# On the Stakes of Experimental Philosophy

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RESUMEN

Tanto prominentes críticos como defensores de la filosofía experimental (X-Phi), han ligado su importancia filosófica al significado filosofico de la intuición. En este ensayo, desarrollo una interpretación de la X-Phi que no requiere una comprensión propulsada por la intuición de la filosofía tradicional y de los argumentos puestos en cuestión por sus resultados. De acuerdo con esta explicación, el papel de X-Phi es primariamente dialéctico. Su objetivo es el de comprobar la universalidad de las afirmaciones que sencillamente se da por sentado que son verdaderas, explorando los limites de nuestras suposiciones y mostrando cuando una proposición es más controvertida de lo que generalmente se cree.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *filosofía experimental, metodología filosófica, intuición, terreno común.*

ABSTRACT

Prominent critics and champions of Experimental Philosophy (X-Phi) alike have tied its philosophical significance to the philosophical significance of intuition. In this essay, I develop an interpretation of X-Phi which does not require an intuition-driven understanding of traditional philosophy and the arguments challenged by results in X-Phi. X-Phi's role on this account is primarily dialectical. Its aim is to test the universality of claims which are merely assumed to be true, exploring the limits of our assumptions and showing when a proposition is more controversial than is widely believed.

KEYWORDS: *Experimental Philosophy, Philosophical Methodology, Intuition, Common Ground.*

## I. X-PHI AND ITS CRITICS

A central point of dispute in debates over the philosophical significance of experimental philosophy (X-Phi) is the solution to what Deutsch calls the 'evidence-for-the-evidence' problem [Deutsch, (2015)]. This problem arises most acutely in the use of thought experiments. For example, one piece of evidence against the justified true belief account of knowledge is that Gettier cases are possible; that is, there are possible

situations where a person possesses justified true belief but not knowledge. In his famous paper, Gettier describes two such cases, noting that it is "clear" that these are instances of non-knowledge [Gettier, (1963)]. Yet, what is our evidence that these are, in fact, cases of justified true belief without knowledge?

One answer is that it is our *intuitions* which are the evidence; it is simply intuitively obvious that the Gettier cases are cases of non-knowledge. Alexander frames the traditional methods of philosophy in terms of their reliance on intuition:

> Philosophical intuitions play a significant role in contemporary philosophy. Philosophical intuitions provide data to be explained by our philosophical theories, evidence that must be adduced in arguments for their truth, and reasons that may be appealed to for believing them to be true. In this way, the role and corresponding epistemic status of intuitional evidence in philosophy is similar to the role and corresponding epistemic status of perceptual evidence in science. … Experimental philosophy grows out of this way of thinking about philosophy [Alexander, (2012), p. 11].

This way of thinking about traditional philosophy is identified in Mallon, Machery, Nichols and Stich [(2009)], as the 'Method of Cases'. Put into a general form (Mallon et al. state it specifically for the theory of reference), it states that 'the correct theory $T$ for topic $X$ is the one best supported by the intuitions of competent judges of $X$'. If this is a correct description of traditional method, then philosophers make wide use of intuitions in their work, and these intuitions are used directly as evidence for and against philosophical claims. X-Phi, then, is justified for straightforward reasons: if philosophy is using empirical premises about what is intuitive, then those empirical premises should be tested using our best available methods.[1] Indeed, Alexander ties the philosophical significance of X-Phi to this characterization of traditional methods in philosophy.

> Since experimental philosophy has emerged as a response to this way of thinking about philosophy, its philosophical significance depends, in no small part, on how philosophically significant the practice of appealing to intuitions is to philosophy. If it turned out that our intuitions weren't philosophically significant, then neither would be experimental philosophy - experimental philosophy would be left to occupy the unhappy position of taking seriously a way of thinking about philosophy not worthy of serious consideration in the first place [Alexander, (2010), p. 378].

