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Note: These are intended as notes for ourselves for our presentation, not as a paper draft or anything of that sort.

ALEXANDRA

Short two-question cell phone survey about demographics of our AAPT audience.

Short three-question TurningPoint clicker survey about how much they know about x phi, their openness to it, and their impressions of it.

EMILY

I. "Experimental philosophy," as we'll be using the term, dates back to around 2000 when philosophers began using the tools of experimental psychology to explore philosophical questions. We'll use, Josh Knobe, a very early practitioner, as our example. Josh was especially interested in the concept of intentional action. To test ordinary lay people's understanding of this concept, he constructed short vignettes, which he handed to randomly selected people in a city park. Applying the statistical tools of the social sciences to their answers to his questions about the vignettes, he came up with a surprising conclusion – it made a statistically significant difference to people's judgments about intention whether the act performed was good or bad.

The Knobe Effect (what the data shows) = We blame CEOs for *bad* unintended side effects, but do not praise them for *good* unintended side effects. So our attributions of intentionality ultimately depend upon the *moral* character of the act's consequences. This is surprising to philosophers, because attributions/judgments of intentionality are usually thought to be purely factual matters. Either something is an inert, unintentional object, like a rock, or not. But, as it turns out, the CEO is considered in fact an intentional being if what he does happens to lead to something we think is bad. And the CEO is in fact unintentional (or an automaton) if what he does happens to lead to something we think is good. He makes a decision, a free choice for which he is responsible, if the effect is bad. But he

doesn't make a decision, a free choice for which he is responsible, if the effect is good.

Since these early experiments, philosophers have used this basic technique – carefully constructing vignettes to give to a random population and analyzing the results –in a number of different areas: free will, trolley problems, personal identity, consciousness, Gettier problems, the nature of reference. A lot of this is taking classic philosophical thought experiments, making them as accessible and clear as possible, and seeing what "the folk" have to say.

There are two basic reasons for undertaking experimental philosophy. One, the positive project, is motivated by the fact that philosophers make reference to folk concepts in their theorizing. Philosophers claim, for example, to be attempting to understand the folk concept of free will; the positive project brings empirical techniques to the empirical claims that the folk understanding is this or that. The second, negative project, is motivated by the fact that intuitions are used as evidence in certain domains. For example, philosophers use intuitions about cases to determine what the correct theory of reference is. The negative project undermines the intuitions' evidentiary status by finding that they depend on philosophically irrelevant factors like the culture of the speaker.

Quick note: we are distinguishing experimental philosophy from empirical philosophy. Crudely, we can think of empirical philosophy as philosophers who use other people's data o inform and motivate their views. Experimental philosophers are actually running their own experiments.

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CHRIS

II. In this presentation, we want to examine three questions related to using experimental methods in the classroom. (1) What unique discussions can experimental philosophy bring to a class? (2) How can we best integrate experimental philosophy with traditional texts? (3) What special challenges does teaching experimental philosophy face? Emily is going to begin by talking about what she did in her Intro class, Alexandra is going to discuss some of the technology instructors might use, and then Chris will talk about integrating xphi into a traditional unit on free will in a metaphysics class. We hope that at

the end you will be persuaded that it is worthwhile to consider teaching experimental philosophy, that experimental philosophy can bring a valuable dimension to the philosophy curriculum.

Brief summary of Nahmias and Nadelhoffer. In "Polling as Pedagogy," NN put aside the question of whether experimental philosophy is justified in its claims. Rather, they explore the value of using surveys akin to those of experimental philosophers as pedagogical tools. If NN are right, we should apply more rigor to the kinds of questions we informally ask our students already, questions like "'Do you think we have free will if God already knows everything we will choose?'" (39). They argue that the benefits of turning those questions into more rigorous surveys that would be used in the social sciences are as follows: 1. The thought experiment and the results are presented more clearly and fairly. 2. Since fewer students will wait and let others answer with the survey format, the survey method is more inclusive and shows students the importance of their opinions. 3. Because the entire class is involved, greater diversity of intuition is elicited, allowing for students to engage with each other more directly and allowing for students with minority opinions to be encouraged by seeing that they are not alone. 4. Finally, because more students are more thoughtfully answering more questions, you get to know your students better. (46-48)

Now Emily will extend the ideas of this paper, showing how to use these techniques etc. Then I will take a different turn, talking about the value and potential drawbacks of teaching experimental philosophy itself as opposed to using surveys.

