Trends and Progress in Philosophy

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The following discussion is divided into three parts. In the first part (section 1) I will

discuss trends in philosophy, and defend the propriety of trends. In the second part,

(sections 2 and 3) I will defend the reliance on intuitions found in contemporary analytic

philosophy from some doubts often voiced. In the third part (section 4), I will critically

discuss the arguments Philip Kitcher presented in an earlier issue of this journal,

charging, in a nutshell, that contemporary analytic philosophy doesn't really have its

priorities straight. The different parts of the paper are fairly independent. But there is a

common theme: I defend what is regarded as orthodoxy from various attacks. No doubt

there are ways in which current philosophical practice could be improved upon. It would

be rather odd otherwise. And I have tentative sympathies with traditional empiricist

worries about the substantive a priori reasoning. But those issues will not be dealt with

here. When it comes to the general types of worries I will discuss here, things are pretty

much fine.

1. Trends in philosophy

Let me start by looking at a particular historical development. What caused the demise of logical positivism? According to certain potted histories of 20th-Century philosophy, it was Willard V.O. Quine's refutation of central claims about analyticity in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" that did it, or Thomas Kuhn's refutation of logical positivism's claims about science in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, or it was problems about how to understand the verification principle (is it itself verifiable?) that did it in. These explanations are all problematic. Quine just didn't give any compelling argument against analyticity in "Two Dogmas of Empiricism". At best he argued that it couldn't be non-circularly characterized, but the same goes for many perfectly legitimate notions, and notions Quine accepted as perfectly legitimate – as H. P. Grice and Peter Strawson (1956) were quick to point out. As for Kuhn, it has now been well-documented that Rudolf Carnap, the most famous logical positivist, was positive about Kuhn's project (Reisch 1991). Simplifying somewhat: while Kuhn presented an account of actual history of science, the positivists discussed science under a certain idealization. Kuhn does not even talk much about logical positivism in Structure. Problems regarding the verification principle are another matter. Those problems are arguably serious. But they weren't discovered when logical positivism met its demise. (Which was when, exactly? The 1950s? Early 60s?) Rather, such problems were always with logical positivism, having been discussed already in the 1930s.

Instead, something like the following happened. Logical positivism presented a certain kind of research program. Its tenets presented certain questions as the ones research should be focused on. But gradually the suggested research program came to be

seen as somewhat sterile, or, perhaps, to promise progress only in certain circumscribed areas. It became natural for theorists to look elsewhere. Insofar as Quine and Kuhn had important roles to play it was rather here. Kuhn's work suggested a research program rather more focused on the actual historical development of science.[1] And while the early parts of Quine's "Two Dogmas" present a rather unconvincing argument against the notion of analyticity, the latter parts present an alternative, holistic picture of theories – and this positive picture, while not argued for, can have been seen as a fruitful alternative to the then sterile-seeming picture presented by the logical positivists. (A complication is that Carnap had presented a not too dissimilar picture already in the 1930s. But Carnap didn't highlight the picture in the way Quine did.)

I think this tells us something about how philosophy often develops. Without borrowing wholesale anything like the picture of science developed by post-positivist philosophers of science like Kuhn or Lakatos, I think some ideas they have introduced are important to keep in mind when considering the trajectory of philosophy. Research programs are adopted, consciously or not, by a certain part of the philosophical community: certain tenets are taken for granted, certain notions are regarded as the proper ones to use as tools, and certain puzzles are regarded as the ones to focus attention on. The research program isn't abandoned simply on the ground that seemingly compelling arguments against its fundamental assumptions are presented. Rather, it is abandoned when research conducted within its confines is no longer seen as fruitful, and when a new alternative, with some promise of success, is available. (Needless to say, Kuhn and Lakatos, the philosophers of science I mentioned, are quite different, in important ways. But the general ideas I briefly described are common to them.)

