

# REPLY TO BOGHOSSIAN, BROGAARD AND RICHARD

SYMPOSIUM ON *PHILOSOPHY WITHOUT INTUITIONS*

FORTHCOMING IN *ANALYTIC PHILOSOPHY*

BY: HERMAN CAPPELEN

## Twin Earth and Intuitions<sup>1</sup> Reply to Paul Boghossian

There is much to engage with in Boghossian's careful, detailed, and challenging discussion. I won't address all the important topics Boghossian brings up, in part because I don't know the answers, in part because I have addressed some of them in other writings,<sup>2</sup> and in part due to limitations of space. I focus exclusively on what Boghossian has to say about Putnam's Twin Earth example. Boghossian's discussion of this case is an excellent way both to put pressure on the line of argument in PWI and to see the strength of those arguments.

### What is the Question?

Having outlined Putnam's Twin Earth argument, as he understands it, Boghossian says:

The question is: What is the *justification* for this judgment about the extensions of Oscar's and Toscar's tokens of 'water' in this highly contrived and specialized case, far remote from any actual scenario that we might have encountered?

In the context of discussing PWI, the question of what the question is, is important and tricky. Here are four different questions we can ask about the twin earth judgment ('the TEJ' for short):

- Q1: What's the justification for TEJ?

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Paul Boghossian for many constructive conversations about these issues. Thanks also to Josh Dever, Torfinn Huvenes, and Juhani Yli-Vakkuri for helpful comments and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of Kripke's use of 'intuition'-terminology (and the passage Boghossian also discusses) see my "Reply to Bengson" in Cappelen (forthcoming).

- Q2: What did Putnam take the justification for his TEJ to be?
- Q3: What do those who follow Putnam take the justification for their respective TEJs to be?
- Q4: What do I, HC, take the justification for my TEJ to be?

The central theme throughout PWI is that metaphilosophers have made false *descriptive* claims about philosophical practice and methodology. They start by stating as a descriptive fact that philosophers do something they call ‘rely on intuitions as evidence’ and then go on to ask whether that’s a justifiable procedure. PWI tries to show that this descriptive claim is false. In the course of those arguments, PWI examines a number of case studies. But in none of those cases do I take a stand on whether the arguments are good or bad, justified or not.<sup>3</sup> I try to describe how the various authors proceed. As a result, the focus here should not be on Q1 or Q4, but instead on Q2 and Q3. That said, in the light of Boghossian’s arguments, there is a very strong temptation to say something about Q4, and I give into that temptation in the last part of the paper. (I suspect that despite my efforts in PWI, many readers’ primary interest will be in Q4, and if you are one of those, feel free to skip to that part<sup>4</sup>).

### **Did Putnam rely on an intuition?**

Putnam presumably thought about this issue for many years, and what he took his justification to be changed over time and might not all of it be reflected in the text he ended up writing. Focusing exclusively on the text itself, we find some hints. Much depends on what exactly we take the TEJ to be. Boghossian says:

“The important claim here is not that XYZ is in the extension of Toscar’s ‘water.’ ... The important claim is that H<sub>2</sub>O *isn’t* in that extension (and vice-versa for Oscar’s word ‘water.’)”

In the spirit of this passage, here is one way to articulate TEJ:

**TEJ-Option 1:** TEJ1 = *that ‘water’ at Twin Earth refers to XYZ and not to H<sub>2</sub>O.*

According to Boghossian, TEJ1 is the claim that is in need of intuitive justification. I don’t think that can be right. TEJ1 is *explicitly stipulated in Putnam’s description of the scenario* and so no argument is needed (and in particular, no support from intuition is needed). Putnam says:

“One of the peculiarities of Twin Earth is that the liquid called “water” is not

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<sup>3</sup> If, for example, it turns out that there’s an intuition based justification TEJ, but that no one ever has appealed to it, then it would have no bearing on the issues discussed in PWI

<sup>4</sup> None of this is to say that Boghossian misrepresents this aspect of PWI – his opening paragraph is clear on this topic and so is the discussion.

H<sub>2</sub>O but a different liquid whose chemical formula is very long and complicated. I shall abbreviate this chemical formula simply as XYZ.” (p.9 “The Meaning of “Meaning”).

If TEJ is true by stipulation, the question of justification doesn't even arise for Putnam.

