PHIL 488/594 presentation

   There the x-philes say that experimental philosophy is concerned with concept application, and with the psychological processes underlying concept application. When they ask the folk for their judgments on cases of knowledge, language, intentional action, free will, or what have you, their concern is with why the folk have the intuitions they, why the folk make the judgments they do. Conducting surveys, and the statistical information they provide, gives the x-philes the data around which to construct their theories of the underlying psychological processes. What helps build these theories are considering what factors influence judgments or intuitions: the order in which questions are presented; the abstractness or concreteness of the questions; the moral terms used in the questions; and so on.

   So, how, and in which ways, is this sort of work to become philosophically relevant? Suppose that some philosopher is given a philosophical analysis of something. For example, they're told that knowledge is justified true belief. Or, maybe, they're told that event c causes event e if and only if there's a stepwise chain of counterfactual dependence of event e on event c. (Whether we're talking about knowledge and causation or their concepts maybe shouldn't distract us.) That is, in the one case, we're told that justification, truth, and belief are necessary and jointly sufficient conditions for a subject's knowing a proposition. But the philosopher is dissatisfied with the analysis given. To show her dissatisfaction, she imagines a case which she judges not to be a case of knowledge but which is such that the conditions given are satisfied. She concludes that knowledge isn't justified true belief.

   Then the x-philes go out and conduct surveys. They find that 68% of people surveyed judge that the philosopher's case is in fact a case of knowledge. What do the x-philes take this to tell us? That the philosopher should give up her judgment? No. The statistical information, the x-philes say, does not have that kind of direct philosophical relevance. They're not making an inference to the most popular. Instead, they say that the statistical information points us in the direction of something relevant to philosophical inquiry.

   Above it was said that the x-philes use the statistical information to build theories of the underlying psychological processes that generate the judgments, the intuitions, that is, the sources of them. Well, some sources are reliable. For external sources, television, it's been said, is not to be trusted. Similarly, there are unreliable internal sources. Whatever's responsible for our judgments on probability, maybe. So, there's a connection between the sources and the warrant we should give to what they generate. As it is with newspapers, so it is with the psychological processes underlying judgments of knowledge. If we find the source to unreliable, maybe this undercuts the warrant of our philosopher's judgment. Or at least some more thinking is maybe required.
As the manifesto says, "Surely, the degree to which an intuition is warranted depends in part on the process that generated it, and surely the best way to figure out which processes generate which intuitions is to go out an gather empirical data. How else is one supposed to proceed?" (8).

   Apparently objections have arisen from philosophers about just how far this goes. Surely, the x-phobes say, the physicist doesn't ask the folk what they think; nor should they. Same goes for philosophers.

Here the x-philes say "Of course, there are topics in philosophy that float free of x-philization. For example, whether the problem of temporary intrinsics can get got around in satisfying way by the endurantist is not a question for the folk. "But", they say, "in many other areas of philosophy, it's much harder to maintain that the disputes are so disconnected from commonsense intuitions" (8).

So, the x-philes accept outer limits (in philosophy): topics in philosophy that can't be x-philized. With that in mind, I think we can reasonably understand a large part of Deutsch's work, and Marti's work too, as arguing that issues in the philosophy of language involving the meanings of proper names and issues in epistemology involving Gettier cases belong in the outer limits of philosophy (in Marti's case, just the issues about the meanings of proper names).

Organizing the papers

The manifesto talks about three strands of empirical philosophy research: source and warrant; diversity; and how the mind works.

Deutsch's work does a few things. It objects to the connection between **source and warrant** by first arguing that the issues in philosophy of language and epistemology are in the outer limits of philosophy. This is his stuff on "Kripke and Gettier don't say that" and the stuff on alternative arguments. Second, Deutsch's work attacks the connection between source and warrant in his discussion of the causal source and the justificatory source of a judgment, of an intuition.

But all this takes place within the **diversity** strand of experimental philosophy. On this strand, if there's cross-cultural diversity among intuitions, such that, for example, Westerners are not descriptivists but East Asian English speakers are (that is, maybe, whether intuitions about cases are consistent with descriptivism or not), and it's an accident that you were brought up where you were, then you ought to wonder what rational preference you have for your intuitions (over theirs).

The x-philes claim that there's cultural variability in intuitions about the theory of meaning of proper names and Gettier cases in epistemology. Independently of source and warrant, Deutsch's work argues against some of these diversity results. He argues that, in the case of the theory of meaning for proper names, the question given to people was ambiguous between speaker reference and semantic reference.

Marti's work also attacks the diversity results in experimental philosophy of language. She argues that they test the wrong thing. They actually test peoples' theory of reference.

Williamson's work is on source and warrant stuff. One other way in which you might object to the connection between source and warrant is that trained philosophers have clearer intuitions. This is the **expertise objection**. X-philes replied. Williamson responds to the x-phile reply that thought experimentation is no less a skill developed through philosophical training than is informal argumentation.

Deutsch (2010)

It would be a mischaracterization of Kripke and Gettier to say that the counterexamples are so judged because they're intuitive. Nevertheless, it seems, people characterize them in this way. This mistake can motivate the x-philes to say that the judgments are false because unintuitive, that is, because the majority judge otherwise.

