contemporary analytic philosophy. Notably, for instance, while the notion of linguistic competence may have played some role in Kripke's thinking, Hintikka's reading underplays the influence of ordinary language philosophy and particularly the role of commonsense in recent metaphysics. Clearly, ordinary language and commonsense will not play the kind of justificatory role that Hintikka sought in his essay. It can also be argued that Kripke's use of the notion of intuition is complicated and perhaps even inconsistent. Nevertheless, the analogy with linguistics misses some central roles that intuition plays in Kripke's thinking. Specifically, as we shall see, Sosa's rather spongy notion of competence captures significant parts of the role that intuition plays in the argument for the legitimacy of modal discourse.

3. Odd-sounding consequences, intuition and meaningfulness in *Naming and Necessity*

Naming and Necessity is widely appreciated as central to the recent history of philosophy insofar as it clarifies the distinction between logical, epistemological and metaphysical notions of necessity. The implications of this distinction are deep and far reaching. Most strikingly, it allows for Kripke's recognition of aposteriori necessary truths. By untangling necessity from apriority and analyticity, Kripke shows how metaphysical investigation can avoid traditional epistemological criticisms.

The argument of the lectures is well-known: Kripke argues against a descriptivist view of reference and for a direct-reference model of names. Direct reference is intended to capture the way proper names and natural kind terms serve to track objects across

possible states of affairs. In this context, names serve as rigid designators. While Kripke's claims concerning rigid designation are widely regarded as providing a new theory of reference, it is important to recognize the function of notions like rigid designation in support of his more basic metaphysical argument. Insofar as there is a new philosophy of language in Kripke's work his account of language is secondary to the more basic metaphysical purpose of the lectures.

Naming and Necessity begins with some relatively straightforward metaphysical assumptions. For example, identity is understood to be a relation. Identity, he claims, never holds between two things and if it holds, it always holds of necessity. From here, the claim that if *a* is identical with *b* then it is necessarily identical with *b* is the result of a very simple semi-formal argument which runs as follows: If we accept the necessity of self-identity, then for all *x,* necessarily *x=x.* If we accept the principle of the indiscernibility of identicals then, for all *x* and for all *y,* $x=y \rightarrow \forall \varphi (\varphi x \leftrightarrow \varphi y)$. Now, if *a* is identical with *b* and if *a* is identical with *b* then whatever is true of *a* is true of *b*, then it is necessarily the case that *a* is identical with *b* since it is true of *a* that it is necessarily identical with *a* and whatever is true of *a* is also true of *b*.

However, accepting the result leads to some odd sounding claims. As Kripke points out, it seems to entail, for instance that if Ben Franklin is the first postmaster general, then it is necessarily the case that Ben is the first postmaster general. There is an apparent mismatch between the formal reasoning (which led us to the necessity of identity) and our ordinary ways of using the word *is*.

Kripke's lectures criticize descriptivist approaches to language replacing it with his account of names as rigid designators. The elaboration of Kripke's so-called "new theory of reference" in *Naming and Necessity* serves to reconcile the formal or semi-formal insights with respect to modality and identity with ordinary identity statements. Kripke's arguments in these lectures are designed to lend some commonsense plausibility to the underlying metaphysical argument. As we shall see, the notion of intuition was central to this aspect of Kripke's project.

In *Naming and Necessity*, intuition is deployed in three distinguishable ways. Intuition is connected to the meaningfulness of certain terms and concepts, it is taken as indicating the conclusiveness of arguments and it serves as a way of distinguishing

between formal and informal reasoning in philosophy. Distinguishing the various roles played by intuition in Kripke's work is important insofar as it clarifies our own uses of this notion in philosophical investigation.

Carrying the heaviest argumentative burden in Kripke's defense of modal reasoning is the idea of intuition as the means by which we connect to the 'ordinary' or 'commonsensical' meanings of our words. So for example, he stresses the familiarity of modal discourse when he writes:

> When you ask whether it is necessary or contingent that *Nixon* won the election, you are asking the intuitive question whether in some counterfactual situation, *this man* would in fact have lost the election. (1980, 41)

Modal questions can be intuitive and presumably, he believes, ordinary questions. That modal questions have some connection to ordinariness is intended as a means of certifying their meaningfulness; on this view, ordinary sentences and questions are meaningful sentences and questions. While neither "Is it contingent that Nixon won the election?" nor "Is it necessary that Nixon won the election?" sound like ordinary questions to my ear, Kripke is less concerned with these particular examples and is focused instead on leading us to recognize that we ask a range of modal questions in ordinary daily life. He is specifically interested in counterfactual reasoning -- "Would Nixon have lost his bid for re-election had he not followed Kissinger's advice?" and the like.

