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A New Hope for Philosophers' Appeal to Intuition

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Abstract

Some recent researches in experimental philosophy have posed a problem for philosophers' appeal to intuition (hereinafter referred to as PAI); the aim of this paper is to offer an answer to this challenge. The thesis against PAI implies that, given some experimental results, intuition does not seem to be a reliable epistemic source, and —more importantly— given the actual state of knowledge about its operation, we do not have sufficient resources to mitigate its errors and thus establish its reliability. That is why PAI is *hopeless*. Throughout this paper I will defend my own conception of PAI, which I have called the Deliberative Conception, and consequently, I will defend intersubjective agreement as a means to mitigate PAI errors, offering empirical evidence from recent studies on the Argumentative Theory of Reason that favor the conception I defend here. Finally, I will reply to some objections that might arise against the Deliberative Conception, which will lead me to discuss some metaphilosophical issues that are significantly relevant for the future of the dispute about the appeal to intuition.

1. Preliminary remarks

Before creating false expectations, I would like to clarify my purpose in this article. What I am trying to do in this paper is not to undertake an out-and-out defense of philosophers' appeal to intuition (PAI). Nor do I want to provide the reader and the opponent to intuition with sufficient scientific or psychological evidence to establish, in an incontrovertible way, the legitimacy of appealing to intuition. In order to reach that point, I think, a huge amount of work remains to be done, especially in psychology, though remarkable advances have recently been made —among others, the one I will review in Section 3 below. Some empirical research will remain pending as regards the specific and particular problems that PAI involves and the possible ways to mitigate them, following from the substantive proposal I defend here. My aim is, then, to reply to a very particular challenge raised against PAI: the question whether there could *in principle* be a method to mitigate PAI errors given *the actual state of psychological scientific knowledge about intuition*.

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Section 2 will discuss the challenge as described by Weinberg (2007). I will not seek to reconstruct Weinberg's position about the appeal to intuition, but merely to state clearly and distinctly the problem of *hope* for PAI. The key issue will be to identify the sources of hope for an epistemic resource to be reliable, in order to examine whether intuition counts as one of these hopeful resources or not. As one might expect, given the title of this paper, I understand Weinberg and other philosophers as adhering to the position that —at least in the current state of scientific knowledge about intuition— it is not a reliable resource.

In Section 3, I will discuss and explain my own proposal to solve the problem and restore hope to intuition. My proposal depends on a substantive thesis regarding intuition, which I believe to be supported by the experiments I mention there. One key requirement for the reader to understand my view is to notice that I conceive philosophical activity as essentially *argumentative* when it comes to expecting correct results. That is why I am interested, above all, in the use of reason and reflection in deliberative contexts. In this Section I will present a method for mitigating PAI errors which is closely tied to "reasoning," so that the challenge could be regarded as overcome. However, as shown by the scientific studies on the Argumentative Theory of Reason that I mention, in some cases it is worth distinguishing between two kinds of reasoning: *intuitive* reasoning and reasoning *proper*. In the relevant part I will discuss whether their nature is opposed or complementary —and to what extent they can lead us to right answers.

Throughout Section 4, I will deal with some problems in the conception I defend. Primarily, the idea that deliberative reflection about a certain topic could be unfortunate and lead, however, to false and intolerant beliefs that are incoherent with well-corroborated scientific knowledge. To tackle these issues I will discuss some metaphilosophical theses of great interest for further discussion regarding the general debate on the practice of appealing to intuition.

2. The challenge: Losing hope

My aim in this section is not to reconstruct Jonathan Weinberg's position about PAI,[1] but has rather a conceptual nature: to understand the problem posed by Weinberg (2007), which seems to me interesting to answer. I use the word "hope," regardless of connotations, in a strictly technical sense. Weinberg says:

> A source of evidence that is not practically infallible is hopeful to the extent that we have the capacity to detect and correct its errors. Parallelism (as well as malice aforethought) demands that we similarly stipulate the term *hopeless* for devices for which our practices lack an appropriate

> sensitivity to their errors, and capacity for correction when such errors are found…
> (H): *Any putative source of evidence that is hopeless ought not be trusted* (2007: 327)

Thus, sufficient methods to mitigate errors are, naturally, the so-called *sources of hope*. It is important to point out that many of the objections and fears about intuition have been highlighted particularly by authors engaged in experimental philosophy (who nevertheless have remarkable differences among themselves in interests and objectives),[2] because of its idiosyncratic nature. In other words, through a series of experiments they have shown that when philosophically irrelevant changes are made in describing or conducting thought experiments (such as framing effects, order effects, Side-Effect effects, etc.),[3] subjects' intuitions tend to be incoherent and inconsistent with each other.[4] Worse still, they have shown that the percentage sharing some intuitions varies among different ethnic, socioeconomic and cultural groups. Given this information, intuition does not seem capable to play its usual role as the last stage in the justification process. This makes it worth asking whether or not intuition is a reliable source of evidence.

