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## A Defense of the Evidential-Role View of Intuitions

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RESUMEN

En este artículo se discuten críticamente los argumentos de Earlenbaugh y Molyneux contra la concepción del rol evidencial de las intuiciones: es decir, la concepción según la cual la comunidad filosófica usa las intuiciones como evidencia. Dichos argumentos descansan sobre tests que determinan si una fuente de información ha sido usada como evidencia. En correspondencia con dos sentidos del término “intuición” – a saber, las intuiciones como estados mentales y las intuiciones como el contenido de esos estados mentales –, se han diseñado dos tests distintos. Aquí se defiende que el primer test, que impone una condición necesaria en el rol evidencial de las intuiciones como estados, ha de ser modificado ligeramente para ser aceptado. A continuación se muestra que, tras la modificación, las intuiciones superan el test. El segundo test, que impone una condición necesaria en el rol evidencial de las intuiciones como contenido, también es superado, una vez se explica adecuadamente. La conclusión es que Earlenbaugh y Molyneux no han propuesto un argumento exitoso contra la concepción del rol evidencial de las intuiciones.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *intuiciones, metafilosofía, metodología, evidencia.*

ABSTRACT

In this paper I discuss Earlenbaugh and Molyneux’s arguments against the “evidential-role view” of intuitions, i.e. the view that intuitions are used as evidence by the philosophical community. Briefly, these arguments rely on tests to decide whether a given source of information is treated as evidential. Corresponding to two senses of ‘intuition’ – intuitions as mental states (“intuiting”) and intuitions as the content of mental states (“intuiteds”) – two distinct tests are devised. I argue that the first of these tests, which imposes a necessary condition on *intuitings* playing an evidential role, needs to be amended slightly if it is to be plausible. I then show that *intuitings* can pass this amended test. The second test, which imposes a necessary condition on *intuiteds* playing an evidential role, will, once it is fully explicated, be one that *intuiteds* can meet. It follows that Earlenbaugh and Molyneux have no successful arguments against the evidential-role view.

KEYWORDS: *Intuitions, Metaphilosophy, Methodology, Evidence.*

INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

In two interesting papers, Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a, 2009b), argue that intuitions don't play an evidential role in philosophy, and, moreover, that they aren't actually evidential. As well as being refreshingly provocative, both of these views are, I think, mistaken. In this paper I discuss Earlenbaugh and Molyneux's arguments against the "evidential-role view" of intuitions, i.e. the view that intuitions are used as evidence by the philosophical community. I argue that these arguments are misguided.

Briefly Earlenbaugh and Molyneux's arguments rely on tests to decide whether a given source of information is treated as evidential. Corresponding to two senses of 'intuition' – intuitions as mental states ("intuitings") and intuitions as the content of mental states ("intuiteds") – two distinct tests are devised. I shall not dispute the general cogency of these tests. But I think that the first of these tests, which imposes a necessary condition on *intuitings* playing an evidential role, needs to be amended slightly if it is to be plausible. I then show that *intuitings* can pass this amended test. The second test, which imposes a necessary condition on *intuiteds* playing an evidential role, will, once it is fully explicated, be one that *intuiteds* can meet. It follows that Earlenbaugh and Molyneux have given us no successful arguments against the evidential-role view. I begin by discussing their case against the evidential-role view of *intuitings*, in section I, and proceed to discuss their case against *intuiteds* playing such an evidential role in section II. Finally, in section III, I consider an objection to my response.

## I. THE CASE AGAINST INTUITINGS PLAYING AN EVIDENTIAL ROLE

Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 97, note with Lycan (1988), that 'intuition' is ambiguous. For it could either mean *intuitings* – "attitudinal mental states," or *intuiteds* – the contents of *intuitings*. Accordingly, they distinguish the position that *intuitings* play an evidential role in philosophy from the view that *intuiteds* do. For example, suppose S has the intuition that it's morally permissible to turn the trolley in the *Standard Trolley Case*, thereby saving five workmen, but killing one. If we were treating *intuitings* as evidence we would be taking the fact that S has this intuition as evidence. If on the other hand we were treating *intuiteds* as evidence we would take the proposition – that is, the content of S's intui-

tion: ‘it’s morally permissible to turn the trolley’ – as evidence qua being *intuited*. Earlenbaugh and Molyneux present us with reasons for rejecting both of these views. Let us begin by looking at their argument against the view that intuitions, understood as mental states (i.e. *intuitions*), are treated as evidence by the philosophical community.

According to Earlenbaugh and Molyneux, *intuitions* are not treated as evidence by the philosophical community. Their argument for this claim is based on the following “test:”

One can check whether a community treats a mental state  $\psi$  as a basic evidential state by determining whether the members of that group are willing to accept, *prima facie*, inferences of the following sort:

S  $\psi$ 's that P

Therefore P” [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 9].