Kripke's notion of meaningfulness here is informed by the ordinary language tradition in philosophy. His confidence that the meaningfulness of words and questions is grounded in their ordinary usage as we see in the following passage, where Kripke writes:

> It is very far from being true that this idea [that a property can meaningfully be held to be essential or accidental to an object independently of its description] is a notion which has no intuitive content, which means nothing to the ordinary man. Suppose that someone said, pointing to Nixon, 'that's the guy who might have

lost'. Someone else says 'Oh no, if you describe him as "Nixon", then he might have lost; but, of course, describing him as the winner, then it is not true that he might have lost.' Now which one is being the philosopher, here, the unintuitive man? It seems to me that obviously the second. The second man has a philosophical theory. (1980, 41)

Kripke's characterization of meaningful and meaningless questions introduces the notion of 'intuitive content'. If an idea has 'intuitive content' then, according to Kripke, it is meaningful to the 'ordinary man.' The reference to the ordinary man here is connected with the idea of intuition or commonsense which is operative. By adding 'intuitive' to 'content', he means to distinguish contexts where the content of a term might be due to some stipulation or some unusual specialist usage. The ordinary man is contrasted with the philosopher, who in this passage is characterized as the 'unintuitive man'. Here, Kripke is deploying commonsense or intuition in a manner very close to that of the ordinary language philosophers. Intuitive content contrasts with content derived via formal or technical considerations. As we shall see, in Kripke's thinking, formal considerations are distinguished from and perhaps even subordinated to intuitive content. In terms of justificatory force, one clear impression is that intuitive content plays a more central role in philosophical deliberation than theories generated by 'unintuitive men'.

For much of the 20th century, following Moore, commonsense was deployed in support of a critical posture towards philosophical extravagance or exaggeration. According to John Austin and other ordinary language philosophers, philosophical extremism, can be cured by careful attention to the way philosophical terms of art were originally used in ordinary language. (Austin, 1974) So, for example, rather than worrying about the reality of chairs and tables, Austin argued that philosophers should attend to the ordinary role of terms like 'real' in ordinary language. Philosophical problems, according to Austin, lose their grip on us once we understand their origins. For Austin, this is because they originate in a misunderstanding or a misuse of the ordinary use of terms. The basic idea of the ordinary language tradition in philosophy is that

philosophical theories and more specifically the philosophical use of terms can be evaluated through a comparison with ordinary usage.[12]

The ordinary language tradition emphasized the importance of Wittgenstein called the "original home" of words, assuming in so doing that the meanings of words in the ordinary context ought to serve as a stable reference point for philosophical deliberation. Thus, while Wittgenstein and Austin would have criticized Kripke's revival of necessity as a topic for philosophical inquiry, his emphasis on the ordinariness of modal discourse involves a direct appeal to the criteria for meaningfulness that are at the heart of ordinary language philosophy. Kripke writes:

> If someone thinks that the notion of necessary or contingent property (forget whether there *are* any nontrivial necessary properties [and consider] just the meaningfulness of the notion) is a philosopher's notion with no intuitive content, he is wrong. (1980, 42)

By the time Kripke presented his lectures, there were many well-known criticisms of ordinary language philosophy.[13] Kripke clearly doesn't believe that the standard criticisms are relevant to his project. While he embraced the kind of metaphysical inquiry that the ordinary language philosophers had rejected, Kripke continues to use the core methodological principle of the tradition, namely that we ought to turn to ordinary usage for insight into the meaning of our terms.[14]

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[12] Wittgenstein described the project this way:

> When philosophers use a word – "knowledge", "being", "object", "I", "sentence", "name" – and try to grasp the *essence* of the thing, one must always ask oneself: is the word ever actually used in this way in the language-game which is its original home?
> What *we* do is to bring words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use. (1953 §116)

[13] Hanfling (2000) provides a useful historical survey of the standard criticisms of ordinary language philosophy.

