

Evidence and Intuition

Yuri Cath

University of St Andrews

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Abstract. *Intuitions are crucial evidence in philosophy.* As Williamson (2004, 2007 Ch. 7) discusses, claims of this kind are integral to a conception many philosophers have of their own methodology—what I will call *the intuition picture* of philosophical methodology. Different versions of the intuition picture have been developed and defended by a number of philosophers. Williamson argues that the resulting accounts of philosophical methodology are best abandoned, as they lead to a psychologistic conception of philosophical evidence that encourages skepticism about the methods of armchair philosophy. In this paper I defend the intuition picture against this criticism. Towards this end, I argue that the intuition picture can be formulated in such a way such that it is: (I) consistent with Williamson's views on the nature of philosophical evidence and evidence in general; (II) can maintain the central claims made about the nature and role of intuitions in philosophy made by proponents of the intuition picture; and (III) does not collapse into Williamson's own deflationary view of the nature and role of intuitions in philosophy.

1. The Intuition Picture

What role, if any, does intuition play in philosophy? Intuitions are widely assumed to play a crucial epistemic role in philosophical inquiry, a role that is often characterized as being evidential in nature. Sometimes the claim is that intuitions are used as a *source* of evidence for or against important philosophical claims, analyses and theories. But most frequently one finds the claim that it is intuitions *themselves* that are used as evidence in philosophy. Either way, it is thought that inspection of the "armchair" methods and arguments employed in philosophy reveals the following to be an obvious truth:

E1) Intuitions are assigned an important evidential role in philosophy.

Perhaps most notably, intuition is thought to play a crucial evidential role in the testing of philosophical theories by the method of cases. The canonical example is Gettier's (1963) famous thought experiment arguments against the justified true belief (or 'JTB') theory of knowledge. Take a typical philosopher, Mary, who concludes, from the comfort of her armchair, that the JTB theory is false, merely on the basis of considering one of Gettier's two thought experiments. What does Mary use as her evidence for this conclusion? A familiar claim made by proponents of E1 is that Mary's evidence for this conclusion (or at least a crucial part of it) is her *intuition* that, say, Smith justifiably and truly believes, but fails to know, that the man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket—this is often called simply *the Gettier intuition*—together with her *intuition* that the case is possible.

The assumption that E1 is true is usually common ground between skeptics and defenders of armchair philosophy. Skeptics of the armchair typically begin with the assumption that some armchair method—like the method of cases or the method of reflective equilibrium—assigns intuition an important evidential role, and then go on to argue that the method in question is thereby defective on the grounds that intuitions should not be assigned this role. For example, see Cummins (1998) and the work of many 'experimental philosophers' including Weinberg, Nichols and Stich (2001). Defenders of the armchair, typically begin with the same assumption

and then go on to defend the method in question by arguing that intuitions should be assigned this role. That is, defenders of armchair philosophy endorse both E1 and E2:

E2) Intuitions should be assigned this evidential role in philosophy.

Defenders of the armchair who endorse E2 do so because they think that intuitions really are evidence for the kind of conclusions philosophers take them to be evidence for, or at least that they are in some non-trivial range of cases. Skeptics of armchair philosophy argue that intuitions are not in fact evidence for such conclusions, or at least that philosophers are not justified in assuming that they are.

What exactly are these 'intuitions' that reputedly play such an important role in philosophy? Philosophers who endorse E1 and E2 often provide us with further claims about the nature of intuitions. One function of such claims is to distinguish the intuitions that philosophy relies on from mere beliefs, judgements, or inclinations to judge. That is, defenders of the armchair who endorse E1 and E2 (as well as those skeptics of armchair philosophy who endorse E1 and deny E2) usually also endorse E3:

E3) The intuitions that play this evidential role in philosophy are importantly distinct from any mere belief, judgement, or inclination to believe or judge.

In the literature one can distinguish two different ways of endorsing E3. The first way is to hold that a philosophical intuition that p ¹ is a kind of belief, judgement, or inclination to believe or judge, that p , but one with certain distinctive properties. For example, Ludwig (2007) holds that philosophical intuitions are a distinctive kind of judgement, and Sosa (2007) has a view on which they are a distinctive kind of conscious inclination or attraction to believe. The second way of endorsing E3 is to hold that a philosophical intuition that p is a *sui generis* mental state that cannot be analysed in terms of any other more familiar mental state, including any kind of belief, judgement, or inclination to judge, that p . Bealer (1998, 2001) is well known for advocating such a view of intuitions, and Grundmann (2007), Pust (2000, 2001) and others endorse related views. It is worth noting that this distinction between views according to which intuitions are a *sui generis* mental state, and views according to which they are a distinctive kind of doxastic state, or a distinctive kind of inclination to be in a doxastic state, can be quite subtle in practice. This is because proponents of both kinds of views will often attribute many of the same properties to philosophical intuitions. For example, we will see in §2 that all of the aforementioned philosophers endorse closely related versions of the following claim about the nature of philosophical intuitions:

E4) The intuitions that play this evidential role in philosophy are *rational intuitions*.