EMILY

After attending the NEH Summer Institute in XPhi I was enthusiastic about incorporating some experimental techniques into the syllabus. I was teaching two intro courses, though, and knew that my students were in no way ready to have a discussion about proper philosophical methodology. As Chris will talk about in more detail, one of the real pedagogical dangers is that students will dismiss traditional philosophical theorizing as pointless – this is especially tempting for the students, since – let's be honest – reading the traditional philosophical texts is more difficult and demanding that reading most xphi.

So I didn't think I should use any actual xphi texts. Instead, following N and N, I used xphi technique. I'd already been using Schick and Vaughn's *Doing Philosophy* textbook, which is recommended by N and N. Doing Philosophy centers each unit around thought experiments. Each section discusses 5-10 classic thought experiments in the field. What I did was pull out some of these thought experiments, cleaned up the language a little bit, and then added a few questions. At the beginning of each unit, before we had begun discussing the topic, I'd hand out the surveys and they would spend about ten minutes reading and answering the questions. I have small classes of 32, so I could run the numbers right there, but you could also collect for discussion the next day. I then used the tallies to start a discussion.

N.B. NN are clear that you should do surveys BEFORE students do the readings. I could not always make this happen. I didn't really notice much difference in discussion when students did surveys before the reading and when they did them afterwards. We can talk more about this in discussion at the end of the session.

Now you might very well ask – what's so xphi about this? Discussion of thought experiments is pedagogical bread and butter. And, as I mentioned, I'd been using Schick and Vaughn for years without thinking about xphi. So here's what is different and what (at least for me) is inspired by experimental literature. In the old days, I would ask for people's opinions on thought experiments, sometimes ask them to raise their hands, and even sometimes take a poll. What thinking about how to integrate xphi into the classroom did for me was make me much more aware of how I was using thought experiments. And being much more explicit in my use made me a better teacher. Here's why.

1. **Comprehension:** Students don't actually understand the thought experiments very well. I didn't realize how widespread comprehension problems were until I started using the xphi techniques. Because I give them plenty of time to read and answer questions about particular thought experiments, I can't chalk up confusions to forgetfulness or not doing the reading. I now spend more time discussing basic comprehension.

2. **Participation:** As NN note, here is clearly an advantage here of giving shy students more of a voice and stake in the debate, even if they aren't speaking up. And I think that

you get better participation across the board. Because they have invested time and thought into the thought experiments students tend to be more invested in the discussion.

3**. Variation**: Again, this another point NN make. Having numbers makes it very clear to the students that there are many people who disagree with them. This is usually quite surprising to them. (Even towards the end of the semester, when you'd think they'd be catching on.) Again, this is evident from the old ways of doing things, but it is much more effective when students realize that their peers spent the same amount of time thinking about the thought experiment and they see that it isn't just one or two of the loudmouths who disagree with them.

4. **Justification:** I think the most important thing that comes out of using these techniques is that once we look at the numbers I ask someone from each side to explain her answers. We then discuss the idea that merely having intuitions isn't good enough since a significant number of students don't share them. This leads into discussion about what counts as good evidence (something both sides can agree upon) and the need to dig deeper than gut intuitions. We have this same basic conversation five times (once for each unit) and I think the repetition with different content makes the lessons sink it.

There are variations on how you might use the surveys. I usually did a large discussion from the beginning, but of course, you could also have them discuss their answers in small groups while you tallied answers. The biggest lesson for me is that once you get them to recognize that not everyone thinks as they do, you take it another step and talk about how you go reasoning about the thought experiments. And this is where you can bring back the original texts, too. Is the author using the thought experiment to push intuitions, or does she also offer arguments for why we should have certain intuitions. (Example??)