The sources of hope Weinberg lists are:[5]

External corroboration. Corroboration that others make of our statements and that we ourselves do of the content of our statements against the world. Thus understood, intuitions would assert a certain propositional content, which, if corroborated in most cases, would make PAI reliable. Alternatively, if we were able to mitigate PAI errors even though its results are largely not corroborated, intuition would be a reliable source of evidence. The key question is how we are going to corroborate the philosophical propositions expressed by our intuitions. Taking, for example, the case of moral philosophy, this is not at all clear, something that Weinberg admits (2007: 338-9). Thus, we have neither a general way of external corroboration for philosophical propositions nor—concomitantly—a way to mitigate any of its eventual errors, and so intuition does not have this first source of hope.

Detectability of margins. In other words, sensitivity to those circumstances where the resource in question is less likely to yield good results. Weinberg argues that because there are harder and weaker intuitions, it would be necessary to provide a scale to weigh what standards of "intuitive certainty" are required not to make a hasty statement (2007: 335). However, we have not yet found a way to establish a certainty scale or to identify intuition's margins of relevance. We do not know under which circumstances intuition might work well, and under which it might not. Therefore, intuition does not have this source of hope either.

Theoretical illumination. This refers to certain knowledge about the operation of those resources we use. The existence of a complete theory is not a strictly necessary requirement (since it would be too demanding), but we can certainly expect to have the start of a theoretical formulation about the operation of the resource used. Weinberg points out that, given the obscure nature of intuition as a kind of "intellectual seeming," we do not know its psychological origin and are not sure about the uniqueness of such origin (2007: 336-7). That is why intuition fails to have this source of hope. I believe, however, that the studies I mention in Section 3 provide an interesting objection to this claim.

Internal coherence. It concerns both internal, intrasubjective, as well as external, intersubjective, coherence. If coherence can be reached through reflection, so that it can eliminate the errors from PAI outcomes, its reliability could in principle be restored. Weinberg's answers to this alternative that thinking deeply about a certain theme could put us in touch with our true intuitions and, above all, lead us to intersubjective convergence are expressed as follows:

> But this *is a mere empirical possibility*, and there is some evidence that tells against it. (…) *It seems that especially thoughtful people tend to lock in their initial judgments*, and their very thoughtfulness allows them to rationalize away those considerations that might have led to future revisions. (2007: 338; emphasis mine)[6]

From which he arrives at the very challenge which has led me to write this paper:

> [W]hen they appeal to the claim that greater reflection will yield greater convergence, *the defenders have at best a weak and untested empirical "maybe."* But they need better than that —they need to score a real source of hope, and in the absence of positive confirming evidence that reflection will yield it, the appeal to reflection here does not look like hope so much as it resembles wishful thinking. (2007: 338; emphasis mine)

What I will undertake to do in Section 3 below is precisely to give an answer by providing *empirical evidence* to this challenge raised by Weinberg, as well as to offer a proper philosophical framework for such answer.

3. The Deliberative Conception

As can be seen, my answer to the challenge raised in Weinberg's paper (2007) is largely connected with deliberation and, therefore, with intersubjective agreement. My argumentation rests on an important thesis that defines my understanding of intuition,

which connects the idea of a conceptual *proposal* with the *intuitiveness* of a judgment; and I will therefore call it IAP ("Intuition As a Proposal").

(IAP) Intuition is an epistemic resource through which certain characteristics that each subject considers present in a given philosophical concept or phenomenon is proposed. For this subject, intuition is the final step in justificatory regress. Like any philosophical proposition, the content of intuition is questionable.

The answer I will give to the challenge raised by Weinberg will not offer empirical results that show that reason (understood deliberatively) proves to be a conclusive means for mitigating PAI errors, across all or the most part of the context in which experimentalists have found that it fails or shows incoherencies. My aim is to point out that, on the basis of *empirical* studies (Mercier and Sperber 2011, and the literature discussed therein) of the use of reasoning when subjects begin from their intuitions and finally come up with the right results, it could be defended that *in principle* there is a method for mitigating PAI errors: intersubjective agreement reached via deliberation. Whether intersubjective reasoning can effectively do this across all contexts in which PAI errors are found (Side-Effect effects, order effects, framing effects, etc.) is an issue that requires empirical testing. Even if such tests prove adverse to the ideas I explain here, it will remain to be discussed to what extent the conditions for testing the trustworthiness of the normative thesis were *adequate*, as well as to what extent the falsity of the empirical tests could serve to establish the *falsity of the normative thesis*. My intuitive belief is that such (eventually) unfortunate outcome will not serve for that purpose.