I will label the view shared by those philosophers who endorse all of E1—E3 *the intuition picture of philosophical methodology*—and in the discussion to follow I will be concerned with versions of the intuition picture that also endorse some version of E4. I call this view a "picture" because

¹ For ease of exposition I will sometimes use 'philosophical intuitions' as a replacement for 'the intuitions that are supposed to play this important evidential role in philosophy'.

obviously as a view it is under-described and could be developed in many different ways, depending on how one conceives of this supposed evidential role of intuitions in philosophy, and the nature of the intuitions that play this role. But, nonetheless, the intuition picture does capture key commitments of a number of important accounts of philosophical methodology, including those given by Bealer (1998, 2001), Goldman and Pust (1998), and Pust (2001). And the intuition picture is also closely related to the views of authors like Chudnoff (2009), Huemer (2005), Ludwig (2007), and Sosa (2007a), although these latter authors talk more of justification or knowledge, rather than evidence, when characterizing the epistemic role of intuitions in philosophy (and I suspect that one can interpret the claim that intuitions play a crucial evidential role in philosophy in such a way that these theorists would also count as being proponents of the intuition picture).

Importantly, not all defenders of armchair philosophy embrace the intuition picture, with perhaps the most notable exception being Timothy Williamson (2004, 2007). Williamson defends, in principle, the practice of relying on the kind of armchair judgements and reasoning at work in the Gettier argument.² But Williamson (2004: 152) claims that "metaphilosophical talk of intuitions obscures our real methodological situation [in philosophy]" and that it would be best if we simply stopped "talking about intuitions". In Williamson (2004, 2007), one can identify numerous different objections to what I am calling the intuition picture of philosophical methodology. But Williamson's most central objection to intuition based accounts of philosophical methodology is that they are committed to a deeply problematic view of the nature of the evidence used in philosophy.

My aim in this paper is to defend the intuition picture against Williamson's evidence related objections to intuition based accounts of philosophical methodology. More precisely, I will respond to the following Williamson-inspired argument against the intuition picture:

The Psychologization Argument

1. *The Psychologization Premise*: The intuition picture psychologizes our evidence in philosophy.³
 2. *The Gap Premise*: If the intuition picture psychologizes our evidence in philosophy then it encourages skepticism about the methods of armchair philosophy.
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3. *The Sceptical Conclusion*: The intuition picture encourages skepticism about the methods of armchair philosophy. (from 1 and 2)

According to Williamson, when philosophers claim that intuitions are used as evidence in philosophy, what they mean is that psychological truths about what intuitions we have are used as evidence in philosophy for the truth of the propositional contents of those intuitions. For example, when philosophers claim that our evidence against the JTB theory is our intuition that

² It should be noted that Williamson has a distinctive view of the content and form of the reasoning involved in Gettier arguments against the JTB theory according to which the content of 'the Gettier intuition' is a counterfactual conditional. See Williamson (2007, Ch. 6).

³ This premise should not be interpreted as making the claim that the intuition picture psychologizes *all* philosophical evidence, instead it should be interpreted as saying that the intuition picture psychologizes a large and significant class of philosophical evidence. For surely no proponent of the intuition picture would want to say that *only* intuitions are used as evidence in philosophy.

the Gettier subject lacks knowledge,⁴ what they mean, according to Williamson, is that our evidence consists in a truth about our own psychology, namely, the true proposition that one has the intuition (or one believes, or is inclined to believe) that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge. Williamson argues that this psychologistic conception of philosophical evidence encourages the very kind of scepticism about the armchair judgements relied upon in philosophy that proponents of the intuition picture seek to avoid. This is because, according to Williamson, one now has to provide some argument from the psychological proposition that one has the Gettier intuition to the epistemological proposition that is the content of that intuition, a “gap” which he claims is not easily bridged.

In §3 I explain this argument in more detail and then respond to it. One possible way for a proponent of the intuition picture to respond to this argument would be to accept the psychologization premise whilst denying the gap premise; that is, one could embrace a psychologistic view of the relevant philosophical evidence, but then contest Williamson’s claim that if true such a view would have sceptical consequences for armchair philosophy. This kind of response is certainly worthy of exploration but I will not develop such a response here.⁵ Rather, I shall contest the psychologization premise, that is, I shall argue that one can consistently endorse both the intuition picture and a non-psychologistic conception of philosophical evidence. The reason for pursuing this kind of response is that I want to show that the intuition picture is not committed to any particular view of the nature of philosophical evidence.

We will see that showing that the psychologization premise is false is a relatively easy task. The problem is that what is perhaps the most obvious way of stating a non-psychologistic version of the intuition picture is inconsistent with Williamson’s views on the nature of evidence in general. For example, it will lead one to deny Williamson’s assumption that evidence is factive. Of course, one might try to contest this assumption as a way of defending the intuition picture. But, again, my strategy will be to argue that the apparent inconsistency here between the intuition picture and Williamson’s views is merely apparent.

Accordingly, in §4 I demonstrate how one can state a non-psychologistic version of the intuition picture that is consistent with Williamson’s assumption that evidence is factive. Furthermore, this version of the intuition picture is also consistent with Williamson’s ‘knowledge first’ approach to epistemology and his famous claim that $E=K$ —that is, that one’s evidence consists in all and only the propositions that one knows. But, crucially, this version of the intuition picture—what I will call *the knowledge first version of the intuition picture* or ‘KFI’ for short—does not collapse into Williamson’s own deflationary view of the nature and role of intuitions in philosophy. On this deflationary view, E3 and E4 would be rejected because Williamson claims that what philosophers call ‘intuitions’ are simply judgements or inclinations to judge that are not distinct in any interesting way from mere judgements or inclinations to judge in general. KFI does not collapse into this deflationary view because it incorporates the central claims about the nature and evidential role of intuitions made by prominent proponents of the intuition picture, including E3 and E4. The moral of KFI then is that one can accept not only Williamson’s views on the nature of philosophical evidence, but also all of his views on the nature of evidence in general, without abandoning the intuition picture or adopting his deflationary view of intuitions.