[14] The ordinariness of modal questions does not, by itself, provide decisive evidence against the kinds of criticism that Kripke had in mind. Quine's well-known criticisms of modal discourse rest on the failure of substitutivity in modal contexts and are intended to encourage philosophers to reform rather than adhere to their ordinary attitudes towards possibility and necessity. On Quine's view, theoretical investigation may leads us to use terms in ways that differ significantly from their role in their original home. See, for example his discussions of modality in 'Three Grades of Modal Involvement' and 'Reference and Modality'.

Perhaps more importantly, one finds in the ordinary language tradition, an important change in the attitude towards evidence that prevailed earlier in the century. As Scott Soames emphasizes in his *Philosophical Analysis in the Twentieth Century* one of the main targets of the ordinary language tradition was radical skepticism. (2003, 172-187) So, for example, in Austin's criticism of A.J. Ayer, he describes the proper role of the notion of evidence in ordinary contexts and claims that skeptical demands for evidence distort the notion of evidence beyond recognition. (See Austin 1964, 115) The argument against the skeptic's demand for evidence supports the reemergence of intuition in late Twentieth Century philosophy insofar as the demands for justification are relaxed dramatically.

4. Intuition as non-formal insight

Another use of 'intuition' in the sense of pre-theoretical insight appears at the beginning of the lectures. In describing his discovery of rigid designation, he points to what he calls "the natural intuition that the names of ordinary language are rigid designators." (1980, 5) The "natural intuition" referred to here sounds like a methodological guide of some kind. We find some clue as to what he might have meant a little later after the passages discussed previously. Unlike his use of 'intuitive' as proxy for 'meaningful' this second use of intuition is explicitly operating as a guide in the evaluation formal reasoning.

Introducing the notion of rigid designation, he begins by invoking the technical apparatus of possible worlds: "Let's use some terms quasi-technically. Let's call something a *rigid designator* if in every possible world it designates the same of object." (*ibid.*, 48) With respect to transworld identity, Hintikka (1995) and Kaplan (1979) have argued that, in order to make sense of rigid designation, one must first establish criteria for transworld identification. Kripke attempts to block this line of argument by claiming that our ordinary use of names makes use of rigid designation and that the so-called problem of transworld identification can only arise once rigid designation is in place. This then is the "quasi-technical" reason for opting for rigid designation and for not taking the problem of transworld identification seriously. In constructing a semantics for

quantified modal logic, Kripke begins by establishing the domain of individuals that fall within the scope of the quantifiers. As Catterson notes "the members of this domain are already assumed by the logician to be completely individuated; the identity relations must already be fixed or given. In the case of a possible worlds model this will mean that the cross world identities must already be given, otherwise one just doesn't have a bona fide model." (2004, 35) Kripke's argument in *Naming and Necessity* does not point to the conditions that are necessary in order to stipulate formal models. By contrast with whatever technical argument for rigid designation there might be, he characterizes his method in *Naming and Necessity* as being intuitive: "In these lectures, I will argue, intuitively, that proper names are rigid designators." (*ibid*., 49) His argument rests on the "natural intuition" that we can rigidly designate Nixon in counterfactual conditions.

> It is *because* we can refer rigidly to Nixon, and stipulate that we are speaking of what might have happened to *him* (under certain circumstances) that 'transworld identifications' are unproblematic in such cases. (1980*,* 49)

According to the Kripkean perspective on individuation in counterfactual statements, the individuals in question are rigidly designated prior to there being any question of transworld identification.[15] Thus, the counterfactual situations that we imagine Nixon inhabiting are stipulated relative to some already individuated Nixon. How it was that Nixon came to be individuated is not relevant to the stipulation of worlds.

Kripke's account of transworld identity risks resting too much on the stipulative powers of the epistemic agent since this would involve blurring his cherished distinction between "the epistemological and the metaphysical, between a prioricity and necessity." (*ibid*., 49) However, the stipulative character of rigid designation is subordinated in the

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[15] Kripke writes: "[…]we begin with the objects we *have*, and can identify, in the actual world. We can then ask whether certain things might have been true of the objects." (1980, 53) Catterson notes that this strategy commits Kripke to some form of haecceitism. This is because:
> "[…] the identity relation is not only primitive with respect to possible world semantics, it is metaphysically rock bottom tout court. Our conceptual scheme must start with the individual already individuated, and then go on to theorize about what relations and qualities this individual possesses or could possess… Thus Kripke is at heart an haecceitist. Of course, if his view of the ontological primacy of the individual is true, then the relation of identity cannot be analyzed into more basic terms and the whole question of cross-identification becomes moot." (2004 39-40)

general line of argument to the support that rigid designation gets via the transcendental argument. According to this view, rigid designation is a necessary condition for even asking about the problem of transworld identification.