One final note. I never mention the words "experimental philosophy" in my intro course. Schick and Vaughn's book is based on conceptual analysis and I don't want to undermine the text. Moreover, I conceptual analysis is difficult and I think it's good for their brains to have to struggle with traditional conceptual analysis – they learn to be careful about what words mean, they learn about necessary and sufficient conditions, they exercise their imagination in thinking about logically possible nonactual worlds. As is probably obvious,

my approach to teaching philosophy is skill based, not content based. The techniques I've discussed work for me, because they help structure discussion about evidence, justification, and argumentation.

ALEXANDRA

Why use a student/classroom response system (SRS or CRS) at all?

Why use this *particular* audience response system -- Turning Technologies's TurningPoint Anywhere system with the ResponseCard XR clicker?

Why not use polleverywhere?

Why not use surveymonkey.com?

Why not use frogmetrics?

An Example: Thomson's violinist

Where can I find out more?

CHRIS

Disclaimer: what I am saying applies to an upper division course only. I agree with what Emily said about not introducing experimental philosophy in an introductory course for all the reasons she said. I think that in introductory courses, it is great to explain some of the empirical literature that empirical philosophers introduce (e.g., talk about the bystander effect when talking about virtue ethics), and I think it is very valuable to use surveys for the reasons we have been discussing. Experimental philosophy itself though is too complicated for these courses.

In my Metaphysics course, I teach a longish (4-5 week) section on free will. The class usually has about 20 students; 8-12 are philosophy majors who are really interested in the material, 5-7 are philosophy majors or minors who are not that interested and the rest are students in other majors (and there is always one who thinks they will learn about crystals, of course).

Explain the structure of the unit. Take for granted people know the basic positions; briefly summarize the xphi articles.

Here are the drawbacks I found. First, some students found the original material very difficult. The experimental philosophy (here I'm thinking more of the negative project) critiqued it, so some students said "see? I knew that stuff was worthless." Experimental philosophy can therefore be an excuse for laziness.

Second, and relatedly, xphi can promote a skepticism about philosophy generally. (Many of the "other" majors in my class come from psychology.) These students do understand the traditional methodology and the critique. Some started to think that philosophy should simply turn into psychology. (I should note that skepticism isn't unique to xphi and was actually promoted much more by Smilansky's view.)

But the benefits are too great to not teach it. First of all, there is nothing intrinsically wrong with skepticism about philosophy: we can all think of examples of philosophers who were skeptical about the methods of their predecessors themselves. You just don't want there to be a critical mass of students and class time such that the class's goals are subverted.

Second, experimental philosophy shows psychology students (and any students who use science really) that the questions in their majors are infused with philosophical concerns.

Third, it provides an obvious entry into metaphilosophy. This promotes the idea that we need to examine starting points and assumptions, something that philosophy majors have practice with but always need more practice with. It shows the other majors that philosophy is self-reflective and critical, something they may not realize, which in turn promotes being self-reflective and critical about their own disciplines.

Fourth, it generates a lot of good paper ideas. Many students have absolutely zero to say about the causal theory vs. the descriptive theory of reference, but they have lots of opinions about what the diversity in intuitions says. Many students cannot think of anything to say to defend or criticize compatibilism that hasn't already been said better by the authors we have read, but they do have opinions about whether human psychology has any bearing on the debate.

EMILY

A final benefit of xphi I think deserves mention is that it allows for collaboration with undergraduate students. I'm working on a project with a student right now on personal identity. And at a nearby liberal arts school, a student group received funding over the summer to design and run experiments. My student and I have been working on a project on personal identity. I wouldn't have pursued an xphi project without a student collaborator. I wanted someone with a background in statistics, who could be in charge if running the software program that does the analysis. It's been interesting and rewarding, and it isn't easy to see how I would be able to work with an undergraduate if I wasn't doing xphi.

ALEXANDRA REDUX

Repeat of the short three-question TurningPoint clicker survey about how much they know about x phi, their openness to it, and their impressions of it, in order to see if their answers have changed.