⁴ For ease of exposition, from here on I will use ‘the Gettier subject lacks knowledge’ as a replacement for ‘the Gettier subject has a justified true belief that p but does not know that p’.

⁵ See Brown (ms) for a response of this kind to Williamson.

2. Rational Intuition

Before examining the psychologization argument, I want to first note some important features of Bealer's (1988) version of the intuition picture. This will aid the discussion to follow by providing us with a concrete example of the general kind of view I want to defend against the psychologization argument. A further benefit of focusing on Bealer's view is that it is the only view that Williamson himself explicitly identifies as an example of an intuition based account of philosophical methodology which is committed to a psychologistic conception of philosophical evidence. I'll discuss Bealer's conception of the evidential role of intuitions when replying to the psychologization argument in §3. For now I want to focus on Bealer's account of the nature of the rational intuitions that play this role in philosophy, and to note certain points of agreement between his account and related views held by other proponents of the intuition picture.

Bealer claims that "For you to have an intuition that A is just for it to *seem* to you that A" (2000: 30), where the use of the term 'seems' here should be "understood not its use as a cautionary or "hedging" term, but in its use as a term for a genuine kind of conscious episode" (1998: 207). These *seemings*, according to Bealer, are a *sui generis* propositional attitude that cannot be reduced to any kind of judgement, belief, or inclination to form a judgement or belief. Intuitions are not beliefs because it can seem to one that *p* even when one fails to believe that *p*. For example, Bealer (1998, p. 208) says "I have an intuition—it still *seems* to me—that the naïve comprehension axiom of set theory is true; this is so despite the fact that I do not believe that it is true (because I know of the set-theoretical paradoxes)".

Bealer qualifies his claim that intuitions are seemings by saying, "of course, this kind of seeming is intellectual, not sensory or introspective (or imaginative)." The view here then is that intuitions are intellectual seemings, where these are opposed to sensory, introspective, and imaginative seemings. This claim in turn is also qualified by Bealer as applying only to *rational* intuitions "When we speak here of intuition, we mean "rational intuition" (*ibid*, p. 207). Rational intuitions are distinguished from *physical* intuitions like one's "physical intuition that, when a house is undermined, it will fall." Putting these points together we can see that for Bealer the claim that philosophical intuitions are rational intuitions and the claim that they are intellectual seemings are equivalent, as he is committed to the following identity thesis:

To have a rational (as opposed to physical) intuition that *p* is just to have an intellectual (as opposed to sensory, imaginative, or introspective) seeming that *p*.

The general idea that philosophical intuitions are rational intuitions or intellectual seemings, and the negative characterization of these as seemings that are not perceptual, memorial, or introspective etc, or as intuitions that do not have their source in perception or memory or introspection etc, can be found in the work of a number of theorists. To this negative characterization a certain kind of positive characterization is usually added, namely, that an intellectual seeming or rational intuition is, in some sense, based simply on one's understanding of the intuited content, perhaps also together with some process of reasoning or thinking about that content.⁶ For example, both of these characterizations are operative in Huemer's (2005) account of intuitions as intellectual seemings or appearances (as well as the further idea that intellectual seemings are non-inferential):

The way things seem prior to reasoning we may call an 'initial appearance'. An initial, intellectual appearance is an 'intuition'. That is, an intuition that *p* is a state of its seeming to one that *p* that is not

⁶ As Bealer (2008, p. 191) says: "rational intuition derives from one's understanding of one's concepts".

dependent on inference from other beliefs and that results from thinking about *p*, as opposed to perceiving, remembering, or introspecting. Huemer (2005: 101–2)

Appearances can be intellectual, as opposed to sensory, mnemonic, or introspective. It seems to us that the shortest path between any two points must be a straight line; that time is one-dimensional and totally ordered (for any two moments in time, one is earlier than the other); and that no object can be completely red and completely blue at the same time. I accept those things on intellectual grounds. I am not looking at all the possible pairs of points and all the possible paths connecting each pair and seeing, with my eyes, that the straight path is the shortest in each case. Instead, I am 'seeing' intellectually that it must be true—that is, when I think about it, it becomes obvious. Huemer (2005: 100–101)

Similarly, Grundmann (2007) outlines what he takes to be a traditional Rationalist conception of intuitions, according to which intuitions are negatively characterized as being “independent of empirical reasons”, and positively characterized as having their origin in one’s understanding of the intuited content or proposition. Grundmann contrasts this Rationalist notion of an intuition with a conception of intuitions according to which any spontaneous judgement that is not consciously inferentially, is an intuition regardless of its source:

In the Rationalist tradition the attempt has been made to distinguish a philosophical concept of intuition from the everyday, source-unspecific concept. In this philosophical sense, intuitions are not spontaneously experienced judgments but a specifically Rationalist source of evidence. Intuitions are reasons that are characterized by the clear and distinct appearance of truth, and these reasons arise purely a priori. By and large, we say that understanding certain propositions is sufficient to cause an evidential state or clear and distinct insight into the truth, independently of empirical reasons.

Notice that these characterisations of rational intuitions or intellectual seemings are all etiological, in the sense that they all concern the source or origin of these states. The negative characterizations tell us that the source of a philosophical intuition is not perception, or introspection, or memory, or inference etc. The positive characterizations tell us that the rational basis or causal origin of a philosophical intuition is simply one’s understanding of the intuited content, perhaps together with some intellectual process of reasoning or thinking about that content.