At this point in Kripke's lectures the argument concerning rigid designation is being conducted at an 'intuitive' level and the methodological guidance that intuition provides involves encouraging us to believe Kripke's quasi-transcendental argumentation for rigid designation. Intuition is what permits us non-technical access to the priority of rigid designation over transworld identification. In one sense, intuition and formal reasoning are working side by side in Kripke's arguments. Consider, for instance the following passage in relation to another important metaphysical principle:

> Already when I worked on modal logic it had seemed to me, as Wiggins has said, that the Leibnitzian principle of the indiscernibility of idendicals was as self – evident as the law of contradiction. That some philosophers could have doubted it always seemed to me bizarre. The model theoretic study of modal logic ('possible worlds' semantics) could only confirm this conviction… The model theory made this completely clear, though it should have been clear enough on the intuitive level. (1980, 3)

To say that the principle "should have been clear enough on the intuitive level" is to claim that intuition should be trusted to comport with the results of formal reasoning. Kripke's intuitive argument for rigid designation is following a similar pattern in relation to his formal argument. There is a long tradition of intuition, or commonsense playing a similar role in relation to proofs. For instance, the relationship between proof and commonsense that we find in *Naming and Necessity* is extremely close to Reid's. When Thomas Reid emphasizes the guidance provided by commonsense, the relationship between proof and commonsense is clear:

> Thus, if a Mathematician, by a process of intricate demonstration, in which some false step was made, should be brought to this conclusion, that two quantities, which are both equal to a third, are not equal to each other, a man of common

sense, without pretending to be a judge of the demonstration, is well entitled to reject the conclusion and pronounce it absurd. (1785, 531-2)

Without needing to understand the technical line of reasoning in question, commonsense inclines the non-mathematician to reject the proof that (A=C) & (B=C) & (A≠B). The non-mathematician's rejection of the proof is not, strictly speaking, rational, in the sense of not being directly related to an evaluation of the proof itself. Instead, the proof is rejected because its conclusion goes against a proposition that is strongly preferred for reasons not related to the proof. Retrospectively, we say that the preference counts as commonsense rather than mere prejudice. If we examined the judgment in isolation, then given the agent's failure to provide any criticism of the proof itself, we would be entitled to say that it is irrational prejudice. However, because of the special logical and mathematical status of the proposition which the proof is attempting to deny, we know that there are reasons that support the agent's decision. We are entitled to reject a proof which runs counter to the principle that identity is a reflexive, symmetrical and transitive relation because of the mathematical or logical consequences of denying those principles. It is because of the fundamentality of the proposition for the business of mathematics that we regard the non-mathematician's rejection of the proof is acceptable. In this case, the role of commonsense is to lead us to assent to special and very basic propositions. A non-rational preference for some proposition counts as an instance of commonsense insofar as the proposition has some important epistemic role.

However, the characterization of the relationship between proof and commonsense is problematic here. The agent's judgment in this case is not distinguished from arbitrariness or irrationality via commonsense. Instead, it is via a demonstration of the good reasons for not wishing to abandon the favored proposition, that we come to distinguish the agent's judgment from mere prejudice. These good reasons are supplied by mathematical reflection on the implications of dropping the basic notion. Thus, Reid's non-mathematician can be judged to have been correct in his rejection of the counterintuitive conclusion, but this retrospective judgment employs mathematical reasoning. Commonsense alone does not allow us to distinguish the non-mathematicians judgment from arbitrariness. It is difficult to provide a scenario in which intuition can

have any legitimate veto power over formal demonstration apart from having recourse to some other formal demonstration. As we shall see below in our discussion of Lewis, it is common for philosophers to drop some previously intuitively acceptable proposition given sufficiently good evidence or argument. Likewise, our assumptions about features of physical or mathematical reality, for example our commonsense views about simultaneity or the intuitive axioms of naïve set theory, may crumble quickly under the pressure of scientific progress. Bealer takes this to mean that intuition is as fallible as any epistemic faculty. Commenting on our intuitive commitments to the axioms of naïve set theory he writes that, "set-theoretic paradoxes establish an important moral: namely that intuition can be fallible, and a priori belief is not unrevisable." (2002, 74) Thus, even by the standards of one of intuition's strongest contemporary defenders, it seems misguided to argue that intuition can license the rejection of a proof which leads to counterintuitive conclusions.