In response, Boghossian might suggest an alternative interpretation of the passage from Putnam quoted above. Maybe the right way to read that passage is as follows: as a matter of fact, so to speak, the Twin Earthers use 'water' to refer to XYZ and not to H<sub>2</sub>O, simply because that's what happens to be around them. They're never around H<sub>2</sub>O and that's the sense in which H<sub>2</sub>O isn't called 'water' on Twin Earth. That leaves it unsettled what we should say were they to apply 'water' to H<sub>2</sub>O. It is in defense of Putnam's reply to this question, he needs to appeal to an intuition.

Two quick replies to this response. (i) this is not a correct interpretation of Putnam. To properly document that I would have to quote several long passages from the paper. Instead of doing that here I encourage the reader to go back to the original text and read the 2-3 paragraphs right after the quoted passage (i.e., take a look at the passages about the spaceships – and Putnam's description of what the travelers on those would say). (ii) If the scenario is construed according to this interpretation (where it is left open whether twin earth 'water' has H<sub>2</sub>O in its extension), it is a poor candidate for a claim Putnam needed intuition to justify. Putnam's justification would then depend on his justification for the view that 'water', as used by the Twin Earthers, is a natural kind term and not a non-natural-kind term (meaning 'watery stuff'). It also depends on his justification for views about how natural kinds terms are introduced. It is clear from the text that these are not issues Putnam thinks he needs intuition to support.

A second, maybe more natural, candidate for TEJ is this:

**TEJ-Option 2:** TEJ2 = *the twin earth scenario is possible*

Where 'the twin earth scenario' abbreviates some version of the story Putnam tells in “The Meaning of “Meaning””. Suppose we take Boghossian to claim that TEJ2 is the central intuitively justified claim. The question then is: Why? Why can TEJ2 be justified by prior experience? Boghossian doesn't answer that (since he doesn't consider TEJ2) so what I have to say here is speculation. A possible answer is that *every* possibility claim requires an intuition to be justified. This is a very strong thesis and in need of an argument. Since that's not an argument Boghossian presents, there's no point here speculating about possible responses. It raises large issues about the epistemology of modality, the answer to which would go far beyond the scope of this reply.

Another answer to the question 'Why would Putnam have to rely on the intuitive to justify TEJ2?' is that there's something special about TEJ2. That specialness triggers the need for an appeal to intuitions. If so, the challenge is to say what's special about

TEJ2. Boghossian's reply doesn't answer that question (because he does not talk about TEJ2, but instead about TEJ1). One option is that TEJ1 concerns a 'strange' and 'farfetched' possibility. A thought one might have is that 'ordinary' experience of the kind cited in the previous paragraph can't help us judge 'farfetched' possibility judgments. As I point out in PWI, this thought isn't right: "Lots of strange and unusual cases are very easy to judge in a reliable way. Here is a very esoteric, unusual and farfetched case: *Easy Esoteric and Farfetched Case*: Suppose there are two pink elephants in my office. Then yet another pink elephant comes into my office (and the first two pink elephants stay in the room). Question: How many pink elephants are in my office?" (PWI p. 226). There simply is no connection, I argue in PWI, between 'strangeness' and lack of support from ordinary experience. That said, these are complex issues and a full exploration of them goes beyond the scope of this reply (and is not clearly fruitful since this isn't a point Boghossian explicitly pursues).

I have considered only two options for what to count as the TEJ. I could go on and on picking candidate claims from the paper, but this reply would then get both exceedingly tedious and long. There is, however, a general point worth highlighting: When philosophers talk of 'the intuition' underlying (or *at the heart of* or *central to*) various famous thought experiments, it is typically impossible to find any consensus on just what exactly the relevant intuitive claim is. This is true even about the non-representative Gettier Case.<sup>5</sup> That's some evidence that claims about the significance of the intuitive in thought experiments are often based on a lack of careful, detailed study of those thought experiments. There is often a general sense that 'something intuitive' is appealed to in those cases (especially among those who have not read the text in awhile), but as soon as you start looking at concrete claims, they all look implausible (or at least problematic) as candidates for carrying the halo of the intuitive.