Etiological characterizations of this kind are not only endorsed by proponents of the intuition picture who hold that intuitions as a *sui generis* propositional attitude. Similar characterizations are also endorsed by proponents of the intuition picture who hold that intuitions are a distinctive kind of belief, judgement, or inclination to believe or judge. For example, Ludwig (2007, p. 135) has a view on which thought experiment intuitions are occurrent judgments “formed solely on the basis of competence in the concepts involved in response to a question about a scenario, or simply an occurrent judgment formed solely on the basis of competence in the concepts involved in it.”⁷ Or, to take a different kind of example, Sosa (2007) holds that intuitions are a special sort of intellectual seeming. Unlike Bealer and Huemer, on Sosa’s view an intellectual seeming is simply an attraction to assent, as opposed an experiential-type state that attracts one to assent. But Sosa does offer etiological characterizations of rational intuitions that are closely related to those given by Bealer and Huemer. On Sosa’s view intuitions are distinguished from other attractions to assent by the fact that the “rational basis for attraction to assent to the propositional content lies in nothing more than [one’s] conscious entertaining of that content” (2007, p. 53). Furthermore, according to Sosa (2007, p. 61), an intuition is a

⁷ Ludwig (*ibid.* p. 137) goes further and also claims not only that a thought experiment intuition is a judgement that is distinguished by its etiology, but also that it is a judgement that “is warranted if it is because of its etiology, because it is an expression of the competence one has in deploying the concepts, of a skill in making correct judgments on the basis of grasp of the concepts involved.”

rational intuition only if it also satisfies certain further criteria including the condition that it has no “reliance on introspection, perception, memory, testimony or inference.”⁸

As well as etiological characterizations of this kind, rational intuitions and intellectual seemings are sometimes characterized partly in terms of their phenomenology or content. Bealer, for example, claims that the phenomenology of seemings in general is very different from the phenomenology of guesses or hunches. I take it that what Bealer has in mind here is the idea that seemings, unlike guesses or hunches, in some sense *present* their propositional contents as being objectively true. This is an idea that a number of authors have developed in different ways. For example, see Chundnoff’s (2009) claim that seemings have “presentational phenomenology”, and Tolhurst’s (1998) claim that seemings have the property of “felt veridicality”. Bealer also suggests that rational intuitions, unlike physical intuitions, “present” themselves as not merely being true but necessarily true.⁹

Other notable features of Bealer’s account of rational intuitions/intellectual seemings include the following claims: (i) All intuitions, including rational intuitions, are fallible, one can have a rational intuition that *p* even when it is not the case that *p*. (ii) Rational intuitions play a crucial evidential role not only in philosophy but also in other *a priori* disciplines like mathematics and logic. (iii) Rational intuitions are the source of our *a priori* knowledge. (iv) There are various close analogies between rational intuition and perception. For example, they are both ‘basic’ sources of evidence. (v) Concrete case intuitions are more reliable than theoretical intuitions. (vi) Rational intuitions are the primary source of our modal knowledge.

3. Psychologization and Scepticism

What do proponents of the intuition picture mean when they say that intuitions are evidence, or are a source of evidence, in philosophy? For example, consider again the claim, made by many proponents of the intuition picture, that after reading Gettier’s paper for the first time one’s evidence that the JTB theory is false is one’s intuition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge. Williamson claims that when philosophers make such claims what they mean is that our evidence consists in a true proposition about one’s own psychology, namely, the proposition that one has the intuition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge. More generally, Williamson (2004, p. 199) says that this:

... is the uneasy conception which many contemporary analytic philosophers have of their own methodology. They think, that, in philosophy, our ultimate evidence consists only of intuitions. Under pressure, they take that not to mean that our ultimate evidence consists of the mainly non-psychological putative truths that are the contents of those intuitions. Rather, they take it to mean that our ultimate evidence consists only of intuitions.

According to Williamson, this psychologistic view of philosophical evidence arises in response to skeptical challenges to the judgements that philosophers rely on. Williamson (*ibid*, pp. 117–

⁸ We can see then that Sosa, like Bealer, holds both that philosophical intuitions are intellectual seemings and that philosophical intuitions are rational intuitions. But, unlike Bealer, these two claims are not equivalent for Sosa because he does not equate rational intuitions with intellectual seemings, instead he views rational intuitions as being a distinctive species of intellectual seemings.

⁹ Bealer says that he is unsure how to analyze what it means for a rational intuition to present itself as necessary. But he does suggest that “Perhaps it is something like this: necessarily if *x* intuits that *P*, it seems to *x* that *P* and also that necessarily that *P*.” See Pust (2001) for discussion.

18) draws a close analogy between this skeptical challenge and traditional sceptical challenges to our perceptual knowledge of the external world:

Scepticism about perception typically narrows one's evidential base to one's present internal mental state. When I can see and hear and feel that it is raining, I might suppose my total evidence to include the fact that it is raining, available for assessing hypotheses, for example the hypothesis that the grass will grow. But the sceptic about perception insists that I have available as evidence only the fact that it perceptually appears to me that it is raining, for sometimes what perceptually appears to me is not the case. From that fact about my present internal mental state I am challenged to reason legitimately outwards to the conclusion about my external environment that it really is raining. The sceptic about perception asks by what right I treat the fact that it perceptually appears to me that it is raining as good evidence that it is raining.

Scepticism about judgement narrows and internalizes our evidential base in a similar way without going as far as scepticism about perception, since it does not usually exclude mental states of other people or at other times. After reading Gettier's article, we might suppose our total evidence to include the fact that the subject in a Gettier case lacks knowledge, as evidence available for assessing hypotheses, such as the hypothesis that justified true belief is knowledge. But the sceptic about judgement insists that we have available as evidence only the fact that it intellectually appears to us (perhaps the members of a restricted group) that the subject in a Gettier case lacks knowledge, in other words, the fact that we are consciously inclined to judge that the subject lacks knowledge, for sometimes what intellectually appears to us is not the case. From that fact about our internal mental states we are challenged to reason legitimately outwards to the conclusion that the subject in a Gettier case really does lack knowledge. The sceptic about judgement asks by what right we treat the fact that it intellectually appears to us that the subject in a Gettier case lacks knowledge, the fact that we are consciously inclined to assent to that proposition, as good evidence that the proposition is true.