5. Common starting points, commonsense methods and counterintuitive conclusions

It is common to read philosophers identifying intuition with some set of propositions. They assume, for instance, that there are intuitively undeniable truisms which can serve as the starting point for philosophical investigation. This latter construal of intuition, which follows roughly from Moore, is part of a general methodological approach according to which we ought to orient philosophical investigation by reference to the some favored set of truisms. Moore saw the Common Sense view of the world as embodied in a set of propositions whose denial (while not flatly contradictory) leads to absurdity. The attempt to deny these propositions, he claimed, seems self-undermining since claiming and arguing for anything seems to involve some implicit acceptance of the truth of a whole range of Common Sense propositions. So, according to Moore, to actively deny these propositions is in some sense implicitly self-undermining. Rather than directly confronting skeptical arguments he provided a description of the background beliefs of participants in an argument. As an antidote to what he saw as the speculative excesses of his British Idealist predecessors, Moore's arguments are intended

to support a view of philosophical practice in which speculative exuberance is restrained by the modesty of Common Sense.

While there is still broad acknowledgment of the importance of commonsense in philosophy, intuition often figures in support of metaphysical theses which do not seem consonant with the kind of modesty that Moore advocated. It is common for contemporary metaphysical arguments to deduce counterintuitive conclusions from some relatively plausible set of intuitions or platitudes. Consider David Lewis' famous arguments for modal realism. While Moore might have joined philosophers who stare incredulously at the strangeness of modal realism, Lewis' arguments consistently make appeal to commonsense and he follows Moore in his emphasis on theoretical conservatism as a methodological principle for philosophers.

Lewis' attitude towards the propositions of commonsense themselves stands in contrast with Moore's. In *On the Plurality of Worlds*, for example, Lewis's argument for modal realism amounts to the presentation of reasons for accepting some commonsense theses at the expense of others. For example, in his defense of modal realism, he explains his conclusion by way of showing which of three commonsense intuitions he accepts and which he rejects. He writes:

> Suppose we interviewed some spokesman for common sense. I think we would find that he adheres firmly to three theses:
>
> (1) Everything is actual
>
> (2) Actuality consists of everything that is spatiotemporally related to us, and nothing more (give or take some 'abstract entities'). It is not vastly bigger, or less unified than we are accustomed to think.
>
> (3) Possibilities are not parts of actuality, they are alternatives to it.
>
> […] I speak as party to the conventions of the community in question. […] I am within my rights in standing with common opinion about the unification and the extent of actuality, at the expense of common opinion

that everything is actual, I do of course disagree with common opinion. I acknowledge that as a fair objection." (1986, 99-100)

Unlike Moore, Lewis distinguishes the significance of commonsense for philosophical methodology and its significance with respect to the evaluation of the results of inquiry. Commonsense has no veto power over the latter. It "has no absolute authority in philosophy… It's just that theoretical conservatism is the only sensible policy for theorists of limited powers who are duly modest about what they could accomplish after a fresh start." (1986, 134) It is likely that the British Idealist targets of Moore's criticism would have agreed with Lewis' methodological point. Thus, commonsense figures prominently in Lewis' work, but not in the way that Moore might have hoped.

In ontology too, commonsense has taken a decidedly un-Moorean turn. For instance, Moore argued that we ought to accept truisms with respect to the existence of familiar objects. By contrast, as Crawford Elder points out, in the years that followed, ontologists have almost universally lost faith in the existence of ordinary things[16]: Familiar objects "have been crowded out by sleeker rivals unheard of by common sense – objects having crisper extinction conditions, or characterized by properties not susceptible to sorites arguments, or objects whose causal efficacy traces to far cleaner laws than would ever fit common-sense objects." (2004, x).[17]

It is worth distinguishing the kind of methodological conservatism that Lewis associates with commonsense from the evaluation of conclusions. This methodological role is relatively straightforward and involves the recognition that we usually cannot make a completely fresh start in inquiry and that attempts to do so are usually not very successful. Philosophical inquiry, according to Lewis, ought to begin modestly by provisionally accepting commonsense starting points. This general principle says nothing, of course, about where inquiry might take us or how we ought to evaluate its results.