3.1 Intuiting, reasoning, deliberating

Let us begin with the way I understand intuition. Intuition is at least twofold. First, it is a particular type of judgment whereby, when a subject *S* intuits a certain proposition *p*,[7] in the absence of dialectical challenges, that judgment stops the justificatory regress at *p*. That is, in the absence of a second person to question the justification of *p*, or in the absence of any experience which is sufficiently disturbing or inconsistent with respect to the content expressed by *p*, intuiting *p* stops the justificatory regress for *S*. Second, intuition expresses, as already noted, a propositional content; and propositional content can be either true or false. It is certainly possible to believe that *p* is true, but it is also possible that the content assessed by *p* is false.[8] In case the content of an intuition were false, *S* would not *in principle* be mistaken by believing in its truth, for the primary quality of an intuitive belief (and, hence, what characterizes intuitive justification) is to be justified *in virtue of a psychological mechanism of inference* which is diametrically opposed to argumentative justification. In this kind of "intuitive reasoning," the belief is justified because it is the result of an inferential process performed at a *subpersonal* level where no reasons are exhaustively counted for *p*. The type of justification that a supposed

objector might ask for may be the one that is characteristic of "reasoning proper." In the latter, acceptance takes place as a result of an argumentative process in which the justification of the conclusion is the outcome of an epistemic decision made at a *personal* level. (Mercier and Sperber 2011: 58-9.)

Thus, we could look at the philosophical dialectic through the eyes of IAP (and hence of PAI). The proposition expressed by an intuition is usually expressed by a philosopher in front of a single partner or a multitude of them; generally philosophers receive statements and philosophical thoughts from other philosophers through publications, academic meetings, private conversations, classes, and so on. This multitude of peers *S'*, *S''*, *S'''*, etc. can (but they may or may not) ask for justification of the propositional content as it was expressed in our intuition. If they do not, this could generally be seen as meaning either that they share our intuition or that, for various reasons, they do not judge it relevant to stress the point at that moment. Should someone ask us for justification to assert *p*, she would be raising a *challenge*: she would make us realize that she is not absolutely sure that she shares our belief in *p*, and that without sufficient reasons she would not incorporate the proposition in question to her belief system. Thus, we can give reasons, provide an argument for *p*, or not; in the second case the end of the discussion, and therefore of philosophical inquiry, would be imminent (something that does not appear desirable). Once we give an argument, it is possible that *S'*, *S''*, *S'''*, etc. accept it or not and, again, the second of these alternatives, if not accompanied by a counterargument (which in turn will continue the discussion until some time limit, belief convergence[9] or agreement occurs), will finish investigation at once.

3.1.1. PAI and the justificatory regress

One might think[10] that if PAI is the thesis that justification as a process rests on certain intuitively believed propositions, then the dialectical process I have just described is contrary to PAI, for in that process the justification of the content *p* of an intuition rests on an argument —on something other than *that* intuition. But I do not think it is necessary to understand PAI this way, for the reasons below.

First, not always does intuiting something mean being justified in believing so. If, as epistemic practice, PAI leads us to adhere to the idea that intuition is a *regress stopper* so that, if *S* intuits that *p*, *S* must be automatically justified in believing that *p*, then we come to an undesirable consequence: being intuitive is *unconditionally enough* to be justified. This unsatisfactory result is due to a partial understanding of the phenomenon of intuition, in particular neglecting that, although most of the time being intuitive is synonymous with being justified, it is possible for a subject to intuit *p* while not being justified in believing that *p*. Why? *S* may have enough clues that, despite the intuitiveness of her belief in *p*, there is *sufficient evidence* against the content expressed therein —

which will make it worth considering revising her beliefs. What might be sufficient to perform such revision? Evidence (scientific or otherwise) could,[11] but, even more importantly for us, the fact of her peers *S'*, *S''*, *S'''*, etc. not sharing the intuitive belief in *p*, and concomitantly raising the challenge to give reasons to believe in the propositional content of *p*. Thus, being intuitive *is not always enough* to be justified.

Second, being justified in believing the content of an intuition based on something other than *that* particular intuition does not mean that the ultimate justification does not rely on (some) intuition. Intuitive propositions that, in deliberative contexts such as the one portrayed in the above paragraphs, are not immediately justified —because they are not shared by all participants— could achieve justification later, by resting on (an)other, certainly intuitive, sentence(s) *p** (*q**, *r**, *s*) that all participants *share* and which imply the former challenged propositions. This is a direct consequence of the statement by Mercier and Sperber that "all arguments must ultimately be grounded in *intuitive* judgments that given conclusions follow from given premises" (2011: 59). We do not abandon PAI, because *S* is justified in believing the contents of her intuition (i.e., *p*) once she has been able to find, *through discussion or deliberation*, a (set of intuitive propositions or a) proposition *p* which implies p* and which is accepted by her peers in virtue of its intuitiveness. Those who had previously refused to accept *p* now have reasons, along with *S*, to be justified in believing *p*. Thus, if we look back at the justificatory regress from a *synchronic* point of view, intuiting *p* justifies *p* for *S*. If, on the other hand, we understand it *diachronically*, the justificatory regress is a process in which agents can constantly give and ask for reasons for or against propositions.