Some recent developments arguably fit this template well. (1) Experimental philosophy. The emergence of experimental philosophy, with its emphasis on empirical, statistical methods in philosophy, isn't due to some particular novel arguments on its behalf, or against the 'armchair philosophy' it sets itself up against. Even before the advent of experimental philosophy, it could be grumbled that what intuition-consulting philosophical analysis provides is information about the meanings of the words in the idiolects of those in the corridors of higher learning. Rather, what happened was that certain early results seemed exciting and suggestive of more exciting results to be had. New avenues of research opened up in areas that seemed stagnant. (The Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess (1938) conducted some early experimental philosophy of the same kind around the middle of the century, but his results hardly promised the same fruitfulness.) (2) Within contemporary metaphysics it has become popular to focus on fundamentality, essence and grounding, and to think about ontological questions not as questions about what there is but about what there is, fundamentally. These notions are further held not to be characterizable in purely modal terms. There are, to be sure, arguments supporting use of these notions: arguments to the effect that modal notions don't suffice to draw all distinctions we may want to draw. But the point about the insufficiency of the modal notions is relatively obvious, and the recent surge of interest in these more fine-grained notions can't really be the result of some new insight. Better to look at things as follows: It has been known for some time that modal notions cannot be used to draw all distinctions that can intuitively be drawn; it was just that a time came when it seemed to many more fruitful to look at what can be said about fundamentality, grounding, etc. than to stick with the old framework and try to use only modal notions for

serious theorizing. (Compare the skepticism about irreducibly modal notions during an earlier era of analytic philosophy. It wasn't as if the difficulties in getting by without, or reducing, modal notions weren't known – as amply evidenced by Goodman's famous 1947 paper on counterfactuals. But it was still judged that one shouldn't respond to the situation by accepting irreducibly modal notions; that is, not until Lewis and Stalnaker came along, providing an extremely fruitful framework employing irreducibly modal notions.[2]) I think further examples can easily be provided. But of course, every example one might be tempted to give will be somewhat controversial, for friends of the philosophical approach in question will be tempted to say that the development is more directly argument-driven than I give it credit for, and sometimes such a reply will be correct.

One sometimes hears the complaint that contemporary philosophy is too trend-driven. I am sure I have sometimes made snarky remarks to that effect myself. The above considerations can be seen as lending support to such complaints. One can take what I say in the previous paragraph to suggest that the developments I consider there are mere fads. But while there may be reason to be skeptical of some of the developments that fit the general template I describe, that's not what I take the main lesson to be. Instead, I think that it is because of a natural process that the kind of thing I describe often happens. And while this may not immediately constitute progress, a means to progress is to keep looking for where there is interesting research to be done and progress to be made. Some research programs popular at a given time can perhaps be dismissed as mere fads – and I certainly have some reservations concerning some currently popular research programs – but it is easier confidently to make such assessments given proper hindsight.

What I have so far presented in this section was first presented, in all essentials, as a blog post at the *Philosopher's Eye* (a forum associated with Wiley-Blackwell's *Philosophy Compass*).[3] I will now add a few remarks, partly related to the reason I was invited to write the blog post and take part in the *Editor's Cut* workshop, as well as write this article for *Metaphilosophy* – my stint as editor of the *Philosophical Review*. The piece – which didn't seem very controversial to me – attracted some critical attention in the blogosphere. One upset blogger claimed that it was – and what follows is a near quote – a self-serving exercise of naked power.[4] I suppose this is because I, while being editor of one of the main journals, defended trends in philosophy. I don't really know what to say about this. If I subscribed to one of the research programs presented, there could be substance to the charge, but I don't, as can easily be verified from my research record. Similarly, if *Philosophical Review* was the house organ of these or other specific trendy research programs, I could see some substance to the charge; but I really don't this assumption could be substantiated. (In fact, if anything, I think *Philosophical Review* has a reputation for being rather conservative. I am not sure this is correct either, but that is a discussion for another day.)