The notion of a basic evidential state that this test invokes is from Goldman and Pust (1998). They define the class of basic evidential states as “the class [...] of contentful mental states such that being in one of these mental states is *prima facie* evidence for the truth of its content” [Pust (1998), p. 180]. Thus, the test implies that a community treats  $\psi$ -ings as *prima facie* evidence only if its members accept *prima facie* that p, when S  $\psi$ 's that p.

This test is a plausible measure according to Earlenbaugh and Molyneux since mental states that we *are* willing to infer to the content of appear to fit it. Thus, for instance,

[o]ne is usually willing to infer P from the fact that S seems to see that P, *prima facie*, provided that one believes that S has a normal, functioning visual system, that conditions are normal, and that nothing else is amiss (e.g., one does not believe S to be a liar)” [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 98].

So, similarly, with respect to other mental states such as hearing, remembering, introspecting [ibid.]. All of these types of mental states *can* pass the test. I.e. one is willing to “accept, *prima facie*” that p if S reports that she hears that p, etc. It is tempting to conclude with Earlenbaugh and Molyneux, that, quite generally, a necessary condition on a type of mental state being treated as a “basic evidential state” is that its tokens can pass the test from the point of view of the community’s members. We

therefore have a touchstone with which we can determine whether intuitions may be being treated as playing an evidential role in philosophy. They could be doing so if they can pass “the test” from the point of view of philosophers. Otherwise not.

Note however, that a certain degree of idealization is involved in extracting “the test” from the case of seeing in the passage just quoted. There seem to be three distinct kinds of idealization involved corresponding to three caveats, or possible defeaters, that are mentioned in this passage, but omitted in the test. First, we assume that S’s perceptual apparatus has certain *intrinsic properties*. Thus, we are told that we are willing to “accept, prima facie” that p on the basis of S’s seeming to see that p “provided that one believes that S has a normal, functioning visual system”. Thus, we wouldn’t, for example, conclude that p if that p is a color-blind person’s report of her perception of the color of some object. This caveat – we can call it “normal functioning” – is not mentioned in the test (as stated at (2009a), p. 98), quoted above). It appears to have been idealized away. A second idealization is evident from the fact that we assume (in the passage that is used to motivate the test) that “conditions are normal.” Thus, S’s perceptual apparatus needs to have certain *extrinsic properties*. If S reports that she seems to see that p on a foggy day in the twilight, then we may be reluctant to infer that p on the basis of her report. Since the problem in this example is that S is in unfavorable conditions, we might call this requirement “favorable conditions.” The test itself doesn’t mention this constraint on our willingness to infer that p from the fact that S reports that she *seems* that p. But if the plausibility of the test derives from the example (which it does), then the test will be more plausible if we require that conditions are indeed normal when we administer the test. Third and finally, in the example we are also assuming that “nothing else is amiss.” It’s hard to say something general about the ways in which things could be amiss in the relevant way. But Earlenbaugh and Molyneux do provide us with a clear example. If we knew that someone was a notorious liar, we would be reluctant to conclude that (say) it’s five o’clock even if she consults her watch upon our asking her, and then announces that it’s five o’clock. This third caveat captures a different category of defeaters than does “normal functioning” and “favorable conditions.” This is because we may have no reason to think that the liar’s perceptual apparatus isn’t well-functioning or that she isn’t well-positioned to perceive the facts. Still, something else is amiss because she wants to deceive us. Notice again that the “nothing amiss” requirement has been idealized away from the actual test as it makes no mention of it.

But it's important to keep in mind that the plausibility of "the test" derives from the underlying assumption that these three conditions are met. For if these conditions aren't met, we have a straightforward defeater of the basis for inferring to the content of S's mental state when S  $\psi$ 's that p. We may call the principle that these conditions – normal functioning, favorable conditions and nothing amiss – must be met, the "defeater caveat." So a more adequate test – albeit a less idealized, and simple one – would consist of the *defeater caveat* in conjunction with "the test" stated by Earlenbaugh and Molyneux. Let's call this more adequate test "the augmented test:"

A community treats a mental state  $\psi$  as a basic evidential state only if they are willing to accept, prima facie, inferences of the following sort

S  $\psi$ 's that p,

and there are no defeaters of S's report that p,

Therefore, p.

Having introduced and motivated their own idealized, non-augmented test, Earlenbaugh and Molyneux make the following claim about the role of intuition in philosophical practice:

Curiously [...] one is *not* typically inclined to believe P on the basis of *someone else* intuiting that P. In this way, intuitions come apart from the standard basic evidential states, for no standard basic evidential state is subject sensitive in this way. One is willing to treat what other people seemed to see, what they seemed to hear, and what they seem to remember, as evidence, in the sense that one will base one's beliefs upon it. But one is not willing to base one's philosophical beliefs on the intuitions of another. At the very least, this indicates a dissimilarity between intuitions and the standard basic evidential states [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 99].