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[16] For Moore, the truisms of common sense are thoroughly entangled with the reality of familiar objects. Figuring prominently among these are his body, his clothes, the furniture in his study, his pen, etc. It is precisely the Idealist denials of familiar objects and ordinary experience that his essay is intended to correct.

[17] Williamson (2004, 112) makes a similar point, noting examples of philosophers (Van Inwagen 1995 and Horgan 1996) who deny the existence of mountains.

5. Intuition and Conclusiveness

As we saw in the discussion of Reid, in one of its roles, intuition is related to the early modern notion of Common Sense insofar as 'intuition' functions as a pre-rational standard of conclusiveness. So, for example, Kripke understands intuition as helping us to find the point at which it is reasonable to terminate an argument. Commenting on intuition, he writes:

> I think it is very heavy evidence in favor of anything, myself. I really don't know, in a way, what more conclusive evidence one can have about anything, ultimately speaking. (*ibid*., 42)

When Kripke writes that intuition provides "heavy evidence", he does not mean that intuition provides any additional content that would assist us in making the case for the proposition one way or another. Instead, is claiming that commonsense or intuition inclines him to accept the proposition and that such inclinations should be trusted. The peculiarity involved in the idea of inclinations or passions that aim towards reasonable ends is captured elegantly by Plato's discussion of *sophrosyne* in the *Republic*. *Sophrosyne*, Socrates suggests, is a condition wherein the irrational passions are inclined towards rationality: "when the ruling part and the two ruled parts are of the single opinion that the calculating part ought to rule and don't raise faction against it." (442c)[18] For later philosophers too, common sense is often presented as something like a pre-rational disposition to prefer rational propositions or courses of action over clearly irrational ones. As touched upon above, Reid articulated an influential early modern view of common sense as a set of innate concepts or principles that form the basis for intersubjectivity and the capacity to reason. Reid writes:

> [Common sense] makes a man capable of managing his own affairs, and answerable for his conduct towards others [… Common sense] is purely the gift

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[18] This is Allan Bloom's 1968 translation.

of Heaven. And where Heaven has not given it, no education can supply the want… A man who has common sense may be taught to reason. But if he has not that gift, no teaching will make him able either to judge of first principles or to reason from them." (Reid 1785, 531)

In spite of the venerable tradition, we lack an account of precisely what it means for inclinations to aim towards some good epistemic end. Clearly one can judge retrospectively whether some inclination helped in the achievement of some positive epistemic end, but the inclination itself does not come marked as epistemically virtuous or vicious. Our positive evaluation of some intuition must be drawn from other, non-intuitive sources. This is precisely the point of Wittgenstein's criticism of the justificatory role of intuition in the section of *Philosophical Investigations* mentioned above. (1953 §213) Evidence of the trustworthiness of intuition is likely to come via the scientific study of this "gift of heaven". By investigating our pre-rational dispositions to favor some propositions over others we will be in a position to distinguish those features of our habits of thought which may actually impede us. As mentioned above, the systematically irrational features of our judgments about probability and cost may have good evolutionary explanations. It is useful for us to know when to trust our intuitions and when to ignore them. This, unfortunately for armchair philosophers is not something which commonsense or intuition can help us to accomplish.

The principal obstacle to the project of scientifically studying our intuitions is a terminological one and is relatively easily dispelled. The problem is the conflation of what Sosa calls our competence in some realm of inquiry with what he calls the content of the subject matter. As we have seen, Kripke's uses of the notion of intuition in *Naming and Necessity* exemplify the conflation of intuition itself with the propositions that intuition leads us to prefer and his use of the term 'intuitive content' provides a historically significant early example of the kind of confusion that is now common.

6. Parsons on Intuitions and their Propositions

It is worth briefly examining Charles Parsons' account of the role of intuition in mathematical reasoning and justification as an alternative to the usual accounts of intuition in contemporary philosophy. Parsons' model of intuition differs considerably from most post-Kripkean accounts. While it is not representative of current usage, it is useful to consider insofar as it draws a clear distinction between the faculty of intuition and the propositions that intuition leads us to favor.