As Williamson (2000: 165) discusses, skeptics about perception typically compare a "good case" with a "bad case". In the good case one believes some proposition *p* (about the external world), *p* is true, and by ordinary standards one knows *p*. In the 'bad case' things still appear generally as they normally do, but *p* is false and, therefore, one fails to know that *p*.

One way of trying to respond to the sceptic about perception would be to agree with them that, when we look outside at the rain falling, our evidential base is merely the proposition that it appears to one that it is raining, and then try to meet their challenge of showing how one can reason outwardly from this psychological fact to the external proposition that it is raining. Williamson (2004, p. 17) thinks that when proponents of the intuition picture claim that intuitions are crucial evidential role in philosophy they are making the parallel response to the sceptic about judgement: "If scepticism about judgement is treated by analogy with scepticism about perception, then its evidential base will be described as intellectual appearances, somehow analogous to perceptual appearances. George Bealer has defended just such an account of intuitions as intellectual seemings." The idea then is that philosophers like Bealer agree with the judgement sceptic that the evidence we gain upon reading Gettier's paper is merely the true proposition that it appears to one that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge, and then they try to show how this psychological proposition is good evidence for the non-psychological proposition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge.

In both cases Williamson holds that any response of this kind to the sceptic is fundamentally flawed, and encourages the very scepticism it seeks to avoid. The crucial mistake in both cases is to concede to the sceptic that the only evidence we can gain by looking outside at the rain, or by reading Gettier's article, is the relevant psychological proposition about what appears to one to be the case. In the case of responding to the judgement sceptic proponents of the intuition picture are left with the unenviable task of trying to argue for the "hoped-for correlation between having an intuition that *P* and its being true". For example, in the Gettier case they are left with "the challenge of arguing from a psychological premise, that I believe or we are

inclined to believe the Gettier proposition, to an epistemological conclusion, the Gettier proposition itself. That gap is not easily bridged” (2007, p. 211).

According to Williamson, philosophers are driven to psychologize their evidence in this way because they are committed to misguided principles about evidence. Williamson (2004, p. 118) identifies the culprit as a commitment to an “operational” standard of evidence according to which one must always be in a position to know what one’s evidence is.¹⁰ In the perception case a commitment to this operational standard leads philosophers to conclude that our evidence in sceptical and non-sceptical scenarios is the same because: “typically, if one is in a sceptical scenario, one is in no position to know that one is not in the corresponding non-sceptical scenario, and is therefore in no position to know that one’s evidence differs from what it would have been in that non-sceptical scenario.” (2004, p. 118) Given that the proposition that it is raining is not available as evidence in a sceptical scenario, where it merely appears to one that it is raining, the operational standard of evidence tells us that it is also not available as evidence in the non-sceptical scenario, where it really is raining. Thus we are led to the view that even in the non-sceptical scenario our evidence will merely consist in the psychological fact that it appears to us to be raining. Similar reasoning (see *ibid*, pp. 118–19) leads from the operational standard of evidence to the conclusion that our evidence in the Gettier case can only consist in the proposition that it intellectually or non-perceptually appears to us that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge.

The proper response to both sceptical challenges, according to Williamson, is to resist the operational standard of evidence. Once we acknowledge that we are not always in a position to know what our evidence is, we can plausibly claim that in the non-sceptical scenario one’s evidence can include the proposition that it is raining, or that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge, even though one would lack that evidence in the corresponding sceptical scenario where it merely appears to us that it is raining or that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge.

Suppose that proponents of the intuition picture are committed to a psychologistic view of the supposed evidential role of intuitions in philosophy, and that this view does encourage skepticism about the armchair judgements that these intuitions are meant to provide evidential support for. If these assumptions are correct, then the psychologization argument will provide us with a strong reason for rejecting the intuition picture:

The Psychologization Argument

1. *The Psychologization Premise*: The intuition picture psychologizes our evidence in philosophy.
2. *The Gap Premise*: If the intuition picture psychologizes our evidence in philosophy then it encourages skepticism about the methods of armchair philosophy.

3. *The Sceptical Conclusion*: The intuition picture encourages skepticism about the methods of armchair philosophy. (from, 1 and 2)

The argument is valid, and other things being equal the conclusion is one that any proponent of the intuition picture will want to avoid. Proponents of the intuition picture then will want to reject one or both of its premises. As indicated earlier, I will argue that we can reject the psychologization premise.

¹⁰ Williamson (2007) identifies the problem as originating from a commitment to a related, but still importantly distinct, principle he calls *Evidence Neutrality*. For reasons of space I will not discuss this principle here.

Let us distinguish two questions: Do proponents of the intuition picture need to psychologize philosophical evidence in the way Williamson describes? Do actual proponents of the intuition picture psychologize philosophical evidence in the way Williamson describes? The answer to the first question is clearly no. Take the claim often made by proponents of the intuition picture that, after reading Gettier's article, one's evidence that the JTB theory is false is one's intuition that the Gettier subject has a justified true belief but not knowledge. This kind of claim, as many have noted,¹¹ is ambiguous in at least two ways. It could be interpreted as saying either: (i) that one's evidence consists in a certain truth about one's psychology, namely, the proposition *that I have the intuition that the Gettier subject has justified true belief but not knowledge*, or (ii) that one's evidence is the non-psychological proposition that is content of one's intuition, that is, the proposition *that the Gettier subject has a justified true belief but not knowledge*.¹² The second interpretation of this claim is perfectly legitimate, and what it shows us is that the intuition picture can, in principle, be interpreted in a way such that it does not psychologize our evidence in philosophy.