This conforms to two central ideas from Weinberg: PAI does not commit us to a foundationalism,[12] and even if PAI is not the end of the argument, it is indeed the end of a chain of reasoning.[13] This concludes the argument to show that we can adopt PAI *without* adhering to the idea that the fact of *p* being the propositional content of an intuition *always* immediately justifies a subject to believe in *that* proposition —an idea which is the core of my thesis about intuition, IAP.

3.1.2. PAI, argumentation and deliberation

Returning to the *purposeful* character of intuition, it has served, as mentioned throughout this article, to express a proposition relative to (at least) one philosophical concept or phenomenon. I think this is easy to see, due to the argumentative nature of the exchange caused by the expression of an intuitive belief in an epistemic peers' context. Intuition helps offer notes, features that *S* considers proper to a certain philosophical phenomenon or concept (the subject matter of intuition); in other words, it is a means for normativizing, or determining, the meaning of a philosophical term. To clarify the *purposeful* character of intuition, two aspects should be highlighted. First, if the

expression of an intuitive belief generates repulsion among participants, it is likely that —if we are engaged in philosophical inquiry, at least— such refusal is accompanied by a subsequent challenge. Through this challenge, partners seek reasons for believing the proposition intuited by *S*, the initial subject. The subsequent exchange of reasons to believe that the concept, term or phenomenon named in *p* has the features that *S* believes is simply a *deliberation.* Why a deliberation?[14] Because *S* will say that the concept has such and such characteristics, *S'* will refuse and offer an argument against one or all the features, or will offer an argument against treating the philosophical concept or phenomenon this way. This exchange seems too close to the model of deliberation: we must make a decision about a certain subject, and the various participants issue their proposals to determine the final course of action. Thus understood, philosophical discussion is certainly close to a deliberation about the determination of the proper phenomena or concepts of philosophy.

It is important to highlight that if *S'* and the others flatly reject our intuitive proposal because it is inconsistent with their belief system, they may be wasting relevant information in simply dismissing all of this. The mechanism present in communication and belief revision is *epistemic vigilance* (Mercier and Sperber 2011: 60).[15] It allows us to regulate trust in the speaker and the consistency of their statement contents with our beliefs, making the appropriate adjustments in our doxastic system. When a speaker *S'* asks us for reasons to believe in *p*, she proposes an argumentative challenge to us; as said before, she suggests that we place ourselves in a deliberative context. The specific characteristic of these contexts, as Mercier and Sperber remark (2011: 60), is that they activate *reasoning proper.* The difference between this kind of reasoning and intuitive reasoning is that the latter results in accepting the outputs of inferential processes performed by our cognitive system at a subpersonal level, attending *only* to the fact that the conclusion is the result of this inferential process (in fact we do not notice that we are accepting it "reasonlessly"). The key issue is that we *just accept it*, regardless of the (possibly existing) reasons for and (plausibly existing) reasons against it. In the case of reasoning proper, we evaluate arguments —complex representations—, stopping at each premise and accepting the conclusion as the last part of the representation, being *explained* by the previous premises (Mercier and Sperber 2011: 58-9). These are the processes involved in PAI specific operation according to the Deliberative Conception; now we should turn to ask whether these reasoning processes could be regarded as reliable so that they may mitigate PAI errors.

3.2. Reliability

A sincere, and worth addressing, objection would be that the deliberative conception fails to return hope to philosophers' appeal to intuition to the extent that it fails to prove that deliberation is a means to mitigate PAI errors. As a result of this idea, it could be

noticed[16] that the deliberative and argumentative contexts suffer from certain effects that mimic consensus, but are not necessarily truth-conducive (group effects such as bullying, and other cultural effects [ideology?] by which certain majority groups engage in attacking or segregating minorities, among other attitudes). However, deliberation is at least *in principle*, or normatively, a means to reach reasonable consensus which is not arbitrary or due to the effects of coercion. (Although in empirical discussions, for example in parliaments of various countries, this is not regularly the case, we do not stop believing that the ideal[17] of transparent deliberation is useful as such; in Section 4 I will discuss some restrictions aimed at this ideal of transparency which may be required of deliberations.) I only intend to establish a conclusion along these lines: deliberation is *in principle* (regardless of the empirical contingencies in each case) a way to mitigate PAI errors.

