Max Deutsch: *The Myth of the Intuitive: Experimental Philosophy and Philosophical Method.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. 194+xx pp.

This engaging and accessible book offers a spirited defence of armchair philosophy, against a perceived threat from experimental philosophy. About twenty years ago, methodological rationalists (like George Bealer and Ernest Sosa) developed a picture of philosophical work that lets us understand how philosophical questions can be addressed from the armchair: Philosophers consider descriptions of possible cases in thought experiments which engage their conceptual competencies and elicit intuitions about the cases considered. Such intuitions provide evidence for or against many philosophical claims, e.g., about the concepts, nature, or essence of things like moral permissibility or knowledge. Philosophical theorising then proceeds by working back and forth between intuitions about specific cases and background beliefs and general principles, until a reflective equilibrium and a coherent set of beliefs have been achieved. This still popular picture provides philosophy with a distinctive methodology that can be applied from the proverbial armchair but goes beyond offering philosophers the license to just follow their argumentative noses.

Experimental philosophy (x-phi) has developed largely in response to this picture and suggests the picture cannot provide a defence of armchair philosophy: It is an empirical question what intuitions about particular cases competent concept-users have. To find out to what extent her intuitions are representative, the philosopher needs to conduct surveys or experiments. 'Negative' x-phi went further and recruited empirical methods to also address the question of where intuitions can (not) serve as evidence: This research program uses surveys and experiments to study the sensitivity of intuitions to truth-irrelevant parameters (like the order in which cases are presented), and infers lack of evidentiary value where it observes such sensitivity. In response, armchair philosophers who accept the popular picture of philosophy sought to defend their use of the 'method of cases' by dismissing as irrelevant the intuitions of non-experts (like the undergraduate participants in many x-phi studies) or by interpreting variability in intuitions as indicative of variability in concepts.

Deutsch convincingly rejects these responses as 'weak, verging on desperate' (xx), and develops a more fundamental line of defence, previously deployed by Herman Cappelen (2012) (who drew on an earlier paper by Deutsch): Deutsch argues 'there is no way to defend "armchair philosophy" from x-phi's challenge if one accepts the view that intuitions are [treated as] evidence [in philosophy]' (132). Accordingly, the book attacks this widely held view as a 'myth': Deutsch accepts that thought experiments play a crucial role in analytic philosophy, but argues that philosophical thought experiments appeal to reason and argument at every stage, and to intuitions at none. He seeks to debunk the 'myth of the intuitive' by 'demonstrating that analytic philosophers give arguments for their judgments about thought experiments and cases' (xvi), and that these arguments provide them with what justification they need for these case-judgments. Intuitions are surplus to justificatory requirements.

Like Cappelen, Deutsch treats the question, whether philosophers adduce intuitions as evidence, as empirical, and seeks to support a negative answer by examining first-order philosophical texts (78,101-2). His main argument proceeds from two chapter-length case-studies on influential thought experiments, by Gettier and Kripke, which were the target of seminal contributions to negative x-phi. The argument is extended through brief discussion of

subsequent exercises in 'Gettierology' and six prominent thought experiments involving esoteric cases.

Deutsch deliberately remains agnostic about the nature of intuitions and their psychological features. He merely lists uncontroversial examples of philosophically relevant 'intuitions' and points out salient commonalities: They are all judgments about whether, in some hypothetical case, something has some philosophically relevant property (25). This 'no-theory theory' of intuitions is all he thinks is required to address the key question, What is the argumentative role of intuitions in philosophy? (32).

The main argument is this (36-8): Like 'judgment' and 'belief', the term 'intuition' can stand for both (a) a mental act or state and (b) a content. Much metaphilosophical debate, and all negative x-phi, assumes that intuitions in the first sense are adduced as evidence: The fact that certain thinkers intuit certain contents (or that these contents are intuitive for them) is supposedly adduced as evidence for the truth of these contents – which is illegitimate in case truth-irrelevant factors influence whether thinkers intuit them. But, in fact, philosophers adduce only intuitions in the second sense as evidence: To support or refute more general claims (*Knowledge is justified true belief*), they invoke contents about specific cases (*Smith does not know that…*). Typically, the contents invoked strike many thinkers as intuitive; i.e., many thinkers intuit them. But the contents' acceptance as true is not justified by reference to their intuitive nature, but by further argument.