More seriously, the same blogger held that when speaking about research programs in philosophy the way I do, I subscribe to a very debatable piece of ideology - a picture of how philosophy is done that derives from the logical positivists. It comports with their attempted assimilation of philosophy with science. However, I have a different understanding of what is going on. It has less to do with ideology and competing visions for philosophy than with professional pressures. It is both (a) easier to produce something that has significant added value to a fruitful research program than it is to produce

something good for which the parameters are less well-defined, and (b) easier for readers – think editors and referees – to confidently render a positive assessment of the value of something that operates within the parameters of an established research program than it is for something that itself attempts to set the parameters. In making these remarks, I only mean to describe a natural process. Of course it is an editor's or referee's duty to try to arrive at a fair evaluations of things that may not be so easy to evaluate.

Certainly analytic philosophy could it some sense work differently. But for it not to work in the way I have outlined, relatively entrenched structural facts about how the profession works would have to be different.

One way it could work differently is that the profession could put less emphasis on someone's publication record; that would counteract the features I have been talking about and provide room for the brilliant genius who may not succeed in publishing very much but whose work in the grand scheme possesses more greatness. But even if things in some sense could work differently here, I don't think that this on balance would be for the good. Emphasis on publication in peer-reviewed venues provides for a democratization of the subject. If one deemphasized this, then pedigree and the good word of respected people would matter more than they do today. There would be fewer external checks on the status hierarchy. The playing field would be less level.

2. Trends and intuitions

Let me now turn to a slightly different issue. Recently, the reliance on intuition in analytic philosophy has come under attack. One prominent line of attack is due to the work of experimental philosophers, who have conducted empirical studies that appear to

show that there is widespread and systematic variability in people's intuitions, including about cases where the philosophical literature would suggest a certain consensus.[5]

Here is Jonathan Weinberg, one of the leading experimental philosophers:

Even restricting the subject pool to analytic philosophers, I suspect there is overall less agreement than standard philosophical practice presupposes, because having the 'right' intuitions is the entry ticket to various subareas of philosophy. Since I've started presenting on this sort of material, a number of philosophers (whose names I will omit here, for their professional safety) have confessed to me of various paradigm intuitions that they simply have not shared; one of the projects that my research group hopes to pursue is a systematic survey of the intuitions of professional philosophers. (My current unscientific estimation here is that twin-earth reference cases and Kripkean cases of necessary constitution are particularly suspect.) (2007, 337)

But it is not only experimental philosophers who give voice to skepticism about intuition. Similar skepticism is voiced also in, for example, Kris McDaniel (forthcoming):

There is a strange feature of contemporary philosophical discourse and practice, one that is especially prominent in metaphysics. Contemporary philosophical inquiry is by and large driven by intuitions, and moreover (and obviously so) by the intuitions of those privy to the current conversation. Perhaps these intuitions are converging on the truth, but one can't help but worry, at least a little, that we live in a degenerate age in

which the intuitions of the select few are either on non-convergent trajectories or are converging towards the False.

However, it should be noted that McDaniel is cautious. He notes the worry about intuitions but does not explicitly endorse it.

Both Weinberg and McDaniel suggest, albeit in slightly different ways, that there being, at a particular time, some intuitions that are the accepted ones concerning a given topic is only a sociological or historical accident and does not suggest that those intuitions are or confer objective justification. Incidentally, both Weinberg and McDaniel emphasize a point that links this discussion to the previous one. There seem to be fashions in what intuitions are accepted or taken seriously by the philosophical community at a given time.

The criticism of intuition raises many important issues, and I can only touch on a few here. One thing I will not properly discuss at all is how much faith to put in the empirical studies conducted by experimental philosophers. For the sake of the present discussion, I will assume that we can take the results of these studies at face value.[6] I will also assume that contrary to the so-called 'expertise defense' one cannot simply deflect the results of these studies by appeal to how we philosophers, with our expertise, do not exhibit the same variability in intuitions.[7]