Although I think this observation has something going for it (for reasons I'll explain below), I don't think this establishes that the philosophical community doesn't use intuitions as evidence. This would only follow, by the more adequate *augmented test*, if philosophers didn't typically have reason to think that there are defeaters of the content of others' intuitions when philosophers don't use them as evidence. And it seems to me that they sometimes do have such reasons. For example, they may suspect

that someone's intuitions are distorted by theoretical affiliations. Such affiliations would count as a defeater of someone's intuitions because the content of the putative intuition could be seen as reporting on the implications of the theory as opposed to reporting the content of a genuine intuition about the subject-matter of interest.

Moreover, it also seems that there are cases where philosophers – in the absence of defeaters – do actually infer that – or at least assign some plausibility to –  $p$  on the basis of a colleague's intuiting that  $p$ . Goldman and Pust (1998), p. 182, for example, claim that philosophical methodology could begin by taking the intuition of “an informant” as *prima facie* evidence. Judith Jarvis Thomson, in considering a variation on the *Trolley* scenario, writes that,

For my own part, I do not find it obvious that he may [throw the switch]. [...]But others tell me they think it clear the bystander may proceed in such a case. If they are right – and I guess we should agree that they are–, then [...] [Thomson (1985), p. 1411].

Presumably, the others to whom Thomson is referring had the intuition that the bystander would be permitted to throw the switch in this case. And Thomson does assign some plausibility to the content of that intuition. This is also the view of the intuitionist Robert Audi: “given how intuitions are understood – as deriving from the exercise of reason and as having evidential weight – conscientious intuitionists will try to factor into their moral thinking, especially on controversial issues, the apparent intuitions of others” [Audi (2005), p. 47]. So philosophers sometimes do defer to the intuitions of others.

As I indicated above, I nonetheless think that there's something essentially right about Earlenbaugh and Molyneux's claim that philosophers aren't “typically inclined to believe  $P$  on the basis of someone else intuiting that  $P$ .” And this does seem, at least on the surface of it, to set intuitions apart from visual perceptions, etc. to the extent that we are inclined to take such observation reports as evidence. But I think their observation about the difference between perceptual reports in more mundane contexts and intuitions in philosophical practice can be explained as follows. We often don't have access to the same objects as others have (in perceptual reports, etc.), whereas philosophers take themselves to have equal access to the subject-matters of interest to them (fairness, personal identity, etc.), as well as to their own intuitions about these. Mental states, such as memories, which can be traced back

to perceptions, often have as their content properties of non-repeatable events, states of affairs or objects. Not so with the thought-experiments which philosophers rely on to elicit intuitions. They are repeatable at different times and places. Thus, anyone who is familiar with, say, Gettier's alleged counter-examples to the tripartite theory of knowledge (S knows that p iff S believes that p, S has justification that p, and p is true) can think about them and determine for herself whether S has knowledge in these hypothetical scenarios. That is, she can consult her own intuitions. But if I'm interested in, say, what Gettier's hair color is, I will have to rely on the reports of others since I have never seen him in person. Even though I'm not altogether debarred from obtaining a first-hand perception of Gettier's hair color, it would be inconvenient to me (financially, geographically, etc.) to do so. My best bet is therefore to rely on the testimony of others. But his thought-experiments are available to me unmediated. There's therefore no need to rely on the intuitions of others about these scenarios.

If this is correct, then we can explain why it would seem to Earlenbaugh and Molyneux that philosophers don't use each other's intuitions as evidence. For philosophers have a kind of access via intuitions to the topics of philosophical interest, that we more often lack in the more mundane contexts of perception, memory, etc. The content of such mental states often represent non-repeatable events, states of affairs or objects, and even if they don't (such as in the case where they are about the color of someone's hair) it may be too inconvenient to get access to their subject-matter. But we can directly determine what our intuitions about thought-experiments are. Philosophers may therefore – reasonably enough it would seem – prefer to “look for themselves:” elicit their own intuitions about the thought-experiments and use these. This doesn't establish however that they wouldn't, under appropriate circumstances, rely on the intuitions of others: if a sufficiently large number/proportion of other people have different intuitions from oneself (as in the Thomson example), if philosophers don't have any intuitions about some case, or if they don't have clear ones, then they do rely on the intuitions of other people. Moreover, philosophers typically, or at least often, seem to think that the intuitions of others should figure in moral deliberation (as Audi maintains). However, the instances where philosophers do rely on the intuitions of their peers may be relatively rare because philosophers usually do have intuitions themselves, and because they prefer to deploy their own. Earlenbaugh's and Molyneux' position overlooks these instances, real though perhaps rare.

So far, we have discussed Earlenbaugh's and Molyneux' case against the evidential role view of *intuitions*. We found this wanting because it was based on a too idealized test. Philosophers do seem to use intuitions as evidence if we use a more adequate test, which I have called the *augmented test*. We did concede, however, that philosophers appear to prefer to use their own intuitions. This observation might help explain why the authors found the anti-evidential-role view appealing.