The intuition-testing model of X-Phi informs two of the recent philosophical challenges to the project, those of Cappelen (2012) and Deutsch (2015). They claim that it is this construal of philosophical methodology which is, in Cappelen's language, X-Phi's "big mistake." Both sides of this debate agree that, *if* our intuitions are used as evidence, then they should be experimentally investigated. Cappelen and Deutsch, however, contend that the antecedent does not hold. Philosophers do not rely on intuition as evidence for their claims. Their diverging answers on the significance of intuition leads to diverging verdicts on the significance of experimental philosophy.

To make the case that philosophers do not rely upon intuition, Deutsch hearkens back to a distinction, first drawn in Lycan (1988), between an intuition as a content (the intuited) and an intuition as a psychological event (the intuiting). For example, when judging a Gettier case, I might have an intuition that the character Smith lacks knowledge. The content of this intuition is 'Smith lacks knowledge' and the psychological event is my having found this content intuitive.

X-Phi has erred, he argues, by confusing this distinction. It is contents which are evidence for philosophical theses, not the psychological events. While one might further argue that the psychological events are evidence for their contents, this is optional, as these contents might be defended in any number of ways. No such argument is found in the works containing these paradigmatic appeals to intuition, like those of Gettier and Kripke. Instead, Deutsch argues, when we actually look at the paradigmatic 'appeals to intuition,' we find that the crucial premises are supported by further arguments, and not by an appeal to our intuitions or judgments.

In this paper, I will argue that the philosophical significance of experimental philosophy does not depend upon our answer to the intuition question. Instead, experimental philosophy is best understood as a response to an observation about philosophical practice: even if we demand, in the long run, evidence for our evidence, we do not typically give it in practice. Experimental philosophy is the empirical investigation of the universality of our assumptions, and its role is to reveal limitations of those assumptions. Understanding it in this way recognizes the insights Cappelen and Deutsch offer about philosophical methodology, whilst still holding on to the value of the work that has been done, and is being done, in experimental philosophy. Indeed, as I will argue, the philosophical significance of experimental philosophy is best understood if we move away from an intuition-driven understanding of philosophical methodology.

Before continuing, it is worth briefly pausing on what I mean by 'X-Phi.' Deutsch limits his critique to 'negative X-Phi,' or the use of experimental tests on intuition to cast doubt on the project of using intuition. I will follow him here. The range of work that falls under the banner of 'experimental philosophy' is diverse, and no single account will capture the philosophical significance of the entire field. Intuitions may play different roles in different contexts, and the justification for testing them in one context may differ from another. Throughout this essay, when I talk of 'X-Phi,' it is to these negative uses of X-Phi that I refer.

## II. X-PHI AND THE COMMON GROUND

Aristotle famously identifies one of the central puzzles of epistemology and philosophical method. All arguments rest on premises, and these premises are in need of justification. To justify our premises, it seems we need to rely upon further arguments. Those arguments themselves, however, will require premises, and we quickly run the risk of an infinite regress or a circular justification. Are there premises upon which we can rely that do not themselves need an argument?

In practice, we can rarely ground all of our premises in a satisfactory way. Instead, we make use of the *common ground* [Stalnaker, (1999)]. The common ground is simply the set of premises that, in this particular context, all interlocutors agree to accept. This is not to say that these premises are true (or even believed), only that, in this context, they are granted.

A speaker, Stalnaker writes, "may presuppose any proposition that he finds it convenient to assume for the purposes of the conversation, provided he is prepared to assume that his audience assumes it along with him" [Stalnaker, (1999), p. 84]. That is, a common ground presumption carries with it two assumptions: (1) that it is true, and (2) that my audience will also be willing to assume it. For example, if I am exploring the consequences of an anticipated legal decision, I might assume that the legal decision will occur, and delve into its consequences, assuming that my audience will share my assumption. The latter assumption is what distinguishes the common ground from other, run-of-the-mill assumptions: it is not merely something that I hold to be true, but an assumption that I take all of my fellows to share.

In some conversational contexts, the 'audience' may be quite small; one may care only that the proposition is assumed by a limited set of people. For example, if I am helping a colleague check an argument's validity,

I might grant premises for the sake of argument without supposing that those premises are widely held. In that context, what matters is that the members of the conversation grant the premises. In most cases of philosophical inquiry, however, one cannot place premises in the common ground that could not be accepted by all parties to the debate. Otherwise, one runs the risk of begging the question. Premises in the common ground in philosophical contexts typically carry with them a presumption that the audience in question includes just about everyone.[2] After all, we typically take our work to have far-ranging, if not universal, import.