### **Do those who endorse Putnam's view rely on intuitions?**

Why have so many of the more than 6000 who have cited Putnam's paper over the last 40 years agreed with his conclusion and cited the thought experiment in support of those conclusions? Some might be tempted by the following view: *Putnam's argument is so intuitively powerful that readers simply can't resist endorsing his conclusion. It is this powerful intuitive pull that explains the widespread acceptance of Putnam's argument.*

I don't think so. If we don't need an appeal to intuition to explain Putnam's endorsement of the view, we don't need it to explain the slew of followers. More generally, these kinds of famous and influential thought experiments (or arguments or positions or views) take on a life of their own. The histories of those lives are best explained by the sociology of philosophy, not by its epistemology. Here is a rough thought: Putnam was famous and he was at a prestigious institution. With Burge, Kripke and Kaplan he founded a new movement in philosophy of language. They

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<sup>5</sup> For discussion of its non-representativeness see PWI p.193 and the difficulty of picking the intuitive claims, see PWI p54-55.

developed a rich and exciting research program with broad implications for other parts of philosophy. When that happens, you'll often have lots of people jumping on the bandwagon. They'll hope that writing papers in this tradition is a way to secure publication, employment, fame, and riches. So they'll refer to the paper, talk about e.g. the Twin Earth Example, and take the conclusion of the example for granted, not because they are in a position to provide excellent justification for the assumption they take on, but because they work in an environment where taking those assumptions for granted is sociologically advantageous. More generally, when we wonder why certain views become widely endorsed (or taken for granted or placed in the common ground) among a large group of philosophers at a certain time, the answer is never found by careful study of the quality of the arguments for those views (or the sources of evidence), but through an understanding of the sociology of philosophy and philosophers<sup>6</sup>.

### **Why do I endorse Putnam's conclusion?**

Much of the above can seem deflationary and uncharitable to Putnam and his followers. Since I am one of those followers, it is fair to press the question: *What do you, HC, think the justification for TEJ is?* Some might think: *If you have good reasons for endorsing Putnam's view, charity should lead you to offer that up behalf of others.* I don't agree with the conditional in the previous sentence, but since many do, I offer some thoughts on how I think the central claims are justified. First a sort of big picture story about why I've been attracted to the argument and then some details.

*Big Picture story:* One thing I particularly like about Putnam's Twin Earth Case is that it nicely articulates a view that captures central ideas in Kripke and Burge. The kind of externalism promoted in various ways by those three has influenced my thinking about almost everything in philosophy. This is not because I think any one of them has articulated some knock down proof that the position is right. I think they have presented data and arguments that make the position plausible (or at least more plausible than some alternatives.) The explanatory power of the view lends additional support to it. That said, I have little doubt that a hundred years from now philosophers will look back at this period and think the whole thing pretty much unconvincing.

*More Detailed Story:* The above paragraph is handwavy. It avoids the central challenge from Boghossian: to spell out the arguments for Putnam's view without an appeal to the intuitive. Below is a sketch of an argument – it is a version of the response Boghossian describes as follows: *we do after all hold a background theory from which TEJ can be derived.* Though, for reasons that will become clear, I don't think it's best described as a theory.

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<sup>6</sup> Note that this is a point about explaining the *group* behavior. First-person explanations will of course be different, see discussion of Q4 below.

*Sketch of an intuition-free argument for TEJ*: Normal speakers have extensive knowledge about reference, what individual terms refer to, and how terms end up referring to what they refer to. They have a capacity to reliably interpret and determine the referent of expressions. They can introduce new referring terms and pass them on to others. I, for example, know that I use ‘Nora’ to talk about Nora, that we gave her the name ‘Nora’, that we told others about her, and that they were then able to use ‘Nora’ to talk about Nora. I know this about many thousands of referring expressions. This kind of knowledge and these abilities are central to all human cognition. It also seems plausible that it is this vast knowledge base about reference and related phenomena that provides justification for my belief in the conclusion of the Twin Earth Example. The role of this kind of pre-theoretic (and non-intuitive) knowledge in providing support for externalism is even clearer if we look at the arguments in Kripke’s Naming and Necessity. Consider these typical claims from that book:

Consider Richard Feynman, to whom many of us are able to refer. He is a leading contemporary theoretical physicist. Everyone *here* (I am sure!) can state the contents of one of Feynman’s theories so as to differentiate him from Gell-Mann. However, the man in the street, not possessing these abilities, may still use the name ‘Feynman’. When asked, he will say: well he’s a physicist or something. He may not think this picks out anyone uniquely. Still I think he uses the name ‘Feynman’ as a name for Feynman. (Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*, P.81)

