

Creator of Heaven and Earth, and of all things, seen and unseen? The answer seems to be yes, but one notices an air of ‘as-if-ness’ at certain junctures. He is aware that how God interacts with or shows himself in the world of objects is a mystery, and he may be sceptical about miracles: ‘...when we attribute an event to his [God’s] will, we are saying that there is a reason for it, and that this reason is God’s answer to our question ‘why?’ We are not describing it as a miraculous intervention, and *we can accept Hume’s scepticism about miracles*, while acknowledging God’s presence as an agent in space and time’ [my italics] (p. 57). In relation to this, the reader cannot fail to notice that while Scruton writes movingly about the essence of God as self-sacrificing *agape*, shown in the life and death of Jesus, he is reticent about Jesus’ resurrection.

Such suspicions of covert scepticism are probably unfair. But the author’s attachment to tradition does not lead to an appetite for dogma, and any tentativeness or ambiguity in the work come from its being a profound and learned engagement both with all aspects of modernity, and the religious instinct. The book is thus a plea for a ‘consecrated world’, in a culture which wants to flee the ‘eye of judgement’.

London

PIERS BENN

*Philosophy Without Intuitions*. BY HERMAN CAPPELEN. (Oxford UP, 2012. Pp. xii + 242. Price £25.00.)

Experimental results on the variability and intra-personal instability of philosophical intuitions have recently sparked a lively methodological debate about the reliability of the philosophical method. In his new book, Herman Cappelen argues that this entire debate is misguided. The reason is simple: philosophers don’t rely on intuitions, so there is no reason for philosophers to worry about their reliability. Cappelen’s case for this claim amounts to one of the most original and well-argued contributions to recent discussions about philosophical methodology. His book should be essential reading for anyone interested in the debate.

Cappelen’s book is in two parts, both centred on a claim he refers to as Centrality: ‘Contemporary analytic philosophers rely on intuitions as evidence (or as a source of evidence) for philosophical theories’ (p. 3). The first part (chs 2–5) rejects an argument attempting to support Centrality with reference to how philosophers sometimes talk in terms of intuitions. The second part (chs 6–11) considers what Cappelen takes to be a more promising argument, framed in terms of philosophical practice rather than philosophers’ talk of intuitions. This argument will be the focus of the remainder of this review.

At the heart of Cappelen’s rejection of the relevant argument are chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 provides a set of ‘diagnostics for intuitiveness’, designating features of intuitions that we should expect to find in philosophical practice, if Centrality is true. Chapter 8 consists of a number of case studies of well-known thought experiments, none of which exhibit the relevant diagnostics, according to

Cappelen. Cappelen concludes that we should reject Centrality, and acknowledge that experimental philosophy is ‘a big mistake’, since ‘the entire project of experimental philosophy only gets off the ground by assuming Centrality’ (p. 219). In what follows, I will suggest that he’s wrong on both counts: both about Centrality, and about experimental philosophy.

The task of identifying diagnostics for intuitiveness is complicated by the fact that there is little agreement among philosophers about what intuitions are. Cappelen settles on three diagnostics: intuitions have a characteristic phenomenology, justify but need no justification, and are based solely on conceptual competence (pp. 112–3). I will set aside the idea that intuitions have a characteristic phenomenology, since it’s the least widely accepted candidate feature of intuitions of the three, and focus on the remaining two diagnostics.

Cappelen refers to the idea that intuitions justify but need no justification as Rock, the idea being that ‘intuitive judgements serve as a kind of rock bottom justificatory point in philosophical argumentation’ (p. 112). Cappelen’s strategy vis à vis Rock is a negative one: since arguments justify, someone presenting arguments for a claim gives us reason to believe that the claim in question is not Rock (e.g., pp. 161–2). By way of illustration, consider his discussion of Goldman’s fake-barn case. Goldman imagines two scenarios: in the first scenario, Henry is driving through a perfectly normal countryside; in the second scenario, he happens to be driving through a district full of fake barns that look just like real barns. Goldman then makes two claims: when Henry looks at a barn in the first scenario, he knows that there’s a barn; and when he looks at a barn in the second scenario, he doesn’t know that there’s a barn, even if he happens to be looking at one of the few real barns in the district. However, according to Cappelen, neither claim is Rock, because Goldman goes on to provide arguments for both.