The main question raised by these studies concerns to what extent we can reasonably take intuitions as evidence. A prior question concerns the extent to which intuitions are actually taken as evidence in philosophy. It is common to take intuitions to be so taken – and it is also this that underlies experimental philosophers' concern with intuitions as

evidence – but the matter is not altogether clearcut. Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009) have recently argued at length that intuitions are not in fact used as evidence, but are instead just *inclinations to believe*. And in his (2010) online review of Ladyman & Ross (2007), Cian Dorr says,

> Often, saying 'Intuitively, P' is no more than a device for committing oneself to P while signaling that one is not going to provide any further arguments for this claim. In this use, 'intuitively …' is more or less interchangeable with 'it seems to me that…'. There is a pure and chilly way of writing philosophy in which premises and conclusions are baldly asserted. But it's hard to write like this without seeming to bully one's readers; one can make things a bit gentler and more human by occasionally inserting qualifiers like 'it seems that'. It would be absurd to accuse someone who frequently gave in to this stylistic temptation of following a bankrupt methodology that presupposes the erroneous claim that things generally are as they seem.

(In part I of his recent 2012, Herman Cappelen makes similar points.) Dorr's point is in the first instance only about style: often when philosophers talk and write as though they write about a special source of evidence, intuition, that is just a stylistic quirk. Even if Dorr is correct about this, it can still be true that philosophers make central use of intuition; it is just that what can seem as explicit announcements to that effect are misleading. And I would be skeptical of the general thesis that philosophers never make use of anything properly called intuition. The philosophical literature is full of arguments

where a scenario is considered and a judgment about what to say about that scenario plays a key role in the argument. This is a special kind of methodology. I see nothing unreasonable in questioning it, even if in the end it can be defended. And especially given entrenched use, I see nothing wrong in describing the methodology as one that involves reliance on intuition. The label 'intuition' may of course in some ways be unfortunate, in that it can seem to suggest use of a special cognitive faculty. But the important point is that there is a rather distinctive way of supporting philosophical claims, raising legitimate questions about reliability, and these questions cannot be dismissed by appeal to how talk of intuitions sometimes just is a matter of style. Dorr's claim, that philosophers sometimes speak of intuitions and seemings as a mere stylistic quirk, and that such talk then has no real significance as to how the philosophers really argue, does not immediately speak to that point.

In the remainder of the section, I will discuss what the role of intuition is. (Or what the role is of one of the kinds of things that fall under the heading of intuition. Lots of rather different things are discussed under this heading.[8]) If intuition has the kind of role I will go on suggest, that provides the basis for a reply to the worries given voice to by Weinberg and by McDaniel. (Again to stress, I want to remind the reader that I am writing this assuming for argument's sake that the damning studies of intuition due to experimental philosophers are correct, and am only concerned with whether even so ordinary philosophical practice can be defended.)

Perhaps, when considering the role of intuitions – or of some of the things that fall under the heading of 'intuition' – we do well to compare *hunches*, and to think about similarities between intuitions and hunches. Maybe different people have all sorts of

different hunches, and there is variation even in the hunches of professional philosophers. But what distinguishes successful philosophers is that they have a sense of which hunches are the theoretically fruitful ones, the ones that, if we take them seriously, will spawn attractive theories or fruitful research programs. One can allow that such hunches have value even while being quite dismissive of the evidential value of individual hunches. (I wouldn't pretend to know anything about the creative process in literature or the arts. But I find it natural to imagine that even the greatest authors have lots of very bad plot ideas; but one thing that distinguishes them from lesser authors is that they have a more keen sense of what ideas are workable.)

The suggestion is not that intuitions are in every way like hunches. Hunches are fleeting, and easily modified. But the way philosophers like to think of intuitions is that intuitions have a certain persistence to them. For example, even when one is convinced that the naïve comprehension axiom is false, the intuition – the intellectual seeming – that it should come out true can persist.[9] However, even if there really is this difference between intuitions and hunches, the above points apply. Moreover, one thing experimental philosophers have sought to show is that intuitions are less constant over time than the common view would have it. If they are right, then intuitions are even more like hunches than I am concerned to suggest here.