## II. THE CASE AGAINST *INTUITEDS* BEING TREATED AS EVIDENCE

We must now turn to their case against the evidential-role view concerning *intuiteds*, i.e. the content of intuitions. This argument is structurally similar to the previous one: it relies on a criterion, or test, that *intuiteds* must meet if they are to play a “psycho-evidential-role *purely in virtue of being intuited*” [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 100]. A proposition, in this case the content of an intuition, plays a psycho-evidential role, if it plays the role as evidence “in virtue of being the target of a psychological state” [Ibid.]. The criterion that *intuiteds* must meet is that they must be “credence-entailing.” Being in a credence-entailing mental state is explained as follows: “being in a credence entailing state with content P is incompatible with placing no credence in P” [Ibid, p. 95]. The notion of credence is a somewhat technical one, and I shall try to illuminate it below.

But before going into details, let's take a look at the basic idea behind Earlenbaugh and Molyneux's argument. First, they have proposed that in order for the contents of a kind of mental state to play an evidential role, mental states of that kind must be credence-entailing. Second, they claim that to be credence-entailing, a kind of mental state must pass what I'll call the *Incoherence Test* (IT). So by transitivity, if a kind of mental state plays a psycho-evidential role, they must pass the IT. The IT consists in considering the coherence of claims of the form

(IT,  $\psi$ -ing) “I  $\psi$  that p, even though I do not place any credence in the idea,”

where  $\psi$ -ing is some type of mental state. The test is to be implemented as follows. If, with respect to  $\psi$ -ing, (IT,  $\psi$ -ing) appears incoherent, then  $\psi$ -ing will be credence-entailing, and consequently  $\psi$ -ing that p would be playing an evidential role. If, on the contrary, it does not seem incoher-



ent, then  $\psi$ -ing won't be credence-entailing, and  $\psi$ -ing that  $p$  won't be playing an evidential role. Thus, for instance, the proposition

(IT, Suspecting) 'I suspect that it's raining, but I do not place any credence in the idea,'

seems incoherent to Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 95. Therefore, they conclude, suspecting is a credence-entailing mental state that plays a psycho-evidential role according to the *Incoherence Test*.

So it's clear what will have to be the case if *intuiteds* are playing an evidential role in philosophy. The following will have to be incoherent:

(IT, Intuiting) "I find it intuitive that P even though I place no credence in it" [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 101].

Earlenbaugh and Molyneux argue that this isn't incoherent. They therefore conclude that *intuiteds* do not play a psycho-evidential role. They argue for the absence of incoherence by way of an example:

consider the naïve comprehension axiom — for any property, there is a set of things having that property. The axiom is, as proved by Bertrand Russell, certainly false. Despite knowing this, one can have a strong intuition in favor of it; thus, one finds intuitive a proposition in which one places no credence. So intuitions are not credence-entailing; i.e., intuiting that P does not guarantee that one places any credence in P. Intuitions are more like desires and wishes in assigning no credence to their contents, and quite unlike credence-entailing states like suspicions, fears and worries [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), pp. 101-2].

As the case is described, someone has background knowledge (the proof) that makes her reject the content of her own intuition ('the naïve comprehension axiom is true'). Because of this background knowledge, the content is not credence-entailing to her. Thus, we seem to have a clear illustration that (IT, Intuiting) isn't incoherent. Therefore, intuitions don't play an evidential role by the *Incoherence Test*.

But does the fact that someone has background knowledge available which is (conclusive) evidence against  $p$  (where  $p$  is 'the naïve comprehension axiom is true') *really* show that one ascribes no credence to  $p$ ? At this point, we have to try to get clearer on the meaning of 'S intuits that  $p$ ' and 'credence,' and the relation between these two notions.

The definition of 'S intuits that  $p$ ' that I'm going to propose is this:

(Intuition) S intuits that  $p \equiv_{df} p$  is the content of a spontaneously occurring mental state (that is, one not formed through overt reasoning) that S finds *prima facie* plausible.

The aspect of this definition that is important here is that S finds  $p$  *prima facie* plausible. This implies that if S intuits that  $p$ , then S may not find it plausible that  $p$  all things considered. For S may have other background beliefs, such that, were she to evaluate  $p$  in light of these, she could end up finding  $p$  implausible.

To show that I'm not simply legislating a meaning for 'S intuits that  $p$ ,' let me appeal to the opinion of philosophers who are impartial to the present debate.

Goldman and Pust (1998) describe philosophical methodology as follows:

In the first step, the occurrence of an intuition that  $p$ , either an intuition of one's own or that of an informant, is taken as (*prima facie*) evidence for the truth of  $p$  (or the truth of a closely related proposition). In the second step, the truth of  $p$  is used as positive or negative evidence for the truth of a general theory [Goldman and Pust (1998), p. 182].