Williamson himself implicitly acknowledges the possibility of a non-psychologistic interpretation of the idea that intuitions are evidence in philosophy. But, as we have seen, he thinks that actual proponents of the intuition picture are endorsing (i), and not (ii), when they say that our evidence in the Gettier is our intuition that are evidence, or are used as evidence, in philosophy. This brings us to our second question. Do actual proponents of the intuition picture endorse the psychologistic view of philosophical evidence?

Williamson's solitary example of a philosopher who psychologizes philosophical evidence in the way he describes is Bealer. But it is actually not at all clear that Bealer endorses a psychologistic conception of philosophical evidence. Indeed, Bealer (1998) seems to explicitly disavow a psychologistic interpretation of the intuition picture: "When I say that intuitions are used as evidence, I of course mean that the *contents* of the intuitions count as evidence" (Bealer 1998: 205; emphasis original). More generally, I think it is quite hard to identify proponents of the intuition picture that commit themselves to the psychologistic view of philosophical evidence that Williamson opposes—Goldman and Pust (1998) being a notable exception. What one typically finds instead is that when proponents of the intuition picture make claims like "intuitions are used as evidence in philosophy" or "intuitions are evidence in philosophy", they simply do not clarify whether these claims should be interpreted in a psychologistic or a non-psychologistic way.

It is not at all obvious then that actual proponents of the intuition picture are committed to the psychologistic conception of philosophical evidence that Williamson opposes. But the more important point is that they need not be so committed. This is because there is a clear non-psychologistic interpretation of claims like "intuitions are used as evidence in philosophy". In which case, the psychologization argument against the intuition picture fails because the psychologization premise is false.

Can we now dismiss Williamson's evidence-related objections to intuition based accounts of philosophical methodology? No, because at this point I think Williamson could reasonably suspect that there will be other equally serious, if not more serious, objections against non-psychologistic versions of the intuition picture, as there are to psychologistic versions of it. To see why we need to think in a bit more detail about how a non-psychologistic version of the

¹¹ For example, see Ichikawa (ms), Lycan (1998), and Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009).

¹² A further possible interpretation, that Williamson does not discuss, is that one's evidence is not a proposition at all but is actually one's *mental state* of intuiting that the Gettier subject has a justified true belief but not knowledge. This would be a different way of having a 'psychologistic' view of one's evidence in the Gettier case. In the discussion to come I will join Williamson in assuming that evidence is always propositional in nature.

intuition picture might be developed. We know that the proponent of a non-psychologistic version of the intuition picture will say that, after reading Gettier's article, the propositional content of the Gettier intuition be a part of one's evidence, and that this evidence can be used as part of an argument against the JTB theory. But, surely, this is not all that they will want to say. As the mere claim that the contents of our intuitions are used as evidence in philosophy, is something close to a trivial truth. Presumably, any proponent of the intuition picture will want to also say that there is also a substantive connection, of some kind, between the fact that after reading Gettier's article one comes to have the Gettier intuition, and the fact that after reading Gettier's article the content of that intuition comes to be part of one's evidence. On a psychologistic interpretation of the intuition picture it is obvious what the connection is—the true proposition that one has the intuition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge is one's evidence for the truth of the proposition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge. But what is the connection on a non-psychologistic interpretation of the intuition picture?

One possible move to make at this point would be to hold a view according to which simply having an intuition that p is itself a sufficient condition for one's having the proposition that p as a part of one's evidence. For ease of notation, I'll use ' $I \rightarrow E$ ' as an abbreviation for this hypothetical view. To understand how $I \rightarrow E$ should be interpreted it might help to compare it with Williamson's view that $E=K$. When Williamson claims (2000, p. 9) that "one's total evidence is one's total knowledge" he clearly should not be interpreted as saying that S 's total evidence consists of all and only the true propositions of the form ' S knows that p '. Rather, the claim is that S 's total evidence consists of all and only the propositions that S stands in the knowledge relation to. Similarly, $I \rightarrow E$ should not be interpreted as saying that if S has an intuition that p then the proposition *that S has the intuition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge* is part of S 's evidence. This may well be true (at least in most cases) but this is not the claim made by $I \rightarrow E$. Rather, what $I \rightarrow E$ says is that if S has an intuition that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge then the proposition *that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge* is part of S 's evidence. Also the proponent of $I \rightarrow E$ does not think that this sufficiency claim is true because whenever one has an intuition that p one concludes that p on the basis of some inference from the premise that one has the intuition that p , and that in virtue of performing this inference the proposition that p is now a part of one's evidence. The idea is that merely having an intuition that p is itself a way of having the proposition that p as a part of one's evidence, as opposed to being one's evidence for the proposition that p .