Or does he? Philosophy sometimes resembles curve-fitting in the sciences. Goldman’s aim is to investigate how ‘this change in our assessment [from the first to the second scenario is] to be explained’. What Cappelen mistakes for arguments are attempts to accommodate data-points, in the form of a surprising assessment pattern. According to Goldman, the way to account for this pattern is by saying that we know that  $p$  only if the actual state of affairs in which  $p$  is true is discriminable by us from a relevant possible state of affairs in which  $p$  is false. Goldman is not thereby providing an argument for his data-points. Fitting data-points to a curve is not to justify one’s data, and accounting for intuitions through philosophical theorising is no different on this score. If anything, it’s the other way around: *ceteris paribus*, theories are justified in so far as they fit our intuitions.

Cappelen addresses this kind of reading when discussing the suggestion that philosophical theorising is a form of abduction, and rejects it in connection with his discussion of Keith Lehrer’s Truetemp case. But here, too, Cappelen mistakes an attempt to accommodate data-points for an argument. Truetemp forms perfectly reliable beliefs about the temperature, on account of a device implanted in his head without his knowledge. A reliabilist seems committed to saying that Truetemp knows the temperature. Lehrer claims that he doesn’t. But, Cappelen suggests, that claim is not Rock—nor is Lehrer engaged in an abductive

inference—because Lehrer goes on to provide an argument for it (p. 170). However, what Cappelen considers an argument is, in effect, the outlines of an internalist account, and would as such simply beg the question against the reliabilist. A more charitable reading has Lehrer provide an explanation of intuitive data by invoking an internalist account, and challenge the externalist to do the same.

As for the reading of Rock that thereby remains unaffected by Cappelen's negative strategy, intuitions justify but need no justification in the same way that statistical data-points do: a set of data-points, fitted to a curve, may justify statistical generalisations, without the data-points themselves being in need of justification. This is not to endow data-points with any mysterious epistemic quality. In fact, suggesting that intuitions may be thought of as data-points leaves completely open the question of their evidential status, and consequently also *why* we should fit our philosophical theories to intuitions in the first place (if indeed we should). The only point relevant here is that Cappelen mistakes attempts to accommodate data-points for attempts to justify them, and thereby fails to undermine what seems a perfectly natural reading of Rock. Hence, Centrality stands.

But let's assume that I'm wrong. That would leave Centrality with the third and final diagnostic: that intuitions are based solely on conceptual competence. Philosophers often express the claims typically identified as expressing intuitions in terms of what it seems right to say. However, Cappelen prefers a *deflationary* reading of such claims, as simply designating things that make up the common ground (p. 172). But such a reading doesn't change the fact that many philosophers have thought it right to say certain things about certain possibilities, and in so doing have shaped philosophical theorising in substantive ways. More controversially, it has turned out that what we're inclined to say varies with manifestly irrelevant factors, and that when we expand the scope of people consulted on the matter, others have not thought it right to say what philosophers have. This raises a question: why trust the philosophers?

This is not a call for scepticism. It's a straightforward methodological question, and the way to answer it is by looking closer at the methods that go into philosophical investigations. If Cappelen is right, we shouldn't frame those investigations in terms of intuitions. But that in no way removes the need for empirical investigations into philosophical methodology. This is also why experimental philosophy doesn't need Centrality to get off the ground. Because if we don't rely on intuitions, then what? At one point, Cappelen suggests that there is nothing to be said in general about the evidential source of philosophical claims (p. 21). Say that's right. That certainly wouldn't mean that experimental philosophy is a big mistake. To the contrary: if our current understanding of the multi-faceted nature of philosophical practice needs to be improved, and we care about whether the variety of methods used are good ones, what we need is more experimental philosophy, not less.

*University of Kent Canterbury*

KRISTOFFER AHLSTROM-VIJ