Clearly, according to Goldman and Pust, intuitions are treated as being only *prima facie* evidence. According to Bealer,

For you to have an intuition that  $A$  is just for it to *seem* to you that  $A$  [Bealer (1996), p. 123].

Where its seeming to you that  $A$ , to Bealer, doesn't imply that you actually believe that  $A$  since it may be inconsistent with other things one knows. For instance,

[...] I have an intuition – it still *seems* to me – that the naïve comprehension axiom of set theory is true; this is so despite the fact that I do not believe that it is true (because I know the set theoretical paradoxes) [Bealer (1996), p.123].

In other words, when Bealer considers the claim, 'the naïve comprehension axiom is true' in isolation from background knowledge, it seems true to him. Thus it only seems true to him *prima facie*.

Sosa, conceives of intuitions as

intellectual seemings of a certain sort, [...] attractions to assent derived from the sheer understanding of the propositions involved [Sosa (2007), p. 52].

Since the attraction is based merely on an understanding of the content of the proposition, one may not assent when one considers the proposition in light of one's background knowledge. In other words, one is attracted to assent merely *prima facie*.

I think, therefore, that the shared understanding of 'S intuits that p' is that S finds it *prima facie* plausible that p when S considers p in isolation.

So far, we have clarified what it means to have an intuition. As for 'credence,' I suggest we understand it in terms of plausibility. It seems to me that if one assigns credence to p, it is simply that one finds it plausible that p either *prima facie* or all things considered. Thus, 'credence' becomes susceptible of two interpretations:

(Credence<sub>pf</sub>) S ascribes credence to p  $\equiv_{df}$  S finds it *prima facie* plausible that p;

and,

(Credence<sub>ac</sub>) S ascribes credence to p  $\equiv_{df}$  S finds it plausible that p all things considered.

On one of these definitions, (Credence<sub>pf</sub>), S can assign credence to something, even if S doesn't actually believe it.<sup>2</sup> This can happen if there are other things that S knows or believes, or other things that S finds more plausible, which suggest to her that not-p. These beliefs or knowings, if S is rational, make S cease to find it plausible that p upon reflection. This does not establish however that S couldn't find p plausible, if S were to entertain the thought that p in isolation from these other background beliefs.

Presumably, ascribing credence is just one kind of propositional attitude among many where it is possible to have the attitude to a proposition either 'prima facie' or 'all things considered.' For instance, one can *suspect* something only *prima facie* or only all things considered. One might suspect *prima facie* that it's going to rain but be given countervailing evidence (such as a weather forecast) that persuades one otherwise. Here one doesn't suspect that it's going to rain all things considered although one suspects it *prima facie*. Alternatively, one might not suspect

that it's going to rain prima facie (it looks bright and sunny outside) but be given evidence that, all things considered, makes one think that it is.

Looking again at (IT, Suspecting), it seems we now have different ways of interpreting the proposition. For, first, one can suspect prima facie ( $\text{Suspect}_{\text{pf}}$ ) and suspect all things considered ( $\text{Suspect}_{\text{atc}}$ ), and, second, one can find something plausible either prima facie ( $\text{Credence}_{\text{pf}}$ ) or all things considered ( $\text{Credence}_{\text{atc}}$ ). Hence, we obtain the following four options:

		Suspect	
		Prima facie	All things considered
Credence	Plausible prima facie	1	3
	Plausible all things considered	2	4

Let us apply IT to each of these four options. (IT, Suspecting) is only incoherent if we say: (1) 'I suspect prima facie that p but don't find it prima facie plausible that p,' or (4) 'I suspect all things considered that p, but don't find it plausible all things considered that p.' However, it's not incoherent to say (2) 'I suspect prima facie that p but don't find it plausible that p all things considered,' nor to say (3) 'I suspect that p all things considered but I don't find it prima facie plausible that p.' Accordingly, once we flesh things out it seems that there are some interpretations on which suspecting can pass the *Incoherence Test* and others on which it can't. For on interpretations (1) and (4) (IT, Suspecting) is incoherent, but on interpretations (2) and (3) it isn't. Filling our findings into the matrix, we get:

		Suspect	
		Prima facie	All things considered
Credence	Plausible prima facie	Incoherent 1	Not incoherent 3
	Plausible all things considered	Not incoherent 2	Incoherent 4

One might wonder if this entails that the *Inconsistency Test* is implausible, since (IT, Suspecting) is incoherent on some interpretations, i.e. (1) and (4), but not on others, viz. (2) and (3). Now we can either decide to reject IT wholesale, or amend it so as to demand only that (IT,  $\psi$ -ing) is incoherent/coherent on the parallel interpretations of those on which (IT, Suspecting) is incoherent/coherent. Rejecting the validity of IT would of course imply that it would be unproblematic if intuitions couldn't pass the *Test*. But let us try to see what happens if we apply the amended IT. On this amended version, (IT,  $\psi$ -ing) can be coherent on some interpretations (i.e. the parallel of 2 and 3 in the above matrix) and  $\psi$ -ing could still play an evidential role. However, the amended test would insist that it's a necessary condition on  $\psi$ -ing having this status that it's coherent *only* on the same interpretations as suspecting. Thus, in general, we would first have to distinguish between,