We can point out, as Weinberg does in the first quotation above, that deeply reflective subjects can, however, get locked up in their first intuitive thoughts as a result of an extensive process of reasoning —a "conservative" effect, called *confirmation bias* in the literature (see Mercier and Sperber 2011: 65). *The task of the Deliberative Conception is to show that, although this is correct, there is some sense in which it is completely misleading: that sense in which we reason, evaluate arguments and reasons, as a result of a challenge that others pose to us in order to resist accepting the propositions our statements express.* This would be the sense in which, if reasoning operates in the area that is more appropriate to it (namely intersubjective argumentation, according to them [2011: 61]), the "conservative" effect is canceled because of the counterweight of thorough evaluation by all the deliberation participants of the reasons given by their opponents (2011: 63-8), an evaluation in which the tendency to confirm one's own points of view (confirmation bias) is not active, but in which *objectivity* prevails instead.

Mercier and Sperber show a study in which they start from a set of subjects which are given the task of solving a specific problem. Different subjects have some time to think about solutions in isolation, in order to get together and solve the problem subsequently as a group. They begin discussion with a set of intuitive propositions in conflict; then, regardless of whether the initial intuitions of the subjects were true or false, they begin to discuss the resolution of the problem faced in the experiment. They offer the solutions they have conceived in isolation, their intuitions, resulting in clear and immediate confrontation among their *proposals* for solving the problem. As a consequence of this confrontation, each individual is challenged to give reasons so that her fellows accept her solution; then she must strive to develop arguments in support of her own position. Given this deliberative context that requires willingness to undertake proactive reasoning and reasoning proper, the result of the process is that participants come together to the *right* result (Mercier and Sperber 2011: 62, 65).[18]

Mercier and Sperber explain the arrival at a correct result by means of argumentation or deliberation as follows: in cases where we reason "properly" but individually, "if reasoning is used at all, it is mostly used to confirm these initial intuitions" (2001: 65). Thus, they admit that we tend to be *biased* in the production of arguments in favor of our position (which would agree with Weinberg in that we lock ourselves in our —even theoretical and philosophical— opinions), but they add that for the *confirmation bias* to play an optimal role in group discussion and work, it must be active only in the production of arguments, *and not in their evaluation*. This is certainly the case, as the evidence collected in their work (for which it was tested whether subjects can spot fallacies, admit *modus tollens*, etc.) "strongly suggests *that people tend to be more objective in evaluation* than in production" (2011: 65-6, emphasis mine).

In deliberative contexts there is confirmation bias, and it would be foolish to deny its existence. But, first, it is (mostly) active in the *production* of arguments, rather than in their *evaluation*, and, second, given the nature of the ongoing challenge present in deliberative contexts, confirmation bias is often countered.[19] Though certainly not thinking about this case, Weinberg suggests a similar idea, namely that in "unchunked" contexts "being thoughtful does have the effect of reducing the recency effects that tend to be displayed by the less thoughtful" (2007: 338). These "unchunked" contexts can be read as referring (mostly) to deliberative contexts, in which people reason and argue insistently —whose corresponding regulatory ideals I will discuss in Section 4.

This undoubtedly offers an answer to the *challenge* posed by Weinberg: reasoning proper allows subjects, when they are introduced into deliberative and argumentative contexts, to mitigate the errors of their own (and of others') intuitions, and finally to reach the truth.[20] Here there is at least one clue that Weinberg's "mere empirical maybe" (2007: 338) could be an effective one. Through this process, we will, in principle, *converge* or *agree* on the intuitions that have greater deliberative support. The problem of empirically testing this thesis on reaching specific agreements about certain propositions or issues concerns the study of specific situations and factors, and is not relevant to the study undertaken here, which aims to establish a *normative* thesis.

On the basis of what has been said so far, the Deliberative Conception has a great point to *restore hope* to philosophers' appeal to intuition through the use of one of the above sources (intersubjective coherence as a result of intersubjective reasoning "proper"). Given that intuition could recover its hope, it could also recover its epistemic status as a *hopeful* resource, something that supporters of intuition have long craved for. Thus, my own thesis about intuition, IAP, is also established: intuition is an epistemic resource through which certain features that each subject deems proper to certain philosophical phenomenon or concept are proposed. For that subject, intuition is the final step in the justificatory regress. But, as in the case of any philosophical proposition, its content is questionable.[21]

4. Metaphilosophical problems of deliberation

If deliberation is not anything but intersubjective coherence achieved through reasoning motivated by argumentative contexts, then it is subject to the same objection one may make to such schemes: it helps justify some beliefs that we do not want to see justified. Many (tragic) examples in the history of humankind demonstrate that for a belief against a particular group, or for such group's exclusion (and even physical elimination) to be socially justified (i.e. to achieve intersubjective coherence), nothing else is needed but the strength of many to convince the few undecided ones —a case in point is the Jewish Holocaust by the Nazis.

Accordingly, there are at least two clear problems involved in deliberation as a general method, and in particular the newly introduced model. Those beliefs that come to be established as a result of deliberation and intersubjective convergence or agreement may well be (A) intolerant or xenophobic beliefs, and (B) false beliefs.