I propose, then, that we conceive of X-Phi as the empirical testing of the universality of propositions taken as belonging to the common ground. We, as philosophers, would be less likely to put a claim in the common ground if we knew that the claim was controversial, as we would not be able to assume that others share the assumption. Yet, it is hard to tell what is controversial and what is not unless one asks people. The simple and straightforward insight of experimental philosophy is that we *can actually go ask people*, or more precisely, the insight is that we can ask a wider and more diverse audience, and by so doing, examine the scope of a set of common ground premises. The role, then, of experimental philosophy is to explore the limits of our assumptions, rather than to challenge the intuitive evidence in their favor. This is a role that it can play regardless of how debates shake out about the evidential status of intuition.

On Deutsch's critique, X-Phi is based upon the following inferential structure:

1. Members of sample $S$ have the intuition that $p$.
2. Therefore, $p$.
3. Because $p$, philosophical hypothesis $H$ is confirmed/disconfirmed.

For example, we might put Kripkean arguments in this structure:

1. English speakers have the intuition that "Gödel" refers to Gödel, not Schmidt, in the described scenario.
2. Therefore, "Gödel" refers to Gödel, not Schmidt, in the described scenario.
3. Because "Gödel" refers to Gödel, not Schmidt, in the described scenario, descriptivism is disconfirmed.

The mistake, according to Deutsch, is the inference from (1) to (2). Philosophical arguments, as a matter of fact, do not proceed from the fact that people have an intuition. As such, experimental testing of premise (1) does not bear on the philosophical arguments in question.

Indeed, I agree with Deutsch. We need not assume that philosophers are appealing to intuition. Instead, the critical question is Aristotle's question - where does premise 2 come from? In an epistemically ideal situation, perhaps all of our arguments would be rooted in foundational premises. In practice, however, premise 2 is often an assumption, hopefully one that is not contentious. We can put X-Phi's role in terms of this argument structure as:

2. $p$ (common ground)

3. Because $p$, philosophical hypothesis $H$ is confirmed/disconfirmed.

X-Phi is the empirical exploration of whether $p$ really does belong to the common ground.[3] Notice that the structure is *not* based on an inference from the universality of $p$ to the truth of $p$. Instead, the universality is a feature of a proposition that licenses the second part of Stalnaker's formulation of the common ground - the assumption that others will also assume the premise. Finding that a proposition is or is not universally accepted should make us more or less likely to make that additional assumption.

This is a *dialectical* rather than *epistemic* reading of X-Phi. That is, X-Phi is typically cast as an exploration of the evidence for philosophical theses, that is, people's intuitions. On my proposal, X-Phi is centrally interested in providing us reasons for or against *dialectical warrant*. By 'dialectical warrant' I mean that the widespread acceptance of the proposition does not provide reason to believe the premise is true, rather the acceptance provides reason to treat the proposition as part of the common ground. If a study finds that people's judgments about knowledge line up across culture, across class, across gender, etc., then I have dialectical warrant to take the content of that judgment as part of the common ground, because I am justified in believing that others will assume it with me. If a study finds the contrary, and finds, say, cross-cultural variability in the intuition, then I am not justified in believing the assumption will be shared. In neither case does the widespread agreement, or lack thereof, provide me reason for or against the truth of the proposition.

The psychological property of intuitiveness does have a role to play in the common grounds interpretation. A content that is intuitive is a con-

tent that seems true. That a proposition is intuitive is often taken as reason to think that it is non-controversial and widely accepted. Such a proposition would be plausibly placed in the common ground, as a proposition that all interlocutors can accept as true. More precisely, the connection between intuitiveness and the common-ground is two-staged. First, intuitiveness is used to license the inference to widespread acceptance. Second, widespread acceptance, in turn, provides dialectical warrant for taking a premise to be in the common ground.