- (1) I  $\psi$  prima facie that p, but don't find it plausible prima facie,
- (2) I  $\psi$  prima facie that p, but don't find it plausible all things considered,
- (3) I  $\psi$  all things considered that p, but don't find it plausible prima facie, and
- (4) I  $\psi$  all things considered that p, but don't find it plausible all things considered.

If, then, with respect to  $\psi$ -ing, (1) and (4) are incoherent, though (2) and (3) are coherent,  $\psi$ -ing could play a psycho-evidential role. Call this the amended *Incoherence Test*.

To get reassurance that the amended IT is plausible, let's look at another of the credence-entailing states mentioned by Earlenbaugh and Molyneux – worrying. Say I worry that a dog is going to bite me. We can interpret 'I worry that the dog is going to bite me' as:

- (1) Prima facie, I worry that the dog is going to bite me, but I don't find it plausible prima facie (incoherent),
- (2) Prima facie, I worry that the dog is going to bite me, but I don't find it plausible all things considered (not incoherent – suppose I'm naturally afraid of dogs, but someone trustworthy tells me that this one is quite friendly),
- (3) All things considered, I worry that the dog is going to bite me, but I don't find it plausible prima facie (not incoherent – suppose the dog actually looks friendly, but someone tells me that it's a cunning dog that always looks that way before it's going to bite), or
- (4) All things considered, I worry that the dog is going to bite me, but I don't find it plausible all things considered (incoherent).

So 'worrying' displays the same structure as 'suspecting' when we apply the amended *Incoherence Test*: interpretations (1) and (4) are incoherent, (2) and (3) aren't. This finding is in tune with Earlenbaugh and Molyneux's claim that worrying is credence-entailing because the amended IT holds that a type of mental state is credence-entailing if we obtain this result.

Before applying the amended IT to *intuiteds*, let us pause to take stock of the argument. Earlenbaugh and Molyneux propose an *Incoherence Test* to determine whether *intuiteds* play a psycho-evidential role. The *Test* was to see whether sentences of the form (IT,  $\psi$ -ing) 'I  $\psi$  that p, even though I place no credence in the idea' were incoherent or not. If they were incoherent, then  $\psi$ -ing could be playing a psycho-evidential role, and if coherent,  $\psi$ -ing couldn't be. In order to determine whether (IT, Intuiting) – "I find it intuitive that p even though I place no credence in it" [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 101] – is incoherent we needed an account of 'S intuit that p' and of 'credence.' I have proposed, first, that we understand 'S intuit that p' to mean that S finds p plausible (prima facie) when S considers p in isolation. Second, I've suggested that we conceive of 'credence' in terms of plausibility. Third, I have suggested that we distinguish between finding something plausible prima facie, and finding it plausible all things considered, giving rise to two interpretations of 'credence' – (Credence<sub>pf</sub>) and (Credence<sub>acc</sub>). Fourth, I have pointed out that one can also  $\psi$  (e.g. suspect or

worry) prima facie or all things considered. Finally, I have shown how this enabled us to devise a more sophisticated test: Sentences of the form (IT,  $\psi$ -ing) need not be incoherent when interpreted in certain ways (i.e. interpretations (2) and (3)) in cases where  $\psi$ -ing is playing an evidential role – as long as they *are* incoherent when interpreted in certain other ways (i.e. interpretations (1) and (4)). This was motivated by the observation that mental states such as suspecting and worrying – which according to Earlenbaugh and Molyneux do play a psycho-evidential role – display a similar structure.

With these clarifications in hand, let's look at (IT, Intuiting) with fresh eyes: "I find it intuitive that P even though I place no credence in it" [Ibid.]. We begin by noting that (IT, Intuiting), just as (IT, Suspecting), is susceptible of four distinct interpretations. However, we need only focus on two. The reason for this has to do with the definition of 'S intuit that p.' What I have argued is that to intuit that p is simply to find it plausible that p, when one considers p in isolation from other background beliefs. Therefore, by definition, to intuit that p is simply to find it prima facie plausible that p (because one considers p only in isolation). Hence, we set aside those interpretations of 'S intuit that p' on which this means that S finds p plausible all things considered (i.e. (3) and (4)). Only interpretations (1) and (2) of (IT, Intuiting) are possible given this definition of 'S intuit that p.'