These claims are continuous with the kind of common knowledge gestured at in the previous paragraph: *We all already know enough about reference to know that what Kripke says about ‘Feynman’ is true*. We also already (i.e. prior to reading Naming and Necessity) know more general principles about reference (or are in a position to quickly come to know them.) Here is a central example:

Someone, let’s say, a baby, is born; his parents call him by a certain name. They talk about him to their friends. Other people meet him. Through various sorts of talk the name is spread from link to link as if by a chain. ... A speaker who is on the far end of this chain, who has heard about, say Richard Feynman, in the market place or elsewhere, may be referring to Richard Feynman even though he can’t remember from whom he first heard of Feynman or from whom he ever heard of Feynman. .... A certain passage of communication researching ultimately to the man himself does reach the speaker. He then is referring to Feynman even though he can’t identify him uniquely. (Kripke, “Naming and Necessity”, p.91)

Again, nothing in these passages requires an appeal to the intuitive. The experience we all already have as lifelong language users puts us in a position to recognize that this is a plausible principle.

As I see it, if I have good reasons to believe the conclusion of the Twin Earth thought experiment, it is for the same kind of reasons as I believe what Kripke says in these

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<sup>7</sup> For more on this line of thought, see the discussion of Socratic Knowledge in my ‘Reply to Weatherson’, Forthcoming *Philosophical Studies*.

passages<sup>8</sup>. The justification is my prior experience, not a flash of insight from some mysterious source of insight called ‘intuition’.

## Reply to Objections

Boghossian raises a number of objections to his way of thinking. I address four of those.

**1. What is the theory?** Boghossian asks: ‘What are the background beliefs from which we might infer this judgment about extensions? It would have to be a theory about extensions, or a theory that carried implications about how extensions are determined.’

*Reply:* I don't think it would have to be a theory. I have knowledge of many particular communicative exchanges involving reference and naming. I then induct on those to reach a conclusion about the new case. Think of it like this: I've got an enormous database of reference judgments. I encounter a new case and I ask myself: is this similar to those? No theory is needed for that to take place. More generally, our ability to classify objects e.g. as *bicycles* or *kids* or *paintings* need not rely on us having a tacit theory from which bicyclehood / kidhood / paintinghood can be derived. This point extends to our general background beliefs about the world: I tend to sit down on chairs without checking whether they're solid. That doesn't mean that I operate on some implicit principle or theory about the solidity of chairs.

**2. The Bad Theory objection:** Boghossian says: “Putnam's whole point is that our background theory about such matters – the received view – predicts the opposite judgment than the one elicited by the thought experiment. It predicts that Oscar's and Toscar's tokens of ‘water’ will have the same extensions.”

*Reply:* Sometimes we have bad theories and being made aware of common background knowledge can help us see that those theories are false. Suppose a child comes up with the following Bad Theory of Past Tense: *take the infinitive and then add ‘ed*. If she is in the grip of the Bad Theory of Past Tense, we can remind her of something she knows. She knows, for example, that the past tense of ‘go’ is ‘went’ and of ‘run’ is ‘ran’. Being made aware of this lead her to drop her bad theory. The externalist arguments are like that. When someone with a Bad Theory of Reference (e.g. a Fregean), reads Naming and Necessity, she is made aware of common knowledge incompatible with her false theory. She is like the child with the Bad Theory of Past Tense.

**3. How do we justify necessary truths about concepts and extensions?** Boghossian says: “*If the deliverances of the tacit theory are justified, surely they are not justified*

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<sup>8</sup> Of course, the details of that justificatory path are not transparent to me and would be very hard to make explicit.

*merely perceptually, since they consist of necessary truths about concepts and their extensions.”*

*Reply:* If the conclusion of Kripke, Putnam and Burge’s work are taken to be necessary truths, then there is a huge challenge here. However, I take that to be an instance of a *general* challenge of explaining how we come to know (or have good reasons to believe) necessary truths. Whatever the answer is to that, it will have nothing *specifically* to do with thought experiments or philosophy or Putnam’s thought experiment. What Boghossian would need is a *general* argument to the effect that we need intuitive insights to come to know necessary truth. I don’t endorse any such arguments<sup>9</sup>, but it goes beyond the scope of this brief reply to address such foundational issues in the epistemology of modality.