The X-Phi critique can be read as making two distinct points. First, intuitiveness (to me, and/or to my colleagues) does not provide sufficient warrant to believe that the intuited proposition is believed by most people. This is hardly surprising as a general principle, but can be surprising in particular cases. After all, if we have to start somewhere, it is natural to start with the propositions that seem obviously true. Rejecting this inference blocks the first stage in the two-stage model described above.

Our fundamental premises are granted as part of the common ground, and this status is based on their presumed universality. X-Phi's second central point is that, if a proposition is shown to be disputed, then it cannot serve as part of the common ground. In this way, the experimental philosopher can grant Deutsch's point: intuitiveness does not play a role in philosophical arguments. At the same time, she has ample grounds to defend the experimental project. It matters whether our fundamental premises really are in the common ground, and experimental philosophy is in the business of exploring what does and does not belong in it.

Put simply, in most argumentative contexts, we have to start with premises that themselves are not supported by an argument. Experimental philosophy is the project of exploring which premises turn out to be more controversial than we think. Its role is dialectical in the sense that it is not concerned with the ultimate justification for our philosophical claims, but rather, it is concerned with the premises we treat as foundational in particular argumentative contexts. Intuitiveness plays a small role in this debate because intuitive propositions are often assumed to be universal, but the central project of experimental philosophy in no way depends upon it.

This conception of experimental philosophy has two important advantages over the evidential-intuition understanding. First, we need not adopt a controversial reading of philosophical methodology in order to make sense of the contributions of experimental philosophy. Deutsch and Cappelen, among others [see also Williamson (2008)], see X-Phi as being

based on a mis-reading of philosophical methodology. The common grounds approach is consistent with this claim; the defender of X-Phi can concede that philosophers do not regularly rely on intuition. That is, even if Deutsch and Cappelen are right about philosophical methodology, we can deny the problematic consequences for X-Phi.

Deutsch's central objection, as noted above, is that X-Phi concerns itself with intuitings (psychological occurrences), while philosophical arguments are concerned with intuiteds (the contents of those occurrences). Testing intuitings, Deutsch argues, is irrelevant to the truth of the intuiteds, which are themselves supported by arguments, not intuitings. On my proposal, X-Phi's value is not tied up in the testing of intuitings. Instead, as Deutsch urges, it does explore intuiteds, namely, whether the conditions obtain which merit treating them as shared assumptions. As in Deutsch's view, intuiteds are the central evidence for philosophical investigation, and intuitings are not used as evidence for them.

For this same reason, the proposed interpretation is also neutral with regards to on-going debates about the evidential value of intuition. I do not deny that there are cases where intuitions can be, and are, used as evidence. Whether an intuition counts as evidence for a particular proposition will depend upon the theoretical context in which that proposition is embedded. What counts, and what does not count, as evidence is not decided in advance of theorizing. The advantage of this account is that it can remain above the fray. X-Phi will be valuable whether or not we determine that intuitions count as evidence in any particular domain.

Second, and most importantly, it draws our attention to whether the presumptions of our theorizing are justifiable starting points. Absent the Cartesian dream of a deductive entailment from self-evident first principle(s), we are bound to start from starting positions that admit of doubt. The goal, however, is to avoid question-begging assumptions, or assumptions that rule out opposing arguments *tout court*. Indeed, work by experimental philosophers has found ways in which judgments about philosophical thought experiments diverge across culture [J. Weinberg, Nichols, & Stich, (2001), Machery, Mallon, Nichols, & Stich (2004)], socio-economic class [J. Weinberg et al., (2001)], and gender [Buckwalter & Stich, (2014)].[4] It is difficult for a single individual to tell whether her premises are acceptable starting points, or are culturally local artifacts. X-Phi reminds us of this limitation, and offers a tool to correct it.

On this reading, X-Phi is an exercise in epistemic humility about the universality of our suppositions. One reason that a premise may seem obviously true to me, and perhaps even to my fellows, is that it is actually

true. Alternatively, however, it may be that the belief in the premise results from enculturation or other social factors. X-Phi is a tool to help us avoid the latter, in much the same way that standard practices of discussion with colleagues helps us to understand the dialectical context of an argument, and what may and may not be assumed in that context. What it offers us is a particularly effective set of tools for challenging assumptions that might be dominant within the discipline due to irrelevant factors.