The most distinctive feature of Parsons' account of intuition is his view of the relationship between intuition and propositions. As we have seen, contemporary philosophical uses of the notion of intuition tend to see it as directly coupled to propositions and do not provide a basis for identifying what intuition might be apart from the propositions that it prefers. The approach to intuition favored by Parsons regards intuition as something like a perceptual faculty rather than a favored set of beliefs.

In Parsons' philosophy of mathematics there is a clear distinction between mathematical propositions and mathematical intuition. He argues that the intuition of objects rather than propositions supports our mathematical judgments. On this account, "intuitive knowledge" rests on the existence of a faculty which allows contact with mathematical or abstract objects. According to Parsons, intuition provides direct access to the mathematical objects which serve to verify mathematical propositions. His view of the role of intuition in mathematical investigation provides a prominent example of an approach to intuition which is not directly related to the notion of commonsense. For Parsons, intuition is a kind of intellectual perception which grounds mathematical practice. There are good reasons to follow Parsons in avoiding a direct link between intuition and common sense when it comes to mathematical reasoning given that there are only the most tenuous links between sophisticated mathematics and ordinary experience. Commonsense is not at home in the outer reaches of mathematical research. By distinguishing the two notions, Parsons argues that intuitions can play a clear evidential role in mathematical reasoning.

Parsons' account of intuition does not rely on the idea of commonsense as a shared background for inquiry. On his view, intuition, unlike commonsense is discrete. We can count intuitions while 'commonsense' is more is more like a cloud of background assumptions. Thus, rather than forming a background for our judgments, intuitions are

the kinds of things we get from time to time. On Parsons' view, intuitions do not play the role of a ubiquitous guide or a set of favored fundamental propositions in our mental life. Instead, intuitions are more like individual events in perceptual experience.

To have intuitive knowledge on Parsons' view is to have the right kind of relationship to the objects which we access via the faculty of intuition: Knowing p involves intuiting the object(s) which makes p true but the proposition p is not equivalent to the intuition of those objects. Stated simply, Parsons sees intuition as providing access to mathematical or abstract objects rather than mathematical truths. James Page (1993) points out that the connection between our mathematical intuitions and our claims to mathematical knowledge is left unexplained in Parsons' view. From the perspective of most contemporary philosophers, Parsons provides a relatively exotic account of intuition. However, Page's criticisms are applicable well beyond the exotic case to more familiar uses of intuition in philosophy. The reason that they *seem* to escape the kinds of criticism Page presents is because philosophers ordinarily tend to conflate intuition and the propositions that intuition leads us to favor.

Page's criticisms are, like Wittgenstein's, aimed at the idea that intuition gives us incorrigible access to the truthmakers of our theories. Parsons' view of intuition fails to provide any substantial answer to the skeptic. Moreover, it is subject to precisely the kinds of objections that Williamson and others have raised with respect to intuition's role in philosophical argument. Clearly, intuition in the sense of immediate and pre-propositional access to truthmakers is unlikely to be a very fruitful model of intuition. This criticism is most obviously applicable in cases like Parsons' where the distinction between intuitions and propositions is clear, but it has a wider ambit insofar as intuition is used as the sole reason to bring arguments to an end.

7. Determining the Limits of our Competence

Intuitions play an important justificatory role at some stages of contemporary philosophical practice.[19] One common role for intuition in arguments involves claims

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[19] Bealer claims that "The use of intuitions as evidence (reasons) is ubiquitous in our standard justificatory practices in the a priori disciplines […]By intuition here, we mean *seemings*: for you to have an intuition

related to the manner in which our deliberations ordinarily occur. For instance, in moral philosophy we might be asked to consider some scenario in order to elicit our intuitive reaction. The philosopher might ask us to consider a scenario wherein an agent allows his fondness for his leather car seats to prevent him from transporting a seriously injured person to the hospital. We are told that the injured person cannot count on anyone else's help. However, the agent decides that he would rather let the injured person die than risk damaging his car's interior. The philosopher describes this as an intuitively obvious example of a bad choice and anticipates that our intuitions comport with hers.

When a philosopher claims that her intuition tells her that the agent made an immoral decision she can be understood as making two kinds of claims. Claims about moral agents and claims about propositions of moral philosophy. In moral philosophy, intuition-talk simultaneously makes claims concerning those of us who have, or fail to have the intuitions and makes claims concerning some subset of propositions which we can take as basic to the project of moral reasoning. As has been emphasized throughout this paper, these two projects ought to be untangled.