(We know from the manifesto that x-philes don't make inferences to the most popular, so this is likely an overstatement of Deutsch's.)

And so we get a formulation of the logical structure of the counterexamples as follows: it's intuitive that c is a case of analysans but not analysandum; so, c is a case of analysans but not analysandum; so, not all cases of the analysandum are cases of the analysans.

But Gettier and Kripke don't say that! Their counterexamples have no explicit or implicit appeal to intuitions. Appeal to the intuitiveness of the judgment that analysans but not analysandum is thus logically inessential. So, the real statement of the logical form of the counterexamples deletes the first premise --that the judgment is intuitive.

So then Deutsch considers an objection: if not intuition, then on what does the judgment that analysans but not analysandum depend?

Deutsch replies: it might be non-inferentially known, even if its causal source is in intuition --because its justificatory source is not. If it were that that the intuition was the justificatory source then it would be that the counterexamples contained the deleted premise.

But then how can we be sure, on any given occasion, that a counterexample is genuine? Deutsch replies: counterexamples are known to be genuine in many ways, depending on the case at hand. This is so because the grounds are different in different cases. In Gettier, the grounds are epistemological; in Kripke, they're semantic. Deutsch then goes through the various grounds for Kripke and Gettier. And it's said that the grounds should remove any suspicion that the counterexamples rely on appeals to their intuitiveness.

To the complaint that grounds might contain appeals to the intuitiveness of things, Deutsch says that it's a point about justification that justificatory chains don't necessarily terminate in claims of intuitiveness of things.

To the complaint that, although it's not necessary, very often philosophical counterexamples actually terminate, justificatorily, in appeals to intuitions, Deutsch replies that he's shown that Gettier and Kripke do not.

p.456: Deutsch says that if Kripke or Gettier had appealed to the intuitiveness of their judgments that analysans without analysandum then they would have been refuted by opinion polls, by an inference to the most popular. If strongly interpreted, where the appeal isn't just "everyone would judge that...", I don't x-philes would say that.

Moreover, Deutsch thinks his results apply more generally to counterexamples in philosophy --from metaphysics to ethics.

Deutsch (2009)

Even if the claims of the previous paper don't hold, Deutsch thinks that the experimental results have no impact on the theory of reference, because they don't obviously present a case of intuition variability across cultures (Westerners and East Asians).

So the study goes: subjects are presented with the Godel case and asked "When John uses the name "Godel", is he talking about (A) the person who really discovered the incompleteness of arithmetic; or (B) the person who got hold of the manuscript and claimed credit for the work?"

Deutsch claims that the question is ambiguous. One may use a word to talk about x in one's language whether or not that name refers to x. For example, if I said "the man

over there with the champagne in his glass is happy", I might successful talk about that man, even if there's only water in his glass. Deutsch uses the Jones/Smith raking example.

So the question is ambiguous between

(Q1) to whom does John intend to refer when he uses the word "Godel"?

and

(Q2) to whom does the name "Godel" refer when John uses it?

Call 'talking about' the speaker's reference and 'referring to' the semantic reference. This is a well-known distinction among philosophers of language, and it's one on which Kripke wrote.

Deutsch says that, given the ambiguity, there's serious doubt about whether the studies show cross-cultural differences in intuitions about proper names. We're not sure if there's genuine disagreement. Mallon et al certainly intend their study to be about semantic reference.

More generally, do philosophers think their theories are best supported by predicting what most people think about cases, actual and (merely) possible? Maybe knowing that a subject doesn't know, in a case, is a priori, and not x-philizable. Maybe all philosophy is ordinary language philosophy, and we may infer truth or falsity (or indeterminacy) from incorrect usage. Also, when we poll people, we have to be sure to separate literal (truth-conditional) content from implicatures.

Marti (2009)

The wrong intuitions are tested. The x-philes want to test intuitions about how names are used (well, about the semantic referents of names), but the question tests how reference is determined, that is, it tests the theory of reference to which people subscribe. It's a distinction between how people do things, and how they think they do things.

What you want to do is test whether people use names descriptively, and not whether they're descriptivists or not. Russell and Mill didn't differ in how they used names, probably, but their semantic views were different.

Marti proposes a step in the right direction (toward name use): "One day, the fraud is exposed, and John exclaims: 'Today is a sad day: we have found out that Godel is a thief and a liar'. What do you think about John's reaction?"

People who use names descriptively should think that John's reaction is strange. People who use names causal-historically should think that John's reaction is comprehensible, though maybe a bit harsh.

Sosa (2007)

When we rely on intuitions in philosophy we manifest a competence that enables us to get it right on a certain subject matter, by basing our beliefs on the sheer understanding of their contents.

So what if a large subgroup affirm [[p]] and the rest of us deny it? Sosa: we need an error theory that attributes the error to those who disagree with us to bad constitution or to bad situation.

Intuition clashes might be merely verbal. People are using words differently, talking past each other, and (thus) not genuinely disagreeing on judgments.

Knobe and Nichols: free will experiment. People think we're free in a determined universe in the concrete, but not in the abstract. But maybe divergence is verbal,

because, maybe, there's accountability and attributability accounts of moral responsibility.