In his defense of extending moral consideration to non-human animals, Peter Singer writes:

> Philosophy ought to question the basic assumptions of the age. Thinking through, critically and carefully, what most people take for granted is, I believe, the chief task of philosophy, and it is this task that makes philosophy a worthwhile activity. Regrettably, philosophy does not always live up to its historic role. Aristotle's defense of slavery will always stand as a reminder that philosophers are human beings and they are subject to all the preconceptions of the society to which they belong. Sometimes they succeed in breaking free of the prevailing ideology: more often they become its most sophisticated defenders [Singer, (2002), p. 236].

Though Singer did not intend it as such, this turns out to be an eloquent defense of X-Phi. Given the reality that ongoing work in philosophy cannot be supported by arguments all the way down (at least in practice), we have to make assumptions. Yet, once we start making assumptions we run the risk of importing the preconceptions of our society, as such preconceptions rarely come pre-labeled as cultural artifacts. X-Phi speaks to Singer's "chief task of philosophy," for it provides a tool for philosophers to check their assumptions, and so, to be more critical of status quo.[5]

## III. OBJECTIONS

Finally, I will defend this proposal by considering four objections against it. First, one might argue that this reliance on assumption is an uncharitable reading of philosophical method. Second, this proposal sits at odds with how experimental philosophers describe their work, and so perhaps it cannot be used to preserve X-Phi as its practitioners see it. Third, one might also contend that universality is indeed evidence for truth, and so finding evidence for or against it does bear directly on the truth of the relevant propositions, not just their dialectical role. Finally,

as Deutsch and Cappelen argue, there are arguments for the crucial premises in these arguments, and they are perhaps not assumptions at all. Their objections against X-Phi could cut against my proposal as well, which applies when arguments run out.

Let's begin with the charity objection. While the intuition account may face hurdles and require further specification, it at least characterizes philosophers as providing evidence for their claims. On the common ground interpretation, we have to assume that philosophers are simply making assumptions in the course of their work, including about crucial premises. It is more charitable, one might contend, to attribute arguments (warts and all) than to attribute bare assumptions.

It is hardly clear that attributing a problematic argument is more charitable than attributing no argument, but more importantly, reading our arguments as being based on assumptions is an honest take on what philosophers are doing. As philosophical questions become increasingly specialized, it becomes imperative to make some assumptions in order to get a project off the ground. The common grounds interpretation reads that use of assumptions as being more thoughtful than an uncritical use of assumptions. Putting a claim in the common ground is not making a bare assumption, but rather, it requires that one consider the acceptability of that claim to one's audience.

Second, one might object that this account does not square with the writings of experimental philosophers themselves, who often frame their work in terms of intuition. This approach, however, is consistent with the work that experimental philosophers do, even if it is not consistent with their framing of it. According to the "negative" or "restrictionist" program in X-Phi, testing intuitions shows the limitations of the use of intuitions in arguments [see, for example, J. M. Weinberg (2007), and chapter four of Alexander (2012)]. While these arguments are framed in terms of the viability of an intuition-driven epistemology, they can easily be recast in terms of the common grounds interpretation. Instead of challenging the arguments because they rely on intuitions which vary on truth-irrelevant grounds, instead, they challenge arguments because they rely upon premises that we ought not take into the common ground. In each case, the experimental work targets the same crucial premise, finds variability in judgments about that premise, and so raises challenges for arguments based upon it. The common grounds interpretation preserves the important results already generated in the field even as it denies the intuition-based construal of philosophical methodology.

Third, even if the propositions in question are assumed as part of

the common ground, perhaps X-Phi still plays an evidential role, rather than a dialectical one. If, for example, the fact that a proposition is widely believed to be true is evidence that the proposition is true (even if not decisive evidence), then X-Phi might be offering the argument to support a proposition that was earlier only assumed. This may indeed be true in some domains. The position developed here does not rule out the possibility that there are some questions for which our intuitions could serve as evidence. Nevertheless, we should not apply this approach broadly, and without an argument for why consensus is an indicator of reliability in any particular domain.