Here, then, is a possible partial reply to the worries about intuition. Let me focus on Weinberg. Weinberg, having called attention to the unreliability of intuitions, speculates that many professional philosophers do not share the intuitions that guide the leading theories in the literature. The clear implication is that there is an unfairness here. Someone who actually were to rely on the 'wrong' intuitions would not be successful in

the field, and there need be no objective justification for this; rather, the unsuccessfulness could be due solely to the whims of the philosophical community. But a more optimistic view is that even if there is this variety in intuitions, the intuitions that have gained acceptance have done so because they have given rise to successful, attractive theories. If no successful research program could be built on the Twin Earth intuitions, then things would have stood differently.[10]

3. Ever tried philosophizing?

Of course, the response tentatively presented in the last section to the concern over intuitions is modest, and works only given the truth of important underlying assumptions It relies on there being other means to evaluate theories, and on these other means – whatever exactly they are –not being such as to make appeal to intuitions be an idly turning wheel. If there aren't other means to evaluate theories, all we are left with are what the response (at least for argument's sake) concedes to have the status of mere hunches, and if these other means play a too central role, what results is a rather deflationary view on the use of intuitions.

Here is a different, considerably less defensive reaction to attacks on intuition.

There is a well-known story from the shooting of *The Marathon Man*, with Dustin Hoffman and Laurence Olivier. Hoffman, a method actor, had stayed up all night in order to play a character who has stayed up all night. When Laurence Olivier was told by Hoffman what Hoffman had done, Olivier replied "Why not try acting?". There is apparently some doubt as to the veracity of this story. However, I sometimes feel the urge to respond to certain things going on in philosophy in a way echoing what Olivier

supposedly said: *why not try philosophizing?* One reaction I have to the criticism of

intuition due to experimental philosophers is a case in point. John Wisdom characterized

philosophy as a process of comparison, and as employing fundamental operators "you

might as well say…", "exactly so", and "but this is different" (Bambrough 1974, 291).

The point being that while there is a reliance on judgment about cases – intuitions – it

isn't a matter of mentally gazing at one's responses to individual cases but rather a matter

of comparisons. The actual practice of philosophizing is a matter of comparison with

other cases: of making judgments like "but if you say this about that case, you might as

well say….". One's first responses to individual cases function only as starting points.

The verdicts one eventually renders is dependent on this process of comparisons. To just

ask about responses to individual cases is to leave out the philosophizing. What goes on

when one performs the comparisons Wisdom points to is that one attends to features of

the examples concerned – similarities and differences between different examples – that

one earlier may not have noticed.[11]

Take one illustrative example. Suppose we polled some group of people on whether

they held that one survives teletransportation. I guess one would find considerable variety

in the responses. But suppose after this one asks people to consider whether one survives

teletransportation in the branching case, where there are several psychological continuers

of one after the process. Bringing up this case shakes the confidence of those who first

intuited that one survives teletransportation, and reasonably so. If one believes we don't

survive teletransportation, one needn't and doesn't simply accept without further ado the

point that some people have conflicting intuitions. One can bring up related cases, like the

branching case, and thus call attention to facts relevant to the original case that one

supposes one's opponents to have overlooked. (My own view on the matter happens to be that one does survive ordinary, non-branching teletransportation. Relevant here is that also those relations of physical continuity that can reasonably be held to be what are, in the ordinary run of tings, necessary and sufficient for personal identity allow for branching. But these complications don't affect the methodological point I seek to make, which has to do with it being a rational and reasonable move to make to turn to consider other cases.)

Worries about experimental philosophy similar to the one I just brought up have been presented before (e.g. Kauppinen (2007)), and those defending experimental philosophy have responded to them. One example is Nadelhoffer and Nahmias (2007). But the responses they provide fail to convince. One response is that due to differences in starting points, philosophers may well end up holding different views even after a process of reflection. This is true, but as stated amounts to little more than a bare skeptical worry about how far rational discourse can take us. This brings me to a second response found in Nadelhoffer and Nahmias, that empirical studies can be performed which back up this speculation.