From a philosophical perspective, the question is what the (at least ideal) conditions of legitimate decisions made under a democratic and deliberative model are. I do not seek to answer this question thoroughly, since on the other hand it is one of the big questions of philosophers of law and moral philosophers dealing with deliberative democracy.[22] I will try, however, to give some characteristics that seem outstanding. Naturally, they are abstract and general terms, and it remains to be determined how and to what extent they apply to cases of deliberation on philosophical issues.

However, it is legitimate to ask *how* these conditions serve to restrict the propositional content of the intuitions mentioned in a deliberation. Certainly, not by controlling on a case-by-case basis, but by giving a general pattern: as in other liberal proposals the appeal to religious propositions (or relating to a certain creed) is restricted, in order to discuss civil laws, the appeal to intolerant and to (certain kinds of) scientifically problematic beliefs is here restricted when supporting philosophical theses. At the same time, it is suggested that certain problems or complications (sociological, psychological, among others, such as poverty, psychological distress caused by living in a regime where one is persecuted for belonging to a certain group, etc.) should be absent for a deliberation to reach optimal conditions and better results. These restrictions can be seen as *regulatory ideals* —whose pursuit is normative, but whose nonfulfillment does not *ipso facto* entail illegitimate deliberation—[23] to achieve a more transparent deliberation and tending to yield better, more objective and less biased results. Perhaps, in this sense, there will never be a complete realization of the suggested restrictions, but that does not mean that the ideal to which it points is not otherwise valuable. Therefore, these are not ad hoc clauses, but substantive restrictions it would be desirable to fulfill to the greatest

extent possible, in order to achieve a better deliberation and, hence, better results, especially for PAI, our focus here.

4.1. Intolerant beliefs

When involved in a deliberation it is essential, to avoid being subject to manipulations and for all participants to be on an equal footing, that all basic rights can be exercised.[24] But this is not enough because we know that, for example regarding the right to freedom of speech, someone who owns several TV channels and as many radio stations could no doubt persuade her peers to endorse her position to a greater extent than any citizen deprived of these means could. That is why fair exercise of basic rights is important. On the other hand, for a decision arising out of a deliberation to be legitimate, *there should be no excluded parties* from this deliberation process. Otherwise, a certain portion of the subjects would be reduced to a level of inferiority such that, in some cases (those where a decision is made *against* them), their consent to decisions *does not matter.* If this condition is not met, we would be allowing deliberations to be conducted taking into account reasons that not all participants may in principle accept as such (for example, Jews would not admit that they must be exterminated *because* some conspiracy theory says that in some way they have led Germany to economic and social ruin; philosophers doing X would not agree to be regarded as not doing philosophy —and hence to be excluded from the professional community— just because philosophers doing Y think so, and vice versa). This is what can surely be called a case of bad faith, which completely breaks the Golden Rule.[25] As a corollary of these limitations, a cooperative attitude must be presumed, probably concomitant with the belief that deliberation participants are peers and therefore share common interests. Finally, there should be boundaries to reasons that may be invoked when discussing. For example, it must be decided whether or not, in the context of public debate, we are to allow references to religious or metaphysical beliefs. This is not without controversy and, of course, I am not proposing here where to draw the line. I do not think that all readers will agree that these conditions do not lead to problems, as I am sure that it entails at least philosophical, if not political, concerns. I note, however, that the disadvantages of such restriction do not involve only PAI, but also any deliberative practice (including philosophical practice) as intrinsically intersubjective, and emerging from conflict and disagreement.

4.2. False beliefs

The second risk taken when embarking on a deliberation is that it could yield results that might entail plainly false beliefs. It is unclear, however, what we strictly mean by this. An alternative, which I discuss here (but which I do not endorse), is to take a metaphilosophical naturalistic position. False beliefs are those that our better

corroborated scientific theories hold to be false. Then we have a split between empirical scientific theories (natural sciences) and non-empirical ones (logic, mathematics, etc.).
The criteria I propose are three. First, beliefs sanctioned by a deliberative process must be *coherent* with well-corroborated scientific knowledge.[26] Second, this coherence may be locally interrupted if and only if beliefs sanctioned by the deliberative process are *reasonably in conflict* with scientific knowledge. That is, disagreement with scientific knowledge must be based on reasons and should not be merely the product of an inconsistency with the individual's or the community's belief system. Finally, beliefs sanctioned by a deliberative process should be subject to a *withdrawal* (and reformulation) commitment, if, after being corroborated, hypotheses are systematically falsified.

4.3. Truth in philosophy

The final problem the Deliberative Conception faces is that this conception leads to truth *only* when it involves problems of the specific kind studied by Mercier and Sperber, but that outside this particular area it has nothing to offer for philosophical problems in which the appeal to intuition often plays a central role.