While consensus can be an indicator of knowledge, it only does so under certain conditions. Bare consensus that p will not suffice to give warrant that $p$. Miller argues that there are three independent conditions on consensus as an indicator of knowledge: (1) all participants agree on the same evidential standards, (2) that the consensus is based upon differing lines of evidence which converge on the consensus claim, and (3) that the consensus is socially diverse [Miller, (2013)]. If Miller's conditions are right, the traditional methods of experimental philosophy can only speak to the third (and perhaps the first, namely, people's beliefs about their evidential standards) of these conditions. The crucial point is this: consensus cannot automatically be taken as an indicator of reliability, or as evidence for a claim. In each case, an argument is owed to show that this consensus meets the appropriate conditions (whether they are Miller's conditions, or some other analysis). This objection cannot be used as a general defense of the evidential role of X-Phi, unless X-Phi is supplemented by these additional lines of argument.

Finally, one might also argue that philosophers offer arguments for the judgments elicited by thought experiments, and that taking them to be bare assumptions oversimplifies these arguments. Deutsch uses Gettier's (1963) famous paper as a test case, as it is one of the most commonly cited examples of an intuition-driven argument in philosophy. In Gettier's cases, an individual has a justified true belief that $p$, but does not know that $p$. Let us take $G$ to be the proposition: 'In the case where …, Smith has a justified true belief that $p$ but does not know that $p$' (where the details of the scenario are fully specified). Deutsch contends that $G$ is not established via intuition, but rather an argument. That argument is of the form:

1. In the case where …, Smith has a justified true belief, but is in a case of epistemic luck.

    2. Cases of epistemic luck are not knowledge.

    3. Therefore, *G*.

Given that an argument is offered, it would be inaccurate to read Gettier as relying upon intuition. Even if the judgment is intuitive, the intuitiveness does not do the work. Similarly, perhaps I am oversimplifying by taking *G* as a part of the common ground.

    If Deutsch is right that Gettier is offering an argument of this form, then, to use Deutsch's terminology, the common ground assumption is simply relocated. Premise (2), rather than *G*, is part of the common ground. In this case, Deutsch would be right that current X-Phi work would be testing the wrong judgments. Nevertheless, X-Phi might still be a justifiable project, even if it could be improved to better test the claims that are taken on assumption. That said, if this were all that could be said in defense of X-Phi, it is a double-edged sword at best, for it would defend X-Phi at the expense of undermining the actual results produced thus far by experimental philosophers.

    Deutsch's analysis, however, can be resisted. Premise (2) is potentially problematic, and indeed, has proven controversial in epistemology. Instead, we come to recognize that (presuming it is the correct analysis) epistemic luck undermines knowledge because of Gettier cases, which show us that cases of epistemic luck are not knowledge. Gettier never explicitly claims a general premise like premise (2), rather, he points to the specific features of the case. That is, he starts with *G*. Premise (2) is established by an abductive inference. It is an explanation for why Smith does not possess knowledge.

    Deutsch considers this possibility, but rejects it for two reasons. One is that *G* is hardly a given. The JTB analysis of knowledge remains a live option, and the defender of that view might deny *G*. It would be dialectically strange to assume it. The other is that coming up with a thought experiment is hard work, and requires careful consideration. Gettier does not start with a given premise *G*; he has to carefully devise a case in which *G* arises.

    While Deutsch is right that coming up with thought experiments is hard work, this does not mean that the premise *G* is not the given in the argument. As Deutsch himself notes, Gettier's thought experiment makes it "clear" that *G*. It is hard work indeed to make obvious a premise that contravenes the view of one side in a dispute. One purpose of the thought experiment, however, is to show the defender of the JTB

analysis that she too must accept *G*. Not on the basis of argument - the JTB defender would reject premise (2) as well - but rather by walking her through a case which culminates in a premise that she is, as a matter of fact, willing to grant as part of the common ground. The aim of the thought experiment, then, is similarly dialectical, it makes clear what we are actually willing to accept.