> According to this…approach…we should set up controlled and systematic experiments in order to find out what people's reflective intuitions, judgments, and beliefs about a given topic really are. By having the conversations in a controlled environment, we could then code, compare, and analyze participants' answers in a rigorous and systematic manner that is less subject to the problems [Kauppinen associates with experimental philosophy as practiced].… As more studies are run and

more data are collected, meta-analyses could eventually be run to see what patterns emerge both within and between large and diverse populations. (2007, 131)[12]

Maybe some useful data could be obtained by studies like these. But just to point to one problem: going by what is going on in actual conversations, as Nadelhoffer and Nahmias suggest, seems to model poorly what we can call – and I am afraid the label I will use is annoyingly pompous – the *grand conversation* of philosophy, which is a conversation only in the sense that the philosopher today writing about and criticizing Aristotle's ideas can be said to have a 'conversation' with Aristotle. There is lots of social dynamics interfering with the rationality of real-time conversations, and while there of course *may* be similar interference with rationality in the grand conversation, it is by no means Panglossian to be more optimistic about the grand conversation. X's charisma, or X's stern demeanor, may make me very likely to accept X's views and argument for non-rational reasons at the end of a conversation with X; it is less likely to interfere with my rational evaluation of X's view if I mull over these views and arguments for years and have discussions in person and by email with many different persons. While saying that nothing experimental philosophers do can help shed light on, or help cast doubt on, the rationality of the grand conversation might be an exaggeration, what Nadelhoffer and Nahmias gesture at is clearly inadequate and it is hard to see what could do appreciably better.[13]

That the findings of experimental philosophers fail to cast doubt on the actual philosophical practice of relying on intuitions of course does not immediately mean that this practice is in good standing. There are other sorts of doubts. One can wonder how we

can have knowledge at all concerning some of the things philosophers study. There are reasonable empiricist doubts about any method of investigation that seems to be in the business of rendering substantive a priori verdicts. But currently popular doubts drawing on experimental philosophy do not seem to me to add to whatever case for skepticism can be built there.

4. Core and periphery

I have discussed trends in philosophy, and I have discussed intuitions in philosophy. Let me now turn to a third topic, somewhat related to that of trends. It is common in contemporary philosophy to distinguish between *core* and *periphery* – where the core is contemporary metaphysics and epistemology and related areas, like philosophy of language and philosophy of mind – and to take the core to be more central (as reflected in the terminology of 'core' and 'periphery'). In a widely discussed article, Kitcher (2011) argues that core areas are overvalued, and periphery, for example practical parts of ethics, undervalued. The picture is complicated by the fact that he also thinks the periphery areas should be approached in a different way from that in which they are approached currently. But more on that later.

Kitcher's article starts off by comparing work in core areas to *scale exercises*: it is about as interesting to outsiders, and appreciated in the profession only because of the technical skills one must display when engaging in it. This parody invites the question: on what is the appreciation of the core areas actually based? For certainly there is something to Kitcher's underlying assumption that work in the core areas is more valued in some ways than work in periphery areas is.

One thought might be that work in core areas is considered more significant because the questions discussed are simply more important. But insofar as that thought is around, it does not withstand even minimal scrutiny. *Surely* some questions of ethics are at least as important as questions about the semantics of the conditional. Another thought might be that work in core areas requires more skill. This is an idea Kitcher picks up on in his comparison with scale exercises. I think it would be hard to properly evaluate how much truth there is in that thought; but I'd be skeptical of it. A third thought might be that better philosophy is and has been done in the core areas, and more progress has been made there. This again is hard to evaluate. Arguably, more widely celebrated, and emulated, work has been done in the core areas, but someone like Kitcher might well hold that this just reflects how the core areas have been more valued. A fourth thought, one I myself would put more stock in, is that knowledge of the so-called core areas is more important for doing work in so-called periphery areas than vice versa. If this is the relation between "core" and "periphery", that would justify the labels core and periphery without any more general value judgments of the quality and general significance of work in these areas being implied. I can believe there is truth to the fourth thought while thinking that no philosophical questions are more important than those discussed in ethics.