My impression is that Bealer is tempted to endorse something like this view, although it must be said that he never explicitly endorses it.¹³ However, suppose, for the sake of argument, that Bealer did endorse $I \rightarrow E$. From this assumption, and the fact that intuitions are fallible, it would follow that Bealer is committed to denying that evidence is factive, that is, that not all evidence is true. But if non-psychological versions of the intuition picture are committed to denying that evidence is factive, Williamson will take this to be a *reductio* of such views, given his view that $E=K$ and the factivity of knowledge.¹⁴ Furthermore, as Bealer points out, one can have an

¹³ What one does find in Bealer are arguments in support of the conclusion that intuitions are evidence (see Bealer 1992), and arguments which are meant to explain why intuitions are evidence in (e.g. see his "Argument from Evidence" and his "Argument from Concepts"). But the claim that intuited propositions are evidence does not entail that *all* intuited propositions are evidence, which is what $I \rightarrow E$ gives us. (Thanks to Jonathan Ichikawa for discussion.) Still I think there is reason to think that Bealer also endorses the latter claim as well as the former. [INCOMPLETE]

¹⁴ Williamson (2007, p. 217) himself appears to point to something like this concern when he writes: "Epistemologically, the most significant feature of the [Gettier] example may be that many of us *know* the truth of the Gettier proposition. But those trying to demarcate a distinctive category of intuition usually insist that there are false intuitions as well as true ones; they do not project truth from the Gettier example to other cases".

intuition that p whilst failing to believe that p . In which case, if $I \rightarrow E$ is true then evidence does not entail belief, that is, one can have a proposition that p as evidence even when one fails to believe that p . But then $E=K$, and the assumption that knowledge entails belief, would give Williamson yet another reason to reject $I \rightarrow E$. If non-psychological versions of the intuition picture need to endorse $I \rightarrow E$ then, Williamson will argue that such views of philosophical methodology must be abandoned on pain of avoiding false views about the nature of evidence.

Of course, proponents of non-psychologistic versions of the intuition picture could try to defend the idea that evidence is not factive and does not entail belief.¹⁵ However, it would surely be preferable if they did not need to be committed to such controversial positions on the nature of evidence and evidence possession (note that many philosophers who reject $E=K$ still hold that evidence is factive and/or entails belief). Furthermore, as stated in §1, my aim here is to show that the intuition picture is not merely consistent with Williamson's non-psychologistic view of philosophical evidence, but that it is also consistent with *all* of his views on the nature of evidence in general. For this reason my task in the next section is to show how one can state a non-psychologistic version of the intuition picture that is consistent (and indeed relies upon) with Williamson's claim that $E=K$.

4. Insight, Intuition and $E=K$

To set the stage for KFI—that is, our knowledge first version of the intuition picture—it will be useful to first explain Williamson's claim (2000, pp. 33–48) that knowledge is the most general factive stative attitude. Williamson tells us that a propositional attitude is factive, if and only if, necessarily, it is an attitude one has only to true propositions. Not all factive attitudes are mental states. For example, forgetting is a mental process rather than a mental state. The factive stative attitudes include such mental states as seeing or perceiving that something is so, remembering that something is so, regretting that something is so, and knowing that something is so.¹⁶ The claim that knowledge is the most general factive mental state amounts to the claim that knowledge is the factive stative attitude one has to a proposition if one has any factive stative attitude to that proposition at all.

To illustrate this idea, Williamson draws an analogy between the state of knowing and the property of being coloured; that is, the colour property that something has if it has any colour property at all. Williamson (*ibid*, p. 34) writes: “If something is coloured then there it has some more specific colour property; it is red or green or.... Although that specific colour property may happen to lack a name in our language, we could always introduce such a name, perhaps pointing to the things as a paradigm.” The analogy is then drawn between the property of being coloured and the mental state of knowing: “Similarly, if one knows that p then there is a specific way in which one knows; one can see or remember or ... that A . Although the specific way may happen to lack a name in our language, we could always introduce such a name, perhaps pointing to the case as a paradigm” (*ibid*, p. 34). In the other direction, because they are *ways* of knowing if one sees, or remembers, or regrets, that A , it follows that one knows that A .

Williamson also claims that corresponding to some of these specific ways of knowing, like seeing and remembering, there are also mental processes that *aim* at these specific factive mental states: “While a belief aims at knowledge, various mental processes aim at more specific factive mental state. Perception aims at perceiving that something is so; memory aims at

¹⁵ See Schroeder (forthcoming) for an interesting defense of a view according to which evidence is not factive and does not entail belief.

¹⁶ See Williamson (2000, Ch. 1) for arguments for the claim that knowledge is a mental state.

remembering that something is so.” As part of his ‘knowledge first’ approach to epistemology Williamson rejects the project of trying to analyse knowledge as some special kind of belief (for example, one that is justified and true). Instead he advocates taking knowledge to be a primitive that can then be used to “elucidate” other important epistemic and mental notions. For example, Williamson offers a characterization of belief according to which “believing p is, roughly, treating p as if one knew p ”, and mere believing is treated as “a kind of botched knowing” (*ibid*, p. 47). Similarly, on this approach one might think of a perceptual appearance that p as an apparent seeing that p , and a mere perceptual appearance that p as a kind of botched seeing.

The proponent of KFI claims that as well as the ways of knowing that Williamson cites there is at least one other distinctive way of knowing, one that plays a crucial role in philosophy, and in other *a priori* disciplines like mathematics and logic. What is this supposedly distinctive way of knowing? It may be that it is a way of knowing that we lack a natural language term for. But, as Williamson notes, we could always introduce a term for such a way of knowing, perhaps by pointing to paradigm cases. For example, if we assume that we do know that Gettier subject lacks knowledge the proponent of KFI can point to this knowledge as an instance of this distinctive way of knowing. The proponent of KFI might say that in this case one has genuine a *rational insight* that the Gettier subject lacks knowledge.