I will begin by admitting that the problems solved by the subjects in Mercier and Sperber's study had an *objective* standard of correctness —*a single correct answer* to which subjects as a group and individually either would or would not have come once the time for the exercise had elapsed. Now thinking about the philosophical problems that are the subject matter of our everyday work and dedication, the above objection can be rephrased as follows: the Deliberative Conception has nothing to offer for solving philosophical problems, where the appeal to intuition is often central, because *there is no evidence* that it could serve to arrive at *the* correct answer concerning those problems, i.e. beyond the areas in which Mercier and Sperber have demonstrated its effectiveness.

But, in what sense do the cited experiments have *one* correct answer? In the case discussed by Mercier and Sperber, a group must solve complex mathematical and logical problems "'for which there exists a demonstrably correct answer *within a verbal or mathematical conceptual system*' (Laughlin and Ellis 1986: 177)" (2011: 62). The sense in which we say that there is *one* real solution, even for these areas of knowledge, seems to be simply conventional: there is a (unique) solution *within a given system* in which we work. Thus, when Weinberg says PAI is *hopeful* in logic and mathematics he does not mean the same as I do.[27] He believes that PAI is hopeful because there is a way in which our intuitions are contrasted with extra-intuitive evidence proper to these areas ("because of their regular contact with other sources of evidence about their domains" [2007: 339]) —in other words, because there is *external corroboration* and it is (mostly) successful. By contrast, my view is that PAI is hopeful about logic and mathematics, because for the

most part (at least for the purpose of discussing within a particular conceptual framework or theory) discussion among professionals finally *stops* when intersubjective *agreement* is reached, based on a certain set of shared *intuitive* propositions (which could, but might not, be fully and formally represented in certain consistent formal theories from some subfield of logic or mathematics). This agreement may be finally revoked and discussion could be rekindled (as in the case of the agreement about theories of truth and properties that generate paradox, before —and after— the discovery of Yablo's infinitary paradox).

The clarifications made on the "existence" of *one* correct answer in certain areas of philosophy (i.e., logic)[28] are useful to discuss what it means to reach *the* correct answer in philosophy. What does it mean to get to *the* truth? How would someone know when she has found *the* truth, by whatever means? These questions concern both the supporter of the Deliberative Conception and its opponent; the advocate of the appeal to intuition as well as its opponent. Until it is clear what it means for an epistemic resource to be reliable with regard to philosophical theses, because its results are mostly *philosophical truths or truths with respect to philosophy*, it is inappropriate to consider that the supporter of the appeal to intuition has the burden of proof to show that the Argumentative Theory of Reason (at least in its embryonic state), while offering scientific support to the Deliberative Conception, is reliable and mostly leads us to truth in philosophy. This, of course, does not oppose what I have argued before: the position I advocate —which is based on arguments and empirical studies— holds *intersubjective agreement* (in conjunction with relevant scientific evidence and regulatory conditions for optimal deliberation) as a source for rehabilitating PAI as a *hopeful* practice, both inside logic and mathematics and outside of them, all across philosophy.

Conclusions

In this paper I have attempted to show that the answer to the problem of *hope* around PAI, contrary to what philosophers have said so far, is yes: there is a way to mitigate the errors of PAI, philosophers' appeal to intuition, and that is *deliberation*. This is why I have called the central formulation that makes use of deliberation "reasoning" (with all its substantive characteristics, in its individual and collective, both biased and objective, use), and intersubjective convergence "the Deliberative Conception."

Finally, if a critic of the formulation advocated here pointed out that the Deliberative Conception (and, with regard to experiments, the Argumentative Theory of Reason) has not conclusively shown that in most cases subjects working deliberately on philosophical issues come to *the* correct answer, I think that she would be taking a very poor approach for rejecting my proposal, due to her failure to establish what it means to reach *the* correct answer in some subfield of philosophy or in philosophy in general. This amounts to expecting that, out of the two sides (opponents and defenders of intuition), only one —

PAI advocates— should take the responsibility of solving a problem the other does not know how to figure out. And that does not seem really fair. But this last claim is, of course, only an intuition: it might be corrected in light of sufficient reasons.[29]

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[1] In order to learn about Weinberg's position concerning intuition, I recommend —at least— reading Weinberg 2001, 2006, 2007, and Weinberg et al. 2010.

[2] An interesting classification (which I do not endorse here) is the one sketched by David Chalmers (the slides showing this classification can be found at http://consc.net/papers/xphi.ppt), who opts to divide experimental philosophy and its supporters among those who practice: a negative program (which studies disagreement and variation in philosophically important intuitions and judgments); a positive program (which studies patterns in the application of philosophically important concepts —something close to conceptual analysis, in Chalmers' words); or a psychological program (which studies the cognitive

processes involved in philosophical judgment —and which could, but may not, undermine the validity of such judgments). I should remark that this very topic has been the subject of debate within supporters of experimental philosophy, and that there is not, as far as I know, a final classification to this date.

