

**Anthony Robert Booth and Darrell P. Rowbottom, eds.,** *Intuitions*. Oxford University Press 2014. 288 pp. \$74.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199609192).

This edited volume situates itself in relation to a 1998 collection of papers, edited by DePaul and Ramsey, titled *Rethinking intuition: The psychology of intuition and its role in philosophical inquiry*. In that volume Gary Gutting spoke of the ‘crisis’ of western analytic philosophy in regard to the, at the time, growing number of philosophers questioning the role and validity of intuitions in philosophical theories. This crisis involved the nature of intuitions and the question of what is to be done when our philosophical theories clash with our intuitions. Is the theory to be revised? Or should the intuitions be rejected? Gutting spoke of attaining a reflective equilibrium between these two options and he saw *Rethinking intuition* as contributing to that end. There was another challenge to the role of intuitions in philosophy that that volume addressed; this was the challenge from cognitive psychology that was showing the unreliable nature and systematic errors of intuitions. Booth & Rowbottom’s 2014 volume on intuitions also addresses these two areas, and it sees itself as continuing the process of elucidating a coherent and explanatory account of intuitions that *Rethinking intuition* began. It seeks to investigate the epistemology and ontological standing of intuitions.

It is of course impossible to properly cover the content of all fourteen chapters in such a short review, so what follows is a summary of each and an elaboration of some. The book is divided into three parts. The first part discusses the ontological and epistemological standing of intuitions. What are intuitions, such that we may use them as evidence or as premises in philosophical arguments or theories? Chudnoff (Chapter 1) argues that intuitions are a certain type of experience that play a role in making some of our attitudes and actions more reasonable than others. He contrasts his view to the view that intuitions play a justifier role (by justifying beliefs) and to the view that intuitions play an evidential role (by being evidence for beliefs). Chudnoff argues that intuitions have an additional rational role of guidance in that intuitions play a role in guiding actions.

Sosa (Chapter 2) distinguishes between experiences and seemings. Experiences do not need rational justification; you just have experiences. Seemings, on the other hand, do need rational justification. Sosa gives the example of the experience of seeing a Spanish word. In Spanish speakers such an experience will prompt a seeming, but in non-Spanish speakers it will not. Experience provides a rational basis for perceptual belief, but experience is not itself in need of justification for it is a regress-stopper. ‘Experiences are supposed to be rationally passive so as to lie beyond rational justification or unjustification. They just happen to us, independently of our rational agency, which is why they are not rationally assessable’ (41). Sosa discusses what might be the analogous role in the case of intuitive knowledge to the justificatory role that experience plays for perceptual belief. In the case of intuitions we have intuitive seemings, but how do the latter acquire their epistemic standing? Sosa argues that since intuitive seemings are based on one’s understanding of their propositional content, that is enough to ground the seeming. ‘What seems distinctive of *intuitive* knowledge is that simply understanding the specific propositional content properly grounds its appearance of truth. The sheer understanding serves on its own as a proper basis for that seeming, helping thus to make it rational’ (43, emphasis in original).

Pust (Chapter 3) considers the claim that adherents of moderate rationalism (i.e., the view that a person’s having a rational intuition that  $p$  prima facie justifies them in believing that  $p$ ) must provide an empirical defence of their doctrine. He concludes that moderate rationalism *can* be justified by direct appeal to the justificatory power of intuitions. The justification of moderate rationalism

does not require any non-introspective empirical evidence; it can be justified entirely a priori. Moderate rationalism ‘can and should be justified entirely from the armchair’ (66).

Johnson & Nado (Chapter 4) argue for what they call moderate intuitionism, according to which intuitions are a central philosophical tool that is generally reliable but that is also frequently in error if certain conditions are not met. They set out a theory that provides an explanation of ‘the genuine yet somewhat fragile connection to the truth that moderate intuitionism aims to ascribe to intuitions’ (68). Such an explanation is a metasemantic account, according to which our intuitions regarding the application of words given certain prompts are reliable but fallible indicators of our dispositions to apply these words given those prompts. When one is in possession of complete information about the scenario at hand, such dispositions are reliable.

In the last chapter of the first part, Jenkins (Chapter 5) lists the different uses of ‘intuition’ in the literature. The various uses are so distinct that one must be careful not to conflate them. He structures the use of ‘intuition’ into four bundles: a commensensibility bundle, a prioricity bundle, an immediacy bundle, and a metaphilosophical bundle. She suggests that ‘intuition’ as it is used by philosophers is at best ambiguous but that that should not be a matter for concern.

