



### Thick Evaluation

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## (p.ix) Acknowledgements

Simon Kirchin

This book has been a long time in the making, almost certainly too long. However, one nice aspect of having spent a good while thinking through a number of issues, and stewing on many problems, is that I am able to thank a large number of people. I hope that this does not come across as an over-long Oscars speech. All of my thanks here are genuine and necessary. I also apologize to anyone I have forgotten.

This book started life as two or three pages in a PhD thesis that I wrote while a student at Sheffield, with the groundwork being laid when I was an undergraduate at Oxford. At the latter I had the good fortune to be taught by three excellent philosophers and tutors: Bill Child, David Wiggins, and Tim Williamson. Those familiar with the material in this book may draw the conclusion that David's work influenced me directly. I suspect that isn't the case because I was probably too unreceptive an undergraduate to appreciate his work fully. I do remember that all three taught me the value of rigorous argument and the importance of close attention to the work of others. While at Sheffield I was supervised by David Bell and Richard Joyce, a supervisory team that, from my point of view, could not have been bettered. David taught me—had to teach me again and again, I'm sorry to say—the importance of being precise with one's words and thoughts, while Richard was a fantastic guide to metaethics. I fondly remember the disagreements I had with both of them. Sheffield in the mid-to-late 1990s was a lovely, supportive place to be a graduate student, and I owe much to the many people, both Faculty and postgraduates, who were there, notably: Gavin Boyce, Peter Carruthers, Keith Frankish, Dave Hemp, Chris Hookway, Maria Kasmirli, Steve Makin, Stefano Mafredi, Ewan

McEachran, Betty-Ann Muir, David Owens, Jenny Saul, Bob Stern, Todd Thompson, Leif Wenar, and Steve de Wijze.

Following my time at Sheffield I spent three enjoyable years as a lecturer at Bristol. Now, as then, the period when one has finished a PhD and is looking for a permanent academic home is a difficult and trying affair. This is not just because one is hopeful of the prize of a permanent academic position. One is also spreading one's intellectual wings and growing as a thinker. I am grateful to many people at Bristol for the support they gave me as I developed, particularly Chris Bertram, Jessica Brown, Jimmy Doyle, Keith Graham, James Ladyman, Adam Morton, Andrew Pyle, Mauricio Suarez, and Carolyn Wilde. I was a temporary lecturer at Bristol at the same time that David Bain, Rachel Cooper, Patrick Greenough, and Finn Spicer found themselves in the same boat, and I think myself lucky to have had such wonderful comrades-in-arms.

I have been at the University of Kent since 2003, an intellectual home that has more than suited. My horizons have been expanded and my thoughts supported by many colleagues and friends, both within the philosophy department and outside. **(p.x)** I am especially grateful to Kristoffer Ahlstrom-Vij, David Corfield, Graeme Forbes, Jonathan Friday, Helen Frowe, Edward Harcourt, Edward Kanterian, Hans Maes, Todd Mei, Julien Murzi, Richard Norman, Lubomira Radoilska, Kelli Rudolph, Sean Sayers, Julia Tanney, Robin Taylor, Alan Thomas, and Jon Williamson, all of whom have had to listen to me talk about thick concepts on and off for years. Steve Pethick and Murray Smith have been particularly long-suffering and kind with their time and thoughts. I am the current Dean of the Faculty of Humanities, a Faculty that is home to a large number of colleagues who value education as much as research, and for whom creativity in thought and in practice is paramount. Governments and others all around the world threaten what is good in our universities, even if they try to help, and I feel blessed to lead such a talented and friendly group of people who endeavour to keep the flame alive.

My philosophical thought has been supported and challenged by many people outside the universities I have called home, in private reading, in presentations, and in conversation. (Here I am sure to miss one or two names.) The roll call may be large, but it is heartfelt nonetheless: Olle Blomberg, Anna Bergqvist, Michael Brady, Vittorio Bufacchi, Roger Crisp, Daniel Elstein, Guy Fletcher, Miranda Fricker, Brad Hooker, Tom Hurka, Jeanette Kennett, Brent Kyle, Gerald Lang, Iain Law, Jimmy Lenman, Maggie Little, John McDowell, Brian McElwee, David McNaughton, Alex Miller, Aaron Ridley, Toni Rønnow-Rasmussen, Constantine Sandis, Sam Scheffler, Elisabeth Schellekens Dammann, Neil Sinclair, Philip Stratton-Lake, Bart Streumer, John Skorupski, Folke Tersman, Daniel Whiting, Jon Webber, Ralph Wedgwood, Eric Wiland, Nick Zangwill. I'm particularly grateful to Michel Meliopoulos who invited me to Zurich to present parts of this book when it was in draft at a workshop in September 2014. Simon

Keller, in an act of complete supererogation, read and commented on the manuscript when it was close to being finished, thus enabling me to polish and improve it.

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Thoughts are one thing, turning them into a book quite another. As many people have experienced, Peter Momtchiloff at Oxford University Press exercises much wise judgement and patience, and is one of the very best of philosophical midwives. **(p.xi)** I am also grateful to Matthias Butler, Clement Raj, Christine Ranft, and Jeremy Langworthy who helped see this book through to publication, and to the anonymous referees who helped saved me from many errors and who encouraged me to sharpen my ideas and arguments.

I also acknowledge thanks for publication of previous work. Chapter Five is a rewritten version of my 'The Shapelessness Hypothesis', *Philosophers' Imprint* (2010), pp. 1-28. The early part of Chapter Six is a rewritten version of part of my 'Thick Concepts and Thick Descriptions', which appeared in my edited volume *Thick Concepts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 60-77.

A book that has taken this long to see the light of day needs more than just philosophical support. Many of my non-academic friends and family have had me lecture them on the relevance of the racy and