There is, however, a larger disagreement here, and it makes those broader issues about modal epistemology less pressing. I’m unconvinced that the conclusions of these arguments ‘consist of necessary truths about concepts and their extensions’. Start with Naming and Necessity: I don’t take that work to show that Kripke’s ‘picture’ of names and natural kind terms is *necessarily true*. I think that Kripke is right about how reference works, but I also think that reference could have been different. It could, for example, have worked the way Evans thinks it does, and it would still have been reference. For this kind of reason, I am at least open minded about whether we should take the arguments in “The Meaning of ‘Meaning’” to establish necessary truths about ‘reference’.

**4. Why trust the tacit theory over the explicit one?** Finally, Boghossian asks: “*Why do we always trust the deliverances of the tacit theory over those of the explicit one? Why don’t we regard the thought experiment as indicating a standoff?*”

*Reply:* I reject the presupposition. In general, when a philosopher encounters a thought experiments that runs counter to a theory she holds, that philosopher won’t just give up her theory. She’ll think of ways to undermine or throw doubt on what Boghossian calls ‘the deliverances of the tacit theory’<sup>10</sup>. She could also recognize that her theory can’t account for that deliverance, but still stick to it (sometimes this is described as ‘biting the bullet’.) This is exactly what happened in response to Putnam’s Twin Earth Case. A couple of years after the publication of Putnam’s paper, D.H. Mellor published the paper “Natural Kinds” where he denies the possibility of Putnam’s scenario (in effect denies TEJ2). Tim Crane in “All the Difference in the World” does the same. More generally, many of the most heated philosophical debates in my time as a professional philosopher have been over just how to adjudicate between theories and ‘deliverances of tacit theory’. For more illustrations, consider the various debates over context sensitivity in semantics, relativism about truth, and

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<sup>9</sup> I’m inclined towards some version of the view in Williamson 2007, Chapter 5.

<sup>10</sup> For reasons given above, I wouldn’t talk about a background *theory*, but for simplicity I use Boghossian’s terminology in this section.

expressivism. In all these debates, a central element is the extent to which we should take the deliverances of the tacit theory over those of the explicit ones<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup> For my own contributions to some of those debates see Cappelen 2004, 2009, and 2014 – in all these works I see myself grappling with questions of how to adjudicate these kinds of conflicts and I don't come down on the deliverances I get from my pre-theoretic background assumptions (see e.g. the final chapter of *Relativism and Monadic Truth*)).

## **Intuitions and Intellectual Seemings**

### **Reply to Brogaard**

Intuitions, according to Brogaard, are intellectual seemings with four characteristics:

- F1: ‘It intellectually seems that p’ expresses an intuition only if the mental state it refers to forms immediately upon considering p and not as a result of extensive, explicit reasoning.
- F2: ‘it intellectually seems that p’ expresses an intuition only if the mental state it refers to confers prima facie justification on the belief that p
- F3: Premises that can receive justification from cannot be confirmed or denied by perception or science.
- F4: The Intuition that p is accompanied by an attraction to p – this attraction is a feeling (which does have a phenomenology) and the feeling is an urge (or inclination) to believe merely based on understanding that is so intense that we have a hard time envisaging that others may not feel the same way.

This is an account of the intuitive somewhat familiar from what I in PWI call the tradition of Methodological Rationalism. How do we discover whether an argument in a text appeals to what Brogaard calls an ‘intuition’? Brogaard proposes two diagnostics:

- *Basic*: p is a premise not explicitly inferred from other premises, argued for in previous publications or explicitly treated as an assumption.
- *Attraction*: There is no widely known argument for p elsewhere, and the author provides no argument for, or reference to arguments for, p yet takes it for granted that there won’t be huge resistance to p among fellow philosophers.