Deutsch's case studies are meant to support this crucial claim. His prime exhibits are thought experiments designed by Gettier and Kripke to refute philosophical theories (like the justified-true-belief account of knowledge), by providing counterexamples. For the philosophical argument to work, these counterexamples have to be genuine, but need not be intuitive for anyone (even if, in empirical fact, they are) (40). Justification for accepting them as genuine is provided by argument for the key judgment about the given case. Appeals to intuitiveness are not required – and not made by the authors examined.

For example, Deutsch points out (43,81,85) that Gettier supports the crucial judgment (J) about his first case by argument (A) about the proposition (e) 'The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket':

> 'In our example, then, all of the following are true: (i) (e) is true, (ii) Smith believes (e) is true, and (iii) Smith is justified… But it is equally clear that [J] Smith does not *know* that (e) is true; for [A] (e) is true in virtue of the number of coins in Smith's pocket, while Smith does not know how many coins are in Smith's pocket, and bases his belief in the truth of (e) on a count of the coins in Jones' pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.'

For each thought experiment he considers, Deutsch thus tries to identify arguments the thought experimentalist adduces to justify the key judgment that is commonly regarded as an intuition. In some cases (e.g., Gettier and Lehrer's Truetemp), Deutsch succeeds more clearly than in others (Kripke's Gödel case [106-111] and Jackson's colour scientist [115]) to identify potentially relevant arguments. He takes these *prima facie* arguments to support the metaphilosophical hypothesis that thought experimentalists support their key case judgments by argument, and do not rely on the intuitiveness of these judgments.

How do thought experimentalists then justify acceptance of the relevant arguments'

premises? By reference to their intuitiveness or through further argument? That is: Does reliance on intuitiveness merely move to a further step of the reasoning? In response to this 'relocation problem' (61), Deutsch discusses precisely one example from the first-order literature to support the answer that, again, philosophers adduce arguments, instead of relying on intuitiveness (123). The book does not examine the relocation problem for the other cases it discusses, leaving its empirical argument noticeably incomplete.

However, there may be a more serious problem. According to negative x-phi's version of the picture of philosophy Deutsch attacks, the book's main argument puts things back-to-front. According to this view, 'intuition supports the thought-experimental judgments, and then those judgments are assumed in abductive arguments for explanatory principles' (97). The mere presence of *prima facie* arguments for specific case-judgments therefore does not establish that philosophers do not accept these judgments on the strength of their intuitiveness: These arguments should not be conceived as deductive or inductive arguments for specific case-judgments, but as abductive arguments for general principles that would explain those judgments – whose truth is taken for granted due to their intuitiveness.

Deutsch grants this is a 'possible view' but argues only briefly against it (97-99): First, he claims, philosophical thought experiments never involve *explicit* appeal to the intuitiveness of a case judgment, followed by an explicit search for the best explanation. The best explanation for *this* supposed fact then is that philosophers do not seek such abductive arguments (97). Second, the abductive picture seems plausible from the perspective of the reader of a thought experiment, but 'plainly absurd' from the perspective of its author: Gettier, say, did not intuit that Smith does not know, but inferred this from the 'recipe' with which he 'cooked up' his counterexamples to the justified-true-belief theory (98).

The first of these claims is unsupported by any discussion of apparent counterexamples, such as Thomson's (1985) discussion of trolley cases. This is regrettable since Cappelen (2012, 158-163) merely argued that this paradigm case of intuition-driven philosophising does not rely on a specific kind of intuitions, 'rational intuitions', but did not argue against the abductive interpretation. Deutsch's second response is *prima facie* plausible. For example, a 'recipe' for Gettier cases calls for a belief that is justified but, even so, true as a matter of luck (5); and Gettier indeed infers the absence of knowledge in his second case from the feature that the protagonist is right 'by the sheerest coincidence' (82). But does that mean that Gettier did not intuit the lack of knowledge? Or that the intuitiveness of the inferred conclusion is irrelevant for its acceptance?

