EXEMPLARY INTUITIVENESS

SEBASTIAN SUNDAY GRÈVE

94th Joint Session / July 2020

The paper discusses two opposing types of view about examples, especially as they are employed in philosophy, and develops a moderate, alternative view. The types of view criticised—psychologisation and denial—are extreme opposites, yet they are representative of a wide range of currently popular positions within academic philosophy.

Psychologisation is the type of view according to which the evaluation of philosophical claims often proceeds by way of intended examples or counterexamples whose evidential strength is, or is supposed to be, a function of their intuitiveness. Proponents of this type of view include experimental philosophers, phenomenal conservatists, rationalists and others.

Denial is a negation of psychologisation. Specifically, denial is the type of view according to which intuition does not play the evidential role that psychologisation ascribes to it: the evidential strength of intended examples or counterexamples is not, nor is it usually supposed to be, a function of their intuitiveness. Proponents of this type of view include Herman Cappelen (2012) and Max Deutsch (2015).

The proposed alternative view is not only historically more accurate regarding the actual practice of philosophy; it is insightful, too, with regard to the question of how philosophy should be done.

ABSTRACT

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- The evaluation of philosophical claims often proceeds by way of intended examples or counterexamples whose evidential strength is, or is supposed to be, a function of their intuitiveness. **(Psychologisation)**

- 'One thing that distinguishes philosophical methodology from the methodology of the sciences is its extensive and avowed reliance on intuition. … To decide what is knowledge, reference, identity, or causation …, philosophers routinely consider actual and hypothetical examples and ask whether these examples provide instances of the target … People's mental responses to these examples are often called 'intuitions', and these intuitions are treated as evidence for the correct answer.' (Goldman 2007, 1)

- 'At one time many people accepted the doctrine that knowledge is justified true belief. But today we have good evidence to the contrary, namely, our intuitions that situations like those described in the Gettier literature are possible and that the relevant people in those situations would not know the things at issue.' (Bealer 1996, 122)

- The evidential strength of intended examples or counterexamples is not, nor is it usually supposed to be, a function of their intuitiveness. **(Denial)**

- Deutsch 2015; see also Cappelen 2012 and Williamson 2007 and 2018

- Kripke's Gödel, Gettier's Ten Coins

- Logical question *vs* psychological question

- 'It is only this logical question that is relevant to whether Gettier and Kripke succeed, with the Ten Coins and Gödel cases, in refuting the JTB theory of knowledge and the descriptivist theory of reference.' (Deutsch 2015, 47)

- No, both (the logical and the psychological question) are relevant.

- 'Could there be a better source for insight into how *Gettier* refuted the JTB theory of knowledge, or *Kripke* refuted the descriptivist theory of reference for proper names, than Gettier's and Kripke's own work on the subject?'   (Deutsch 2015, 41) [see also Cappelen 2012, 162 and 169]

- How did the authors of the original texts come to believe that these particular cases were suitable for publication? And how did readers come to believe that the cases worked?

Suppose that Smith and Jones have applied for a certain job. And suppose that Smith has strong evidence for the following conjunctive proposition:

(d) Jones is the man who will get the job, and Jones has ten coins in his pocket.

Smith's evidence for (d) might be that the president of the company assured him that Jones would in the end be selected, and that he, Smith, had counted the coins in Jones's pocket ten minutes ago. Proposition (d) entails:

(e) The man who will get the job has ten coins in his pocket.

Let us suppose that Smith sees the entailment from (d) to (e), and accepts (e) on the grounds of (d), for which he has strong evidence. In this case, Smith is clearly justified in believing that (e) is true.

But imagine, further, that unknown to Smith, he himself, not Jones, will get the job. And, also, unknown to Smith, he himself has ten coins in his pocket. Proposition (e) is then true, though proposition (d), from which Smith inferred (e), is false. In our example, then, all of the following are true: (*i*) (e) is true, (*ii*) Smith believes that (e) is true, and (*iii*) Smith is justified in believing that (e) is true. But it is equally clear that Smith does not *know* that (e) is true; for (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 (e) on a count of the coins in Jones's pocket, whom he falsely believes to be the man who will get the job.

(Gettier 1963, 122)

Suppose someone says that Gödel is the man who proved the incompleteness of arithmetic, and this man is suitably well educated and is even able to give an independent account of the incompleteness theorem. He doesn't just say, 'Well, that's Gödel's theorem', or whatever. He actually states a certain theorem, which he attributes to Gödel as the discoverer. … In the case of Gödel that's practically the only thing many people have heard about him—that he discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic. Does it follow that whoever discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic is the referent of 'Gödel'?

… Suppose that Gödel was not in fact the author of this theorem. A man named 'Schmidt', whose body was found in Vienna under mysterious circumstances many years ago, actually did the work in question. His friend Gödel somehow got hold of the manuscript and it was thereafter attributed to Gödel. On the view in question, then, when our ordinary man uses the name 'Gödel', he really means to refer to Schmidt, because Schmidt is the unique person satisfying the description, 'the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic'. Of course you might try changing it to 'the man who *published* the discovery of the incompleteness of arithmetic'. By changing the story a little further one can make even this formulation false. Anyway, most people might not even know whether the thing was published or got around by word of mouth. Let's stick to 'the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic'. So, since the man who discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic is in fact Schmidt, we, when we talk about 'Gödel', are in fact always referring to Schmidt. But it seems to me that we are not. We simply are not.

(Kripke 1972/80, 83–4)

- 'Could there be a better source for insight into how *Gettier* refuted the JTB theory of knowledge, or *Kripke* refuted the descriptivist theory of reference for proper names, than Gettier's and Kripke's own work on the subject?' (Deutsch 2015, 41) [see also Cappelen 2012, 162 and 169]

- How did the authors of the original texts come to believe that these particular cases were suitable for publication? And how did readers come to believe that the cases worked?

- 'The right answer to the evidence-for-the-evidence question is not that intuitions … count as our evidence-for-the-evidence … The answer is instead that *further arguments* play this role.' (Deutsch 2015, 57) [see also Cappelen 2012, chapter 8]

- However: there is a stage in the history of the evaluation of a case at which the best available evidence of its being an example (or a counterexample) is that it intuitively so appears.

- 'It wasn't the mere publication of Gettier's two examples, or what he said about them. It was the fact that almost everybody who read Gettier's examples shared the intuition that these were not instances of knowing. Had their intuitions been different, there would have been no discovery.' (Goldman 2007, 2)

- The evaluation of philosophical claims often proceeds by way of intended examples or counterexamples whose evidential strength is, or is supposed to be, a function of their intuitiveness. **(Psychologisation)**

- The evidential strength of intended examples or counterexamples is not, nor is it usually supposed to be, a function of their intuitiveness. **(Denial)**

- Both views misrepresent the practice of philosophy

- The evaluation of philosophical claims often proceeds by way of cases that are intended to be examples (or counterexamples) and that are designed to so appear intuitively, because such intuitiveness will constitute significant, albeit weak, evidence in favour of the claim that the case is an example (or counterexample). **(Alternative)**

- Psychologisation and denial remain worth considering from a normative perspective.

- Effective thinking *vs* effective communication

- Difficulty/complexity: a useful measure of the epistemic potential of an example's intuitiveness

- Thus, a useful measure of the philosophical achievement represented by such brilliant cases as Gettier's and Kripke's [compare Plato, *Theaetetus,* 201c–210b; Russell 1948, 140; Searle 1958, 168]

Any questions ?

seba-xiaosai

✉ ssg@pku.edu.cn

🔗 *www.yhposolihp.com*

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