

# ON EVIDENCE IN PHILOSOPHY

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## PREFACE

My title is a pun, as between (a) what philosophers may use as evidence for theories and (b) what sorts of things philosophers may consider to be evident. Each of those is a central topic of this book.

I shall describe and defend a partial method for philosophical inquiry. No element of it is original with me, but I do not think it has ever before been put together in the way I will do here.

I begin in the dialectical (not literary!) style of Moore, though considerably honing his method, defending facts about everyday human activities as being immune to existing idealist and skeptical challenges. In Chapters 3 and 4 apply my particular version of Moore's technique to each of two philosophical issues on which it has not previously been brought to bear: eliminativism in the philosophy of mind, and the free-will debate. Turning to more general methodological matters, in Chapter 5 I offer a case study, Cartesian dualism, as a cautionary tale and an illustration of philosophers' hubris; I then give my own detailed but pessimistic answer to the question of what knowledge philosophy can yield. In the final two chapters, I argue that philosophy rests ultimately on intuitions in a narrow sense of that term, and/but I defend such intuitions as having at least some evidential value. I advocate a picture of philosophy as a very wide explanatory reflective equilibrium—and nothing more, not ever. To quote Chapter 5, a felicitous explanatory coordination between common sense and science is the best that philosophy can hope to achieve.

For some readers this will be a downer. It was for me, when I arrived at the view early in my career. I speak but as I find. And the job needs to be done.

Most of the material has previously appeared in print, but this book is not a collection of papers. The papers that are largely reprinted here (Chapters 2-4 and 6) were written to become part of the book.