[3] For instability and ethnicity, see Weinberg, Nichols, and Stich (2001); for gender influence see Buckwalter and Stich (2011); for instability within an individual see Swain, Alexander, and Weinberg (2008: 335).

[4] A possible objection one could posit to the results of experimental philosophy (but which I am not going to endorse in this paper) would highlight the fact that these variations might not be as philosophically or scientifically irrelevant as they are regarded to be.

[5] I prefer to present them in an order which helps understand this paper.

[6] Weinberg warns us here of what in Section 3 we will call, following Mercier and Sperber, *confirmation bias.*

[7] The propositional character of intuition is admitted by Weinberg (2007: 338-9).

[8] In virtue of *what* they have this property is a debate which concerns those who are engaged in the realism-antirealism discussion, and does not belong to the scope of this paper (except, maybe, for the treatment of the external corroboration requirement I discuss in subsection 4.2.).

[9] For an analysis of this case, see subsections 3.1.1 and 3.1.2.

[10] An objection by an anonymous referee was helpful for thinking about this.

[11] One of the most traditional cases is the intuitive (or naïve) comprehension scheme for Set Theory, which leads to the so-called Cantor's and Russell's Paradoxes, respectively.

[12] "Although they are used to provide evidence, one does not, and need not, provide further evidence for them" (2007, 321). Furthermore, notice what he says in support of the argument I gave about PAI, in the footnote associated with the previous quote: "Please note that this very thin sense of 'foundational' does not preclude coherentist, infinitist, externalist, and/or localist epistemologies from making sense of them. Any epistemology that attends to our justificatory practices has to say something about where we stop offering more reasons and are right to do so, and it may be that one need not read the ultimate structure of justification off of the shape of those practices" (2007: 321, fn. 2).

[13] "However, even if the appeal to an intuition is never taken to be the end of the argument on the whole, it is usually meant to be the terminus of a particular chain of reasoning" (2007: 322).

[14] For a richer and interesting discussion of the advantages of deliberative models in order to make more reasonable decisions concerning a multiplicity of agents, and —above all— to compare discussion and deliberation, see Fearon (1998), "Deliberation as Discussion."

[15] See also Mercier, Sperber et al. 2010.

[16] I owe this objection to an anonymous referee.

[17] With regard to these, see Nino (1996) and Rawls (1996).

[18] See subsection 4.3. for a discussion of what it means for Weinberg that certain applications of PAI are *hopeful*, and concomitantly what it means to get to the "right" answer in certain subfield of philosophy — and my own conception about this issue, based on the case of logic and mathematics.

[19] "[W]hen reasoning is used in a more felicitous context —that is, in arguments among people who disagree but have a common interest in the truth— the confirmation bias contributes to an efficient form of division of cognitive labor … [its] advantages … are even more obvious given that each participant in a discussion is often *in a better position to look for arguments in favor of his or her favored solution* (situations of asymmetrical information). *So group discussions provide a much more efficient way of holding the confirmation bias in check*. [This does not happen when reason is used in individual contexts, because] [b]y contrast, the teaching of critical thinking skills, which is supposed to help us overcome the bias on a purely individual basis, does not seem to yield very good results" (2011: 65, emphasis mine).

[20] Again, *what* truth actually is, is a question which we cannot answer here, but that does not weaken Mercier and Sperber's results.

[21] I am indebted to Federico Pailos and Diego Tajer for their thoughtful comments on this Section.

[22] For an extended discussion about this matter, see Elster (1998) and Cohen (1989).

[23] See Cohen (1989) and Rawls (1996).

[24] What is meant by basic rights is a complex and probably contentious issue.

[25] To be precise, it does not break the Golden Rule but its prohibitive version, the Silver Rule. In this sense, a thorough discussion about the Consent Principle is found in Parfit (2011), Ch. 8.

[26] Whenever I say "scientific knowledge" I will be referring to empirical (scientific) knowledge as well as to non-empirical (scientific) knowledge.

[27] I am grateful to an anonymous referee for making a remark that made me notice this interesting agreement (on different bases) between Weinberg and me.

[28] A last remark is worth making: it is a discussion topic in philosophy of logic and of mathematics what it means to have a *sound* mathematical or logical theory. For some, it means that the theory *represents* our *intuitive* notions, which makes it even more complicated to determine the kind of connection between "intuitive" and "external" data that (could) grant external corroboration. I have benefited from participating in the discussions on these topics which daily take place within the GAF Logic group at the University of Buenos Aires. Discussions with Eduardo Barrio and Lavinia Picollo, among others, were particularly relevant in this regard.

[29] I thank the members of GAF and the SADAF Colloquium 2011 attendees for their highly useful and helpful comments on previously presented drafts of this paper.