*First point of criticism*: Basic and Attraction are not indicators of the presence of what Brogaard calls ‘intuitions’. Suppose a claim, C, is made in a paper and both Basic and Attraction is true of it. It doesn’t follow that “the mental state it refers to forms immediately upon considering p and not as a result of extensive, explicit reasoning.” It doesn’t follow that “the mental state C refers to confers prima facie justification on the belief that C.” It doesn’t follow that “C cannot be confirmed or denied by perception or science.” Finally, it doesn’t follow that “C is accompanied by an attraction to C – that this attraction is a feeling (which does have a phenomenology) and the feeling is an urge (or inclination) to believe merely based on understanding that is so intense that we have a hard time envisaging that others may not feel the same way.” Interpret ‘follow’ as liberally as you want in the previous sentences, and

they are still true. Spelling out why in detail would take a few pages<sup>12</sup>, but it's a simple exercise for the reader to confirm. The lack of connection goes the other way as well. Suppose a claim C is characterized by F1-F4. C could still be explicitly treated as an assumption (i.e. fail to satisfy Basic) and the author could refer to an argument for C (i.e. fail to satisfy Attraction). In sum: *Brogaard's diagnostics don't track Brogaard-intuitions.*

*Second point of criticism:* Brogaard says:

Even if my preferred account of intuitions as intellectual seemings is incorrect, *Basic* and *Attraction* are nonetheless still good indicators that philosophers rely on intuitions in their arguments. If *Basic* is present in a philosophical text, then either the author relies on intuitions as evidence for p, or p is entirely unjustified (so far) *yet not treated as an assumption to be argued for in the future*. ... I personally would be more likely to rely on intuitions as evidence than to just throw p out there *without treating it as an assumption and then build my argument on it*. (my emphasis.)

I don't think that Brogaard's Basic and Attraction are good indicators of a reliance on the intuitive, on *any* account of the intuitive. Brogaard's account, i.e. F1-F4, is a fairly standard account of the intuitive<sup>13</sup>. Among those who dabble in 'intuition'-talk it is standard to assume that versions of F1 and F4 characterize the intuitive. There are a few proponents of Centrality that reject both F1 and F4<sup>14</sup>, but those tend to stick with some version of F2 and F3. Brogaard's diagnostics fail to capture all of F1-F4 and so isn't a plausible diagnostics for what philosophers call 'intuitive'.

*The Role of Implicit Assumptions in Philosophical Arguments:* Basic and Attraction seems to imply that if an author leaves it implicit that a claim, C, is an assumption, then she is relying on an intuition in favor of C. I see no reason to endorse that view and many reasons for rejecting it. Here is a sketch of the problem: Let C be a claim made in a philosophy paper. Suppose C is not *explicitly* inferred from other premises, not argued for in previous publications by that author, not *explicitly* treated as an assumption, and that the author takes for granted that there won't be huge resistance to C among fellow philosophers. C then satisfies Basic and Attraction. The point I want to highlight is this: C can be an assumption made by the author even though she isn't explicit about it. Most of the time when we treat a claim as an assumption, we don't explicitly say that we do it<sup>15</sup>. Most assumptions we make are not marked by an

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<sup>12</sup> For a more detailed version of this argument, see Max Deutsch "On the Irrelevance of Intellectual Seemings" (unpublished ms).

<sup>13</sup> I can't with a straight face say they are *good* accounts of what intuition are, since I don't think anyone should talk about that category— it is a verbal virus that is a permanent source of verbal disputes and nonsense speech.

<sup>14</sup> Prior to PWI, I don't know any such proposals, but among those who reply to PWI, that seems to be a popular move— see e.g. Chalmers (forthcoming) and Weinberg (forthcoming).

<sup>15</sup> Indeed, even if I explicitly assert 'I assume that p', I can't also add 'I assume that I assume that p' ad infinitum. So is 'implicit' (in Brogaard's terminology) that I assume that I assume that p.

explicit 'I assume that ...'. The typical situation is this: C is simply asserted, and it is understood from context that the speaker is suggesting to the audience that C be added to the common ground. Of course, in written work, accommodation is forced upon us, so to speak.<sup>16</sup> The main point is this: If we endorse Basic and Attraction, then much of what is assumed but not explicitly marked as an assumption, would be classified as an intuition. I take it no proponent of intuitions would want that result.

This problem affects all of Brogaard's discussions of particular cases. As an illustration, consider what she says about Keith Lehrer's Truetemp case:

Lehrer's basic premise is that if one truly believes that p, then one must have some way of knowing that p is correct. So, premise 1 in Lehrer's argument that Mr. Truetemp doesn't know has the feature I called *Basic* above: it's not explicitly inferred from other premises, argued for on previous occasions or explicitly treated as an assumption. This indicates that Lehrer is relying on intuitions as evidence for this premise. Again, the alternative, that Lehrer thought that premise had no degree of justification, is highly unlikely.