So, with respect to moral community, if I were to say that I value the car seat more than the life of a person, perhaps I should be judged to have a blindspot so large as to make it impossible for me to participate in the project of moral reasoning. In this case, when it comes to moral philosophy, I am beyond the pale of acceptable moral reasoning and should be judged incompetent with respect to moral matters.

This way of approaching intuition captures what Ernest Sosa's competence model of intuition wherein "to intuit that p is to be attracted to assent simply through entertaining that representational content. The intuition is *rational* if and only if it derives from a *competence*, and the content is explicitly or implicitly modal (i.e. attributes necessity or possibility)." (2007 103) Whether we can legitimately rely on our intuitions depends then on whether we are genuinely competent with respect to some subject matter. Thus, in order to take intuitions seriously we must first determine the scope and limits of our competence.

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that A is just for it to *seem* to you that A. Of course this kind of seeming is *intellectual*, not experiential – sensory, introspective, imaginative." (2002, 73)

This becomes an important methodological question for philosophers, but not, it seems for other forms of inquiry. This does not mean that these other forms of inquiry have abandoned commonsense or that they do not have recourse to intuition in their inquiry. Rather, the sciences, including the more or less a priori sciences like mathematics, have separated the capacity to be reasonable from the particular propositions that commonsense or intuition is likely to favor. Once we accept this separation, along the lines suggested by Lewis, for example, then we can see that the status of the faculty of intuition, qua faculty is not really affected by the lessons of the special theory of relativity, neuroscience or even some outlandish metaphysics. Like Lewis, we can be reasonable about some pretty outlandish stuff.

In terms of the relationship between the propositions favored by commonsense and theoretical insight, the philosophical concern is often to determine the point at which our theories are strong enough to cause us to reject some proposition that commonsense or intuition is very fond of? In scientific practice, this happens quite frequently. So, what then is the proper role of intuition or commonsense in our deliberation? An answer to this question will depend on empirical investigation into the nature of intuition and is likely to depend on the kinds of subject matter about which we are deliberating. In a wide range of areas of inquiry we will realize, via empirical investigation, that our intuitive judgments, the way things seem to us, are often systemically unreliable. So for example in judgments about probability, judgments about ones own aptitudes, judgments about color, judgments about one's own reasons for action, we are hopelessly misled when we rely solely on the ways that things seem to us. Having said this, it is likely that there are broad areas of relatively mundane and ordinary human cognition in which we are right to follow our intuitions and where the heuristics which lead us astray in Tversky and Kahneman cases are reliable guides to truth. Determining the boundaries of our competence is the most fruitful task that lies ahead for experimental philosophy.

While the principal concern with intuition has involved our preferences with respect to propositions, the notions of intuition and commonsense are connected to a general sense in philosophical methodology that we ought to take modest starting points as the basis for our arguments. There is clearly an important role for methodological conservatism in philosophical investigation. This general invocation to prudence is

largely independent from those aspects of intuition which have drawn critical attention in this paper and in the recent literature from experimental philosophers.

A third distinguishable role for intuition that we have identified concerns the feeling of conclusiveness. Clearly too, we ought to be wary with respect to the kinds of conclusiveness claims that are often attached to intuition. As with the relationship between intuition and propositions, the intuitive feeling of conclusiveness attaching to some kinds of arguments ought to be subject to empirical investigation. We can agree that there are some subject matters in which we are competent and in which our feeling for the conclusiveness of an argument is legitimate without knowing precisely how we acquired our competence or how far that competence extends. It might be the case, for instance, that we have capacities for handling complex problems which do not map cleanly onto standard styles of philosophical argument. In the same way that we can ride a bicycle without being able to provide a decision procedure for our navigation, it might be the case that in some areas of intellectual life the way things seem to us may well turn out to have resulted from a process which does not take the form of a philosophical argument. Such *seemings* might result from important social and emotional capacities, distributed cognitive processes and the like. It might be possible to demonstrate that we can rely on these capacities to lead us to truths while at the same time being unable to articulate the processes which give rise to the ways that things *seem to us*. In any event, the lasting significance of experimental philosophy is not that it undermines appeals to consensus, but that it opens a fertile field of inquiry into our commonsense or intuitive capacities.[20]

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[20] One example of this kind of ameliorative project in epistemology is Bishop and Trout (2005).

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