		Intuit	
		Plausible prima facie	Plausible all things considered
Credence	Plausible prima facie	1	Not possible 3
	Plausible all things considered	2	Not possible 4

In other words, we are left with the following possible interpretations:

(IT, Intuiting (1)) 'I find it prima facie plausible that p, but I don't find it prima facie plausible that p'

and

(IT, Intuiting (2)) 'I find it prima facie plausible that p, but I don't find it plausible all things considered.'

(IT, Intuiting (1)) is incoherent and (IT, Intuiting (2)) is not. (IT, Intuiting) can therefore pass the amended IT. The amended IT, it will be recalled, was derived from the observation that the other types of credence-entailing mental states that we have discussed so far – suspecting and worrying – are incoherent on interpretation (1) (and (3)), but not on interpretation (2) (and (4)). These other types of mental states *do* play a psycho-evidential role, according to Earlenbaugh and Molyneux. Because (IT, Intuiting) is incoherent/coherent on the parallel interpretations on which (IT, Suspecting) and (IT, Worrying) are incoherent/coherent, the amended *Incoherence Test* doesn't actually give us reason to think that intuitions don't play an evidential role.

It seems likely that the second interpretation, (IT, Intuiting (2)), is the one at work in the case cited by Earlenbaugh and Molyneux, where p is 'The naïve comprehension axiom is true.' This is because once someone who knows about Russell's proof considers the naïve comprehension axiom in light of this information, then (if they are rational) they realize that the axiom can't be plausible *all things considered*. Therefore, (IT, Intuiting (2)) isn't incoherent. One can be tempted to believe that p although one knows that not-p.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, then, the focus on (IT, Intuiting (2)) explains why Earlenbaugh and Molyneux think that *intuiteds* don't play an evidential role. For using the original *Incoherence Test*, the coherence of (IT, Intuiting (2)) would imply that intuiteds aren't credence-entailing. But the amended *Incoherence Test* actually implies that the coherence of (IT, Intuiting (2)) is a necessary condition on *intuiteds* being credence-entailing, and hence on their ability to play an evidential role.

To test whether the content of an intuition, p, plays an evidential role, Earlenbaugh and Molyneux proposed the credence-entailing test. To test whether intuitions are credence-entailing, they proposed the *Incoherence Test*. I have argued that the most plausible, amended, version of the *Incoherence Test* is one that *intuiteds* can meet. Therefore, applying the amended IT, we get the result that *intuiteds* aren't prevented from playing an evidential role.



Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 102, claim that,

Believed propositions play a psycho-evidential-role because the belief guarantees that the subject invests credence in them. But S's intuiting P is not sufficient for S investing credence in it. Thus, if an inference legitimately proceeds from an intuited proposition, it must be because the subject stands in some other, credence-entailing, attitude towards it. But if the proposition plays the role in virtue of this other state then it does not play the role in virtue of being intuited.

But, it seems that one can legitimately make inferences from intuited propositions, even if one merely finds them *prima facie* plausible. One need not stand in some *other* credence entailing relation to them, such as actually believing them. For example, one might have the intuition, regarding the famous *Surgeon Case*, that the surgeon would be doing something morally wrong if he decided to harvest the organs of one innocent person in order to save five lives. On the basis of this intuition – that is, on the basis of finding it *prima facie* plausible that the surgeon would be wrong to harvest the organs – one could reason as follows:

- (1) The surgeon would be doing something morally wrong in harvesting the organs.
  - (2) If the surgeon would be doing something morally wrong in harvesting the organs, then he should be permitted to do something that falls short of maximizing the overall happiness.
  - (3) If the surgeon should be permitted to do something that falls short of maximizing the overall happiness, then (act) utilitarianism is false.
- ∴ (Act) utilitarianism is false.

This is a perfectly legitimate inference proceeding from an intuition. Since the argument is valid, one should assign the same degree of plausibility to the conclusion that one does to the content of the intuition, i.e. (1). In other words, the intuitor seems logically committed to assigning *prima facie* plausibility to (4).

### III. AN OBJECTION AND A REPLY

Before concluding let us consider just one objection. It is based on the suspicion that Earlenbaugh and Molyneux may be thinking that

there's an important and essential difference between the default epistemological status of the content of intuitions and those of other kinds of mental states. In the case of perceptions, memories, introspections, etc. we need special reasons if we are to doubt what someone reports that she seems to see, remember, introspect, etc. With respect to these *seemings* therefore, the default seems to be to trust them. But in the case of *intuiteds* the opposite appears to be the case. For here we need special reasons in order to trust them. If this is correct, then *intuiteds* wouldn't be playing an evidential role in their own right, as the other kinds of mental states appear to. They would only do so by dint of these other special reasons, e.g. that we find the intuitor trustworthy given her track-record as an intuitor, or that she has special insight into a subject-matter. So *intuiteds* don't play an evidential role by default.