When Kitcher criticizes the core/periphery picture he talks about how philosophy arises as a response to real-life experience. He quotes Dewey to the effect that philosophy must not be a matter of "sentimental indulgence from the few" (Kitcher 2011, 250; quoted from Dewey 1916/1997, 328). But it should be obvious that one can agree with Kitcher on this while defending the core/periphery distinction in the way just outlined.

When talking about how philosophy arises from real-life problems, Kitcher also criticizes the development of technical language in philosophy. Kitcher's points are separate. One can emphasize that philosophy arises from real-life problems even while allowing that when we try to tackle these problems theoretically, we can and should develop technical languages for the purposes of the inquiries we are engaged in. But in Kitcher's discussion these matters end up being treated together. To establish the point about technical language, Kitcher discusses how technical language is used in the natural sciences and then unfavorably compares philosophy. It is worth quoting what he says when criticizing the use of technical language in philosophy:

> To the extent that the technical issues that fill Anglophone journals result in any comprehensible way from questions of large significance, they do not seem to have reached the stage at which firm answers might be found. Any defense of the idea that philosophy, like particle physics and molecular biology, proceeds by the accumulation of reliable answers to technical questions would have to provide examples of consensus on which larger agreements are built. Yet, as the philosophical questions diminish in size, disagreement and controversy persist, new distinctions are drawn, and yet tinier issues are generated. Decomposition continues downwards, until the interested community becomes too exhausted, too small, or too tired to play the game any further. (2011, 251)

The idea must be that in the natural sciences the use of technical language is justified because these sciences come up with firm answers. By contrast, Kitcher seems to say,

philosophy doesn't make progress. But how exactly is this related to use of technical language? The point would be relevant if philosophy makes progress sometimes, but not when it employs technical language. But Kitcher's pessimism seems general. He seems to think philosophy simply doesn't come up with reliable answers. But then why does it matter what sort of language philosophy employs? For that matter, what does it matter which problems it deals with, important or unimportant, if it anyway does not make progress on them?

In the last paragraph, I did not properly distinguish between the claim that philosophy does not come up with answers to the questions it deals with and the claim that philosophy does not make progress. One can think philosophy makes progress in some other way than by coming up with answers to the questions it discusses. It can make important distinctions, or replace old questions with better questions, or…. But however it may be with that, appeal to the possibility that progress can be made without one's finding answers is still of no help to Kitcher. For his charge against core areas is that answers are not found. If progress can be made in other ways, then the core areas can, for all Kitcher says, make progress in those ways. Kitcher even suggests himself that philosophy can be a handmaiden to other disciplines. He says philosophy can "aspire" to frame new "conceptions that can assist existing disciplines" and even "initiate new modes of inquiry" (2011, 251). But if that can constitute success, why cannot the core areas achieve success even if answers cannot be found there?

What is more, I wonder whether philosophy isn't better at finding answers than some critics give it credit for. Philosophy doesn't seem very successful in arriving at categorical answers, about religion or free will or ethics or knowledge or language, but

maybe philosophy still can be and has been successful in finding answers conditional in form: answers of the form *if one assumes this, that and the other, then one should also accept such-and-such*. We might not know be much closer to an answer to the question of whether we have free will, whether in the libertarian's sense or in the compatibilist's sense, but we may for all that be appreciably closer to arriving at a generally accepted answer to the question of what form the best libertarian view should take or the form the best compatibilist view should take. Or, to relate to problems I personally have taken more interest in, we may not have generally accepted solutions to the liar and sorites paradoxes, but we have a considerably better sense of what exactly the commitments are of various theories – and this is not only a matter of us having figured out what follows deductively from the starting points.

