BOOK REVIEWS

Booth, Anthony Robert and Darrell P. Rowbottom (eds.), *Intuitions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. ix + 289, £40 (hardback).

*Intuitions*, edited by Booth and Rowbottom, provides us with several positions in a current debate between advocates of Analytic PHIlosophy (A-Phi) and their intellectual descendants, advocates of eXperimental PHIlosophy (X-Phi), regarding the nature of philosophical intuitions and the role of these in argument and justification. As is apparent through all contributions, the debate is a mess, with no agreed upon definition of ‘intuition’, its purported role and justificatory power, and even whether A-Phi ever depended in any interesting way on intuition (this is discussed by Cappelen’s paper). This is not to imply that there is no valuable work here. It’s always worthwhile asking ourselves to reflect on our methods and on whether they can achieve the goals of philosophy; and all of the chapters make a contribution to this issue. As the book is a collection, and a somewhat diverse one in terms of the conclusions reached, there is no single narrative to introduce and review. So I will impose one. This is not an artificial imposition, a mere tool upon which to hang a coherent review; rather, it is one that reflects some limitations of the debate as collected in this book. It is also a narrative that is appropriately truncated to fit a review, so please do not take the space I give to a particular contribution as an indication of my perception of the quality of said contribution. Part of the truncation requires that I focus on the role of intuition in metaphysical arguments rather than in normative arguments; you may take this as suggesting that I think of the role of intuitions in metaphysical arguments as having better developed alternatives.

Intuitions are given a wide variety of starting definitions by different authors in the collection. Unsurprisingly, this leads to quite a bit of disagreement and to more than a little talking past each other. Here are just some of the ways in which intuitions are defined:

1. As a kind of experience. Specifically:
   a. the seeming of truth [Chudnoff: 11], specifically seeming that the truth of a conclusion is guaranteed by the truth of the premises of an argument (more on this later)
   b. seemings that can lead to judgments [Johnson and Nato: 69]
   c. the feeling that a proposition is necessarily true [Jenkins: 93]

2. Attractions to assent to a proposition [Sosa: 41]). Or, similarly:
   a. inclinations to make judgments [Johnson and Nato: 69]
   b. ‘unreasoned automatic response’ that reflects prior learning [Sorensen: 138]
(3) A proposition attitude. Specifically:
   a. the proposition is taken to seem to be true [Pust: 60]
   b. ‘spontaneous, not-obviously-inferential judgements such as those that frequently occur in response to thought experiments’ [Johnson and Nato: 69]
   c. a judgment of the truth of a proposition not based on introspectively observable reasoning [Rowbottom: 119]

(4) Part of an argument:
   a. as in (1a) above.
   b. ‘Spontaneous, unsupported premises’ that are available to qualified experts, i.e. professional philosophers [Sorensen: 135]
   c. the result of a thought experiment that serves as a premise in an argument against some theoretical position (which predicts the opposite result) [Ichikawa: 232]
   d. a priori justification for a proposition, where the feeling that a proposition is necessarily true (see (1c)) arises from conceptual analysis or mere conceptual competence [Jenkins: 93]

Some definitions are clearly in tension with others. For some, the relevant kind of intuition can be developed only through training; for others, this isn’t the case. Some contributors take it that intuitions are importantly tied to thought experiments; others consider intuitions that arise in other circumstances. Some of the conflicts between definitions are explicitly considered by Jenkins, who concludes that often intuition considered as a kind of common sense is conflated with intuition as a kind of a priori justification for the truth of a proposition. In the light of this, we may be tempted to agree with Cappelen [270] that

the word ‘intuition’ is such a semantic and pragmatic mess that those interested in the philosophy of philosophy are better off if positions and arguments are not articulated using that and cognate terms.

As can be expected from this, there is considerable, and messy, disagreement about what, if any, epistemological role intuitions can, do, and ought to play in philosophy. Chudnoff’s examples are interesting in this regard because they focus on the intuition that the premises of a deductive argument make the conclusion true. He concludes that the role of intuition in this sense is to guide mental actions, namely inferences. However, to my mind he is misusing the term ‘inference’: in the examples he gives, the conclusion is a paraphrase of the conjunction of the premises. For example [18],

(1) If today is the 20th, then Martha Argerich is playing today in Carnegie Hall
(2) Today is the 20th
(3) Martha Argerich is playing today in Carnegie Hall,

is not properly referred to as an inference, because nothing is inferred in the conclusion, (3). Rather, (3) states in simpler form the conjunction of the premises (1) and (2). Perhaps all valid arguments are like this; I don’t know. But those that are so are better named ‘deductions’ than ‘inferences’, because ‘inference’ implies new knowledge or a new hypothesis for testing. Nonetheless, the intuition which Chudnoff is
interested in is one of seeing that if (1) and (2) are true then (3) is also true. He seeks
to defend the role of intuitions about deductions from some recent criticisms. I'll
leave open whether he succeeds, and I'll agree with him that, even if he is successful
in this defence, separate arguments need to be provided to defend proposals for more
ambitious roles for intuition like those considered below.

Sosa, for example, takes as his purview intuitions as attractions to assert to a
proposition. He argues [41] that, unlike experiences which serve as rational founda-
tions for perceptual beliefs, this kind of intuition needs ‘epistemic assessment’. He
concludes that certain intuitions can serve as rational foundations only when
further conditions are met. First, they must seem to the reasoning agent to be
true, based only on her understanding of the proposition. Second, the reasoning
agent must be a competent reasoner, where this competence is understood disposi-
tionally [46].