This diagnosis ignores an interpretation that is pushed throughout PWI: All arguments have unargued for assumptions. That doesn't have to be explicitly marked. The author doesn't have to *say*: "I'm not going to argue for C now, but will in the future" or "here I simply assume C without arguing for it." The author typically just asserts C. If others question C, then it is a burden on the author (or those sympathetic to her cause) to defend C. That someone has an unargued for assumption in a paper is no evidence whatsoever that she relies on some mysterious source of evidence. It is just a corollary of the fact that in a finite number of pages it is impossible to argue for every assumption made. In this case (as in the other cases), Brogaard fails to mention the option that Lehrer's allegedly intuitive premise is an assumption, though not explicitly marked as such.

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<sup>16</sup> This is one of the things that make reading philosophy (or reading anything, really) extremely frustrating: you're constantly forced to accommodate assumptions you want to reject, just in order to keep reading- reading is a form of cognitive submission (and therefore very uncomfortable).

# Conceptual Structure, Indeterminacy, and Intuitions

## Reply to Mark Richard

There is much in Richard's sympathetic discussion that I agree with and welcome. Richard and I agree that "...just about anything can play an evidential role in philosophy, and that a great deal of what is evidence in philosophy comes not from gazing at our inner *omphalos*, but from the sciences." Richard also rejects many aspects of intuition-based philosophy that PWI opposes. That said, there is a point of fundamental disagreement and it is succinctly summarized by Richard: "Cappelen's view, I think, is that they (philosophers) are simply trying to say something illuminating about properties and relations, and that our concepts of these properties and relations are of no particular philosophical interest." This is my view and Richard central objection is this: "...we have no choice in philosophically interesting cases than to proceed cautiously, open to the possibility that there are no properties or relations that our words and concepts are directed on –not because those concepts are as empty of content as the concept *phlogiston*, but because they are often massively partial or painfully indeterminate. Since this is generally an open possibility, and surely sometimes how things in fact are, philosophical analysis *has to be* conceptual analysis, for often there is nothing else for it to be." (my emphasis). In what follow, I first deny that indeterminacy means philosophy has to turn to conceptual analysis. I then say a bit about why I don't endorse Richard's account of conceptual competence. I end with some brief comments on Richard's interpretation of Austin.

### The Painful Indeterminacy of 'free action'

Philosophical concepts, according to Richard are often "massively partial or painfully indeterminate". Following Richard I use 'free act' as an illustration. Here are two strands in (or elements of) our concept of a free act:

- F1: To act freely is to perform an act, the performance of which was not determined by conditions over which one has no control.
- F2: To act freely is to perform an act such that one could have decided not to perform it (and would not have performed it, had one so decided).

There are, as Richard points out, other strands. I agree with Richard that when we use the phrase 'free action' in speech or token it in thought, it is not determinate that we are picking out the property isolated by one as opposed to another of these. I also think that this is true about practically every interesting philosophical concept. What I'm bewildered by is the conclusion Richard draws: "then all those interested in philosophical problems linked to the notion of freedom can do is to describe the varying strands in our concept of free action and make recommendations, based on the interests we do or might have, as to how we might eliminate the vagueness of the

concept.” I don’t think this is *all* we can do. I’m not even sure it’s *a* thing one *should* do. Here are some important questions that might lead you to be interested in the nature of free acts:

- Q1: What is the connection between freedom and moral responsibility?
- Q2: What is the connection between freedom and human agency, choice, and rationality?
- Q2: What is the connection between freedom and autonomy and dignity?

Let’s grant that when we use the phrase ‘free action’, there are many candidate meanings, for simplicity let’s say F1 and F2. Suppose you discover this indeterminacy. How should you react? You’ll still be motivated by an interest in Q1-Q3 (there is no reason why discovering indeterminacy should change that motivating interest). You will now ask yourself what role F1 and F2 plays in an account of moral responsibility, autonomy, dignity, love and friendship. These are not questions about concepts. They are questions about the world, e.g.:

Q4: What is the connection between moral responsibility and acts the performance of which was not determined by conditions over which one has no control?

Q5: What is the connection between moral responsibility and acts that one could have decided not to perform (and would not have performed, had one so decided)?

Where before you had *one* question about what you called ‘freedom’ (Q1). You now have *two* (Q4 and Q5). Neither is a question about the concepts of freedom – they are both about the non-conceptual world.