But a proponent of the KFI will not only think that they can point to paradigmatic instances of this way of knowing, they will also think that can offer at least a partial characterization of what unites these instances. In particular, the proponent of KFI can adopt any of the standard etiological or phenomenological characterizations of or rational intuitions, or intellectual seemings, to help elucidate what it is to have a rational insight. For example, the proponent of KFI can say that rational insight is knowledge the source of which is not perception, or memory, or testimony etc, and that it is knowledge gained simply on the basis of one’s understanding of the known proposition and one’s reasoning capacities. The proponent of KFI might also claim that this way of knowing has a distinctive presentational phenomenology, and that when one has a rational insight that p this proposition is presented as being not merely true but necessarily true, and so on.

It is true that such characterizations of rational insights do not yet distinguish them from rational intuitions or intellectual seemings. However, identifying properties that rational insights share with rational intuitions can still be a useful way of distinguishing this distinctive way of knowing from other ways of knowing. Of course, on a knowledge first approach to epistemology one will want to deny that one can analyse what it is to have a rational insight that p in terms of one’s having a rational intuition that p , and one’s satisfying certain further conditions. But this non-analyzability assumption is consistent with the idea that we can usefully distinguish rational insight from other ways of knowing by pointing to certain features that it shares with rational intuition. Furthermore, one could use the notion of a rational insight to elucidate the notion of a rational intuition or intellectual seeming, in a way analogous to Williamson’s elucidation of belief in terms of knowledge. One might say that a rational intuition or intellectual seeming is as an apparent rational insight, and that a mere rational intuition or intellectual seeming can be thought of as a kind of botched rational insight. Similarly, the proponent of KFI might choose to characterize the mental process of rational intuition as that process which aims at having a rational insight that something is the case.

The imagined proponent of KFI will characterize the distinctive way of knowing that is rational insight in something like the way just described. To see how they would characterize the evidential role of rational insights in philosophy let us return to E1 and E2:

E1) Intuitions are assigned an important evidential role in philosophy.

E2) Intuitions should be assigned an important evidential role in philosophy.

The proponent of KFI can endorse both these claims. But, given that these claims are ambiguous between a psychologistic and a non-psychologistic reading, we should specify the particular interpretations of these claims that they will endorse. Let us replace E1 and E2 then with E1* and E2*:

E1*) Intuited propositions are assigned an important evidential role in philosophy.

E2*) Intuited propositions should be assigned an important evidential role in philosophy in those cases where they are known to be true (where typically the way philosophers know such propositions is by having a rational insight).

E1* clarifies that KFI is a non-psychologistic version of the intuition picture. The proponent of KFI will claim only that intuited propositions—as opposed to propositions about what intuitions we have—play an important evidential role in philosophy; where the evidential role they play is that they are used as evidence for or against philosophical theories, analyses, and claims. E2* tells us that intuited propositions should be used as evidence in philosophy, but it adds the qualification that the intuited propositions need to be known to be true. The bracketed clause is also added to reflect the assumption that the standard way we come to know such propositions in philosophy is by having the appropriate rational insight. (Note that the proponent of KFI can allow that we could, in principle, also gain knowledge of such propositions by other means, for example, by testimony.)

Importantly, the proponent of KFI will not merely claim that the content of the Gettier intuition is our evidence that the JTB theory is false, as they will also claim that there is a connection between one's having the Gettier intuition and one's having the content of that intuition as part of one's evidence. The connection falls out of three assumptions: that $E=K$; that having a rational insight is way of knowing; and that one's Gettier intuition is a genuine rational insight as opposed to a mere rational intuition. With these assumptions in place, the connection is that it is in virtue of one's having the Gettier intuition/insight that its content is now a part of one's evidence.

In a similar way, the proponent of KFI can endorse both E3 and E4 when they are interpreted as E3* and E4*:

E3*) The intuited propositions that play this important evidential role in philosophy are the objects of intuitions which are importantly distinct from any mere belief, judgement, or inclination to believe or judge.

E4*) The intuited propositions that play this important evidential role in philosophy are the objects of rational intuitions.

In endorsing E3* and E4*, and in claiming that having a rational insight is a distinctive way of knowing, the proponent of KFI clearly distinguishes their view from Williamson's deflationary view of the nature and role of intuitions in philosophy. Furthermore, as we have seen, the proponent of KFI can adopt any of the central characterizations of the nature of rational intuitions offered by more familiar versions of the intuition picture.

5. Conclusion

I have argued that the intuition picture is consistent with the non-psychologistic view of philosophical evidence advocated by Williamson, and with his view that $E=K$. This result shows us that the intuition picture should not be regarded as being wedded to any particular theoretical positions on the nature of the evidence provided by philosophical thought experiments, or the nature of evidence in general. In which case, one should not expect to be able to reject the intuition picture by appealing to different theoretical positions on such matters. Furthermore, this result shows us that proponents of the intuition picture are not wedded to any particular response to sceptical challenges to the armchair judgements relied upon in philosophy. In which case, if they choose to, proponents of the intuition picture can avail themselves of Williamson's response to such sceptical challenges, without adopting his deflationary view of intuitions.

Of course, Williamson's evidence related objections do not exhaust his objections to intuition based accounts of philosophical methodology. As mentioned, Williamson has a number of objections to claims like E3 and E4. I should emphasize then that my aim here has simply been to show that, despite their centrality in his work on intuitions, Williamson's evidence related objections do not provide us with any reason to reject the intuition picture. At best, they give us reason to reject one particular interpretation of the intuition picture, one that very few philosophers have actually endorsed. If we are to find a successful argument against the intuition picture in Williamson's work then we will need to turn to his other objections. I think on close examination these objections also fail, but that conclusion will have to be argued for on another occasion.

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