The second part of the volume discusses whether intuitions have a role to play that is unique to philosophy. What is the nature of thought experiments outside of philosophy (say, in the hard sciences)? Are thought experiments put to different methodological use in science? Rowbottom (Chapter 6) argues that thought experiments are the same as physical experiments, the only difference being that thought experiments involve hypothetical or counterfactual states of affairs which serve as argument pumps. ‘Experiments involve states of affairs intentionally ‘brought about’ – physically or mentally – in order to solve problems’ (133). Sorensen (Chapter 7) discusses the nature of novice responses to thought experiments in physics and in philosophy. He notes that novice intuitions are ignored throughout the humanities and the sciences and asks why they are taken seriously by X-Phi. No physicist in his role as physicist takes seriously a conflict between undergraduate physics experiments and the experiments of physics professors. A psychologist might be interested in a survey of novice intuitions or experiments, and physicists might be interested in the psychology of physics, but psychology of physics is not physics. Analogously, the psychology of philosophy is not philosophy. X-Phi articles are increasingly looking like psychology articles because that is what they are.

Van Roojen (Chapter 8) discusses moral intuitionism, experiments, and skeptical arguments in the ethics literature. He argues that the right response to the attack on philosophical reliance on intuitions is simply to drop the claim that intuitions are inferential. Even if intuitions on their own are at times unreliable, when intuitions form part of an overall process of reaching reflective equilibrium about a subject matter that is no problem. Thus, in order to undermine the practice of philosophers using intuitions, one has to look at the entire package and show that it is unreliable in total. Alternatively, one has to show that if intuitions were not used, judgments would be better. According to van Roojen, neither of these has been shown. Turri (chapter 9) discusses the intuitive assessment of people’s verbal behaviour and whether one should make such an assessment on the basis of truth-evaluable speech acts. After giving specific examples, he argues that there are instances in which we must look beyond the question of truth. Such cases are when the interlocutors are not primarily concerned with performing truth-evaluable speech acts. For example, a speaker’s primary intention might be to give an order or refuse a command, and in such a case ‘it’s a distinct possibility that the truth-value of their literal speech will be irrelevant not only to their own take on the situation, but also to our intuitive assessment of their behaviour as well’ (182).

The third part of the volume discusses different views on the methodology of philosophy. Weinberg & Alexander (Chapter 10) discuss the ‘thin’ and ‘thick’ conceptions of intuitions. Thin conceptions identify intuitions as instances of some generic and epistemologically uncontroversial category of mental states. Thick conceptions add to this base further semantic, phenomenological, etiological, or methodological conditions. Thick conceptions are popular, especially as a response to the challenge from X-Phi, but Weinberg & Alexander argue that such a conception turns out to have methodological problems that make matters worse—not better—for philosophers wanting to defend the use of intuitions. They stress that the contest between thick and thin conceptions of intuitions cannot be settled from the armchair and thus must involve not just philosophical but also substantive scientific work. Pritchard (Chapter 11) discusses the problem of philosophical skepticism and the role that intuitions play in that debate. He claims that this debate sheds light on the nature of intuitions in that it reinforces the claim that philosophers’ use of intuitions sometimes are significantly informed by expertise. Thus, one cannot conclude from the fact that there is a mismatch between expert intuitions and novice intuitions that there is a problem for the philosophical use of intuition. However, ‘at best, this only provides philosophy with a provisional, and possibly quite narrow, defence of its use of intuition’ (228).

The last three chapters all argue in different ways that the role that intuitions play in philosophy has been exaggerated and misunderstood. Ichikawa (Chapter 12) argues that while it’s true that philosophers rely on many propositions that are intuitive, the claim that philosophers rely on psychological states, intuitions, as evidence is false. He argues that very little contemporary analytic philosophy takes psychological intuitions as central inputs. Lowe (Chapter 13) argues that intuitions may shed interesting light on some of our relevant concepts, but intuitions are not and cannot be reliable guides to mind-independent truths of essence. Lastly, Cappelen (Chapter 14) argues that the word ‘intuition’ is such a semantic and pragmatic mess that ‘those interested in the philosophy of philosophy are better off if positions and arguments are not articulated using that and cognate terms’ (270). He argues that the way X-Phi is currently done is pointless because it does not engage with the reasoning and evidence that philosophers give in support of their claims. Philosophical judgments are made and evaluated based on reasons and evidence, not on the basis of intuitions at all. This sets up a straw man argument that is damaging to philosophical methodology. Furthermore, the institutionalization of X-Phi has made it the case that many philosophers *now* take intuitions too seriously. In other words, experimental philosophers have ‘*created the practice they set out to undermine*’ (285, emphasis in original).

**Eran Asoulin**, Independent scholar