Incidentally, the point about philosophy coming up with answers conditional in form can also answer a question David Lewis asked in his (1989). Lewis wondered why, in academic appointments – though his concern, as illustrated by the examples, was specifically with philosophical appointments – we are so little concened with whether the appointee holds true views. For example, we can be confirmed materialists and happily decide to hire a dualist. Lewis's answer was essentially decision-theoretic. There is an implicit treaty of tolerance because, as Lewis puts it in another article, "each side prefers toleration to defeat more than it prefers victory to toleration" (1989a, 178). The materialists prefer coexistence with the dualists over dualist dominance more than they prefer materialist dominance over coexistence.

If philosophy's progress in large part comes by way of coming up with answers that are conditional in form, then it's not so clear that we don't care about the truth when

it comes to academic appointments. It's just that we care about conditional truths more than categorical ones for example when making hires, perhaps because there are more solid cases to be made in favor of conditional claims. Even as a materialist I can recognize that a dualist can be better at coming up with interesting and important truths than a given fellow materialist may be. The dualist can be especially insightful when it comes to what consequences various dualist and materalist theses have.

5. Conclusion

I have discussed trends in philosophy, the reliance on intuitions, and the core-periphery distinction. In each case I have in effect defended a kind of orthodoxy against challenges. Needless to say, there are many other good foundational questions about philosophical methodology and claims to philosophical knowledge; questions which have not even been touched upon here. As earlier mentioned, I myself have some sympathy with traditional empiricist worries. But that is a different matter.

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[1] This is not to say that there are not doctrinal differences between Kuhn and the logical positivists, or even genuine conflicts. There were reasons for why the positivists focused on what they focused on, and there were reasons for why Kuhn focused on what he focused on.

[2] Irreducibly? Is not Lewis's modal realism reductive? In response: Even if Lewis's modal realism reduces modality talk to talk of Lewisian worlds, the theory of counterfactuals Lewis proposed also makes crucial use of a metric on this space of worlds, and no reductive account of that is in the offing. Besides, many more theorists

have accepted Lewis's modal theory of counterfactuals than have accepted his reductive theory of modality.

[3] http://philosophy-compass.com/2011/11/22/the-future-of-philosophy-trends-in-philosophy%E2%80%A8-by-matti-eklund/

[4] The blogger is Eric Schliesser and the blog post is here:
http://www.newappsblog.com/2011/11/the-future-of-philosophy-as-seen-from-mt-olympus.html.

[5] See e.g. the central articles Weinberg et al. (2001) and Mallon et al. (2009).

[6] For arguments that we cannot take the results of (some of) these studies at face value, see e.g. Cullen (2010), Kauppinen (2007) and Martí (2009).

[7] For the expertise defense, see Williamson (2011); for criticism, see Machery (2011) and Alexander et al (2010). Some of my remarks below will relate to the expertise defense; see also my (forthcoming).

[8] For further discussion of this, see my (forthcoming).

[9] Compare George Bealer (1998, 271) on intuitions to the effect that the naïve truth schema and naïve comprehension hold.

[10] A different concern about Weinberg's worry is that it relies on a false presupposition. As Williamson (2011, 228) remarks, "a powerful challenge to orthodoxy brings rich professional rewards in philosophy".

[11] Wisdom's own philosophical practice, as exemplified for example in Wisdom (1952), takes this methodology to the extreme. But the general description of philosophy is widely applicable.

[12] In connection with this, Nadelhoffer and Nahmias refer (2007, fn27) to a study of this

kind performed by students at Florida State. The students ran a pilot study that "involved presenting participants with various cases about intentional action and allowing them to discuss and debate the cases among themselves. At the end of the study they took further surveys to examine how the students' views changed (or did not change)".

[13] This relates to the expertise defense (fn 7). Both friends and foes of this defense assume that philosophical expertise makes one better at *intuiting* – at rendering initial judgments about the cases in question. But maybe where expertise really makes a difference is in, well, the philosophizing. The experts are better at the process of comparison – going through reasoning of the kind "…but if I say *that* about *this* case what will I then have to say about….".