It is, then, not dialectically strange to assume *G*. While a defender of JTB would reject *G* when analyzed through the light of her theory of knowledge, the thought experiments show that *she is already committed* to *G*. Since she is already committed to *G*, the theory which leads to the judgment that *not-G* should be rejected. On the basis of *G*, and other similar claims, we can come to recognize a general claim about knowledge, like premise (2).

Further, in other cases, Deutsch's analysis of the arguments aligns with my own. Take, for example, his analysis of Kripke's Einstein case:

> Kripke does not treat the question of whether, say, 'Einstein' refers, for all of us, to Einstein, or instead, for some of us, to the inventor of the atomic bomb, as an *open* question. Rather, Kripke *takes it for granted* that 'Einstein' does not refer, for any of its users, to the inventor of the atomic bomb. That is, it is a mistake to suppose that Kripke thinks he is adducing evidence - of any kind, let alone intuitive *evidence* - for the view that 'Einstein' does not refer, for any of its users, to the inventor of the atomic bomb. Instead he *assumes* this view [Deutsch, (2015), p. 108, emphasis in original].

On this point, Deutsch and I are in agreement. Kripke is indeed offering arguments, and those arguments rest on assumptions in the common ground. While it remains an open question where the assumptions are located in any particular argument, these examples support the plausibility of this interpretative strategy for experimental philosophy and the arguments it targets.

## IV. CONCLUSIONS

Deutsch and Cappelen both agree that X-Phi has a conditional insight. If traditional philosophy follows an intuition-driven methodology, then X-Phi is justified. Alexander, a proponent of X-Phi, takes on this same framework, and defends X-Phi by defending the intuition-driven methodology construal of traditional philosophy. I have argued here that

X-Phi's significance for philosophers is not contingent on this reading of philosophical arguments. Instead, it is an investigation of the scope of agreement on our assumptions, and so provides data to help us make careful decisions about what we are willing to assume.

In this way, X-Phi makes an important and valuable contribution to philosophical practice. As philosophers, we care about making fair assumptions – assumptions that our audience would grant and which do not beg the question. We also care about making assumptions that do not merely conform to popular opinion. Yet, in practice, it is often challenging to distinguish between a proposition that seems obviously true because it is obviously true, and one that seems obviously true because it is something I have been enculturated into believing. While X-Phi may not be our only tool to help us make fair assumptions, it is a particularly effective one. X-Phi's results have a lot to teach us, whether or not intuitions matter one whit.

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NOTES

[1] Not all practitioners of X-Phi, however, have described their project in terms of intuition [Alexander & Weinberg, (2007)]. Instead, X-Phi is principally concerned with our judgments about cases, regardless of whether these judgments can be characterized as intuitions or not. As Deutsch's argument against X-Phi applies to a judgings/judged distinction parallel to the intuitings/intuited distinction, I will set this issue to the side in this essay.
[2] The 'just about' caveat allows for some exclusion of others on a variety of grounds, e.g., one might exclude people from the audience who hold positions which foreclose a debate, or people who have not considered the issue with a sufficient degree of care.

³ Applying the results from these studies, however, is surely not simple and straightforward. The universality presumption is that all parties *could* and *would* accept the premise, not that they actually do. It might be that people do not actually accept the premise because they have not thought it through, rather than because they would reject it, all things considered. I leave these questions to the interpretation of particular experimental results.

⁴ All of these results have been the subject of dispute. On semantic intuitions, Lam, (2010) offers a critique, though see Machery et al., (2010), for a defense. On epistemic intuitions, both Kim & Yuan, (2015) and Seyedsayamdost, (2015), challenge Weinberg et al.'s findings. On gender variation in intuition, Adleberg, (2015) fails to replicate Buckwalter & Stich's findings and critiques their methodology.

⁵ Finding kinship with Singer also suggests another crucial point: it is not part of my argument that X-Phi has an exclusive claim to this role. There are lots of ways of investigating our assumptions. A defense of X-Phi need not be a defense of the *necessity* of X-Phi - only of its *value* to philosophy.

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