To address these questions, we need to advance from Deutsch's 'no-theory theory' of intuitions to the psychological notion most experimental philosophers implicitly use: Intuitions are judgments generated by automatic inferences, i.e., by effortless and typically unconscious cognitive processes which duplicate inferences with heuristic or other rules (Kahneman and Frederick 2005). When thinkers leap to a conclusion, without being able to explain how or why, prior to sustained reflection, they are relying on automatic inferences, and their conclusions are intuitions. Some philosophical case-intuitions have been explained by reference to automatic processes which constantly go on in language comprehension *and* production, and support semantic and stereotypical inferences (Fischer and Engelhardt 2016). Language production includes the subvocalized speech that is the medium of much philosophical thought. It is therefore not 'plainly absurd' but perfectly possible that original

thought experimentalists arrive at their judgments in this way, i.e., that they intuit them, when considering what is true of a case conforming to a 'recipe' they are trying out. (E.g.: 'Accidentally true guesses don't qualify as knowledge. What if a justified belief is accidentally true? Here's a possible case…')

Precisely in the cases where Deutsch most clearly succeeds in identifying arguments adduced for thought-experimental judgments, the arguments (like A above) consist in direct inferences from mere restatements of case features, to the key conclusion, without further explanation or argument (174, cp.177). Whether a thinker is inclined to accept a conclusion without further explanation or argument depends upon her level of subjective confidence (Thompson et al. 2011), which also predicts how likely the judgment is to be accepted by others (Koriat 2008). In the absence of specific topic knowledge, this subjective confidence does not depend upon the content of the judgment, but on properties of the cognitive process generating it, in particular on the 'fluency' or subjective ease with which it comes to mind (Alter and Oppenheimer 2009). Ultimately, the high fluency of automatic processes is what leads to the confident and wide acceptance of the conclusions that thinkers infer without quite knowing how or why – as apparently in Deutsch's clearest examples. This means that even when thinkers do not explicitly appeal to its 'plausibility' or 'obviousness', the intuitive character of such a conclusion may be what makes them accept it without further ado. To what extent the cases Deutsch discusses involve such *implicit* reliance on intuitiveness remains to be examined.

As to the larger picture: Where thinkers engage in speculative thought, they will frequently base their arguments on premises that simply strike them as plausible and that are likely to be accepted by others. The psychological research just indicated suggests that such a basis is exactly what intuitions provide.

While *The Myth of the Intuitive* may not succeed in establishing its ambitious conclusion, this thought-provoking book effectively challenges simplistic conceptions of how philosophers rely on intuitions. This significantly advances a key debate about the nature of our subject.

References

Alter, A.L. and D.M. Oppenheimer. 2009. Uniting the tribes of fluency to form a metacognitive nation. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 13,* 219-235.

Cappelen, H. 2012. *Philosophy without Intuitions*. Oxford: OUP.

Fischer, E. and P.E. Engelhardt. 2016. Intuitions' linguistic sources: Stereotypes, intuitions, and illusions. *Mind & Language, 31,* 65-101.

Kahneman, D. and S. Frederick. 2005. A model of heuristic judgment. In K.J. Holyoak and R. Morrison (eds.), *Cambridge Handbook of Thinking and Reasoning* (pp. 267-293). Cambridge: CUP.

Koriat, A. 2008. Subjective confidence in one's answers: The consensuality principle. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Learning, Memory, & Cognition*, 34, 945-959.

Thompson, V.A., J.A. Prowse Turner, and G. Pennycook. 2011. Intuition, reason, and metacognition. *Cognitive Psychology*, *63,* 107-140.

Thomson, J.J. 1985. The trolley problem. *Yale Law Journal*, 94, 1395-1415.

Eugen Fischer
University of East Anglia