A problem arises for such a view, one that generalises to many of the proposed epi-
stemic roles for intuitions in this volume, at least so far as intuitions are used in meta-
physics. For Sosa, recall, the argumentatively useful intuitions are those attractions
to assert propositions based only on the agent’s understanding of the proposition.
This can only help us to do metaphysics if the concepts used in the proposition accu-
trately represent the world. As naturalists often point out, many of our concepts have
turned out to represent the world inaccurately and so we are not justified in believing
that our current concepts accurately represent the world without further testing. For
example, we might be justified in believing that the chemist’s concept of HYDRO-
GEN BOND accurately represents hydrogen bonds because it has been used exten-
sively in empirical studies. In contrast, we are not justified in supposing that a
concept of PHLOSTOGEN accurately represents anything about combustion.

A contemporary example comes from the study of consciousness. Chalmers [2002]
argues that philosophical zombies are conceivable, based on his concept of PHE-
NOMENAL CONSCIOUSNESS (with this conceivability implying dualism of some
form). But, as we don’t have the kind of justification for PHENOMENAL CON-
SCIOUSNESS that we have for HYDROGEN BOND, on Sosa’s view attractions to
assert to claims based on understanding PHENOMENAL CONSCIOUSNESS
oughtn’t to serve as epistemic foundations in arguments about metaphysics. How-
ever, the chemist who knows a lot about hydrogen bonds is able to treat attractions
to assert to propositions based on her understanding of HYDROGEN BONDS as
epistemic foundations in metaphysical arguments.

This kind of naturalist argument, which rests on worries about whether or not par-
ticular concepts are accurate enough for doing metaphysics, is missing from the
book. Yet it is an important position in the debate about the role of intuitions. Wein-
berg and Alexander offer a rather different critique, suggesting that intuitions are
unreliable and so ought not to be trusted. Defences for the role of intuition typically
focus on suggesting that X-Phi experiments don’t target the kind of intuitions used in
philosophy, if indeed any are so used (Cappelen), or that they fail to take into
account the effects of expertise (Sorensen, Pritchard).

But these arguments miss what I take to be the central naturalist worry. It is not
merely that intuitions tend to be unreliable; it is that we can have reason to hold that
they are reliable only if we are justified in believing that the concepts underlying the
intuitions are accurate representations of the world.

Only Lowe seems to recognise that kind of concern when he says this [256]:

Our ‘intuitions’, particularly as revealed by aptly constructed thought experiments, may
indeed cast interesting light on some of our concepts, but they are not and cannot be reli-
able guides to mind-independent truths of essence.
Lowe goes on to argue that we can do metaphysics by an alternating cycle of *a priori* reasoning attempting to determine possible ‘real essences’ of things, followed by *a posteriori* work to determine which possibilities are instantiated in the actual world. After this comes a refining or revision of the concepts used in the initial *a priori* stage; and the cycle repeats. There is much here to question (e.g. how are we to investigate things that don’t have an essence, like biological species?). Yet it would have been helpful to have the naturalist voice in this volume discussing these worries. The natural philosopher is involved, as much as the scientist is, in the *a posteriori* determination of what possibilities may obtain, and in the development of new or revised concepts with which to produce representations of new possibilities. Think, for example, of Block’s [1995] famous work on ACCESS CONSCIOUSNESS that involved the development of new concepts inspired by, and tested against, existent scientific findings.

In sum, then, Booth and Rowbottom have provided a good collection that takes us through the muddy waters of intuition. It will be very helpful for those looking for a single source for debates between A-Phi and X-Phi, and beyond that there is some helpful material for anyone thinking about the epistemic role of intuition. Nonetheless, because the collection focuses primarily on the debate between A-Phi and X-Phi, with little recognition of the deeper worries at the heart of natural philosophy, some readers will find the debates too one-dimensional to be decisive.

References

Block, Ned. 1995. On a Confusion About a Function of Consciousness, *Behavioural and Brain Sciences* 18/2: 227–47.
Chalmers, David J. 2002. Consciousness and Its Place in Nature, in *Philosophy of Mind: Classical and Contemporary Readings*, ed. David J Chalmers, New York: Oxford University Press: 247–72.

Glenn Carruthers

*Macquarie University*

© 2016 Glenn Carruthers

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00048402.2015.1029501

Cotnoir, A.J. and Donald L.M. Baxter, eds, *Composition as Identity*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. x + 259, £40 (hardback).

There are those—call them *universalists*—who believe that, whenever there are some things, there is a fusion of those things. Universalists have responded to objections to the ontological profligacy involved in their position by denying that the fusion is really any substantive addition to reality over and above the things that it fuses. This is an odd response, as the mere imposition of the qualification ‘substantive’ is insufficient to prevent the fusion from being nevertheless an (unwanted) addition to our ontology. The oddity may be dispelled, however, if a fusion can exist without being any addition to reality. This is what composition as identity (CAI) claims: that the fusion is (or, is just as if it is) identical to the things fused. Since the plurality denoted by ‘some things’ is no addition to reality once we’ve already included some things, so too their fusion is no addition to reality.

You might wonder at how one thing might be identical to many, severally; and whether, even if it could be, universalism is thereby rendered innocent. If so, you will be very ably served by the volume under review, which makes significant and welcome contributions to a number of debates surrounding CAI. Anyone interested in