One must concede that this objection is very forceful. However, I think it should be resisted. It must, I think, be admitted that there are differences in the default plausibility of types of mental states. Thus, mental states like hallucinations and dreams seem to have contents with no default plausibility. And mental states like seeings do seem to have contents with default plausibility, as the objection holds. But perhaps *intuiteds* occupy a position between these two *types of seemings*. That is, they may have a degree of default plausibility that's lower than the content of *seeings* but nonetheless higher than that of mere hallucinations and dreams. Moreover, *intuiteds* do have such a degree of plausibility since, by definition, *intuiteds* are the objects of intuitions, and so they have *prima facie* plausibility.

One way to see how *intuiteds* often have a degree of plausibility that's lower than *seeings*, is to note that we cannot always be sure that someone has a genuine intuition that *p*, or even that the content of the intuition is *p*.

Thus, if someone reports that she has the intuition that *p*, we might suspect, for example, that she doesn't really have an *intuition*, but that perhaps she's remembering that *p* or reporting what she think most people would about a scenario. This might explain why we are unwilling to assign the same degree of default plausibility to *intuiteds* as we are to *seeings*. For if someone reports that she has the intuition that *p*, we may suspect that she's not really intuiting that *p*. Typically however, no such avenue is available in cases of seeing. For here we normally don't have reason to doubt that the perceiver really is seeing since virtually everyone knows what it is to see. 'I intuit that *p*' is used in a slightly technical sense in philosophy, and 'I intuit that *p*' may be used differently in other contexts ('a sixth sense,' "I feel that *p*," 'Most people would say that *p*,' 'The first thought that enters my mind is *p*,' etc.). This makes it reasonable for

philosophers to suspect that when any Tom, Dick or Harry says “I intuit that  $p$ ,” this may not actually be so.

A related point is that philosophers might suspect that when laymen say they have an intuition that  $p$ , they aren’t tracking the concepts or facts that philosophers are interested in. Some concepts get used in a technical sense in philosophy, and lack of familiarity with the philosophical tradition on the part of laymen, may make philosophers skeptical about the epistemic value of some intuitions.<sup>4</sup> And even within the philosophical community there are different traditions and theoretical affiliations. This may make philosophers wonder whether some of their colleagues’ intuitions really are about the same issues as their own.

As I’ve argued above, philosophers do, at least occasionally, treat the intuitions of their colleagues as evidence. This may be because they assume that, given philosophers’ familiarity with what it is to intuit (in the philosophical sense), there’s no doubt as to whether or not they really do intuit. So within philosophy, *intuiteds* might enjoy a degree of default plausibility that approaches that of *seeings*. However, (alleged) *intuiteds* in general may not enjoy this status because they include those of non-philosophers. Here there’s room for doubt about whether they really are genuine *intuiteds*. So perhaps *intuiteds* do not generally enjoy the same degree of plausibility as *seeings* although they may do so within the philosophical community.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has discussed Earlenbaugh and Molyneux’s case against the evidential-role view of *intuitings* and *intuiteds*. Their argument against the evidential-role view concerning *intuitings* was rejected because it was based on a too idealized test. A more adequate test, I argued, had the result that *intuitings* could play an evidential role. We did concede however, that philosophers appear to prefer to use their own intuitions. This observation might help explain why the authors found the non-evidential-role view appealing.

The argument against the evidential-role view of *intuiteds* was also found wanting. Distinguishing between two senses of ‘credence’ – (Credence<sub>pt</sub>) and (Credence<sub>atc</sub>) – and two corresponding senses of ‘ $S$   $\psi$ s that  $p$ ’ – ‘ $S$   $\psi$ s that  $p$  prima facie’ and ‘ $S$   $\psi$ s that  $p$  all things considered’ – a more plausible *Incoherence Test* than the one suggested by Earlenbaugh and Molyneux was devised. According to this amended *Incoherence Test*, (IT,  $\psi$ -

ing) only had to be incoherent on certain interpretations. Once this amended IT' was combined with a conception of 'S intuits that p' – according to which one intuits that p, when one finds it prima facie plausible when one considers it p in isolation – *intuiteds* were capable of passing it. Therefore, Earlenbaugh and Molyneux's argument against the view that *intuiteds* play an evidential role in philosophy is unsuccessful.

Finally, I considered the objection, that, unlike *seemings*, *intuiteds* don't enjoy any kind of default plausibility. I dismissed this objection on the grounds that intuiteds are the object of intuitions, so by definition, they enjoy prima facie plausibility. And intuiteds do seem to enjoy a degree of default plausibility, as I think my examples of Thomson, and Audi illustrate.

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#### NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> The authors think that credence-entailing mental states need not be belief-entailing. However, if one is in a credence-entailing mental state – e.g. that of suspecting that p – this “excludes ruling P out” [Earlenbaugh and Molyneux (2009a), p. 95].

<sup>3</sup> This is also Bealer's take on the example, see the quote above [Bealer (1996), p. 123].

<sup>4</sup> See Ludwig (2007) and Kauppinen (2007).

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