### **Terminological hygienics?**

If, however, our imagined inquirer were to follow Richard’s recommendation, she would, in response to the discovered indeterminacy, turn to questions such as these:

- Q6: How do we best describe the varying strands in our concept of free action?
- Q7: How, in the light of these descriptions, might we eliminate the vagueness of the concept?

Her interest would then have turned to what Richard calls ‘conceptual analysis’ - I like to think of it as a form of *terminological hygienics*. This is an interesting topic, but it is a *change* of topic. Good work on terminological hygienics does not help you get clearer on Q1-Q3. If those or related questions motivated you in the first place, I see no reason why you shouldn’t just continue to pursue them. In sum: the discovery of indeterminacy doesn’t mean you *have to* turn to terminological hygienics Nor does it provide a reason why you *should* turn towards it.

Of course, none of this is to say that studying what Richard calls ‘concepts’ isn’t an interesting topic for philosophers. However, note that when we study concepts, that’s what we study. We don’t instead turn our interest onto the concept of a ‘concept’ (and its indeterminacy and recommendations for its use). This should be clear from Richard’s discussion in his response. Large parts of it are devoted to an account of what concepts are. When presenting that view, Richard is not doing conceptual analysis (or terminological hygienics). He is just describing some feature of the world – concepts.

### **Richard on the Conceptual Structures and competence**

According to Richard, those who share a concept “...typically share presuppositions about how the concept is to be applied, even in novel case.” and they “...have stable inclinations to apply the terms, ones that overlap with those of others, but they have not articulated those inclinations to themselves or to others.” My concerns about this kind of view is the standard one in the literature: I am unconvinced that a shared stable inclination to apply a term T is partially constitutive of having a shared concept. First, members of a linguistic community can have stable shared inclinations to apply e.g. ‘orange’ or ‘moon’ to a range of objects without those inclinations in any way being part of the conceptual structure of *orange* or *moon* (or constitutive of concept possession.) I have never seen an adequate answer to the question: *How distinguish the stable inclinations that are required for concept possession from those that are not?* The line of argument in Williamson (2007) makes answering that question hard. A closely related concern (maybe the flip side of the previous one) is mentioned in Richard’s note 8. Richard says that there “...are delicate issues here about members of a community who possess a concept but are in some way deviant...” I share those concerns. I think competent users of a term can fail to share the stable inclinations. So having those inclinations isn’t constitutive of concept possession. If it isn’t, then why should we think of it as constitutive of conceptual structure? Again, the central concerns are spelled out in Williamson (2007) and the following passage is a good summary: “The idea that a shared understanding of a word requires a shared stock of platitudes depends on the assumption that uses of a word by different agents or at different times can be bound together into a common practice of using that word with a given meaning only by an invariant core of beliefs<sup>17</sup>. But that assumption amounts to one of the crudest and least plausible answers to the question of what makes a unity out of diversity. In effect, it assumes that what animates a word is a soul of doctrine.” (p.123)

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<sup>17</sup> Richard’s view is not that core of beliefs is sufficient, but, if I understand him right, it is necessary.

## Austin on Ordinary Language and Conceptual Analysis

Richard quotes a passage from Austin's "A Plea for Excuses" in support of the view that ordinary language philosophers thought of themselves as engaged in conceptual analysis. I love the passage, but I don't think it supports Richard's view. I won't quote the entire passage again, but simply note that the following important passages not only doesn't encourage philosophers to think about their concepts, but actively discourages them from doing that: "...ordinary language ... embodies ... the inherited experience and acumen of many generations of men. ...If a distinction works well for practical purposes in ordinary life (no mean feat, for even ordinary life is full of hard cases), then there is sure to be something in it, it will not mark nothing."<sup>18</sup> Austin is encouraging us to *use* ordinary language, not to *mention* it or *reflect* on it. Then Austin notes that in many cases where language is used outside the ordinary, e.g. in scientific context, "...ordinary language is *not* the last word: in principle it can everywhere be supplemented and improved upon and superseded." Sometimes we need new distinctions and new terminology. In those cases, we need to engage in some kind of conceptual engineering (which is different from reflecting on or analyzing our concepts). But none of this is a recommendation for philosophers to turn away from the world and towards language or concepts. It's a recommendation for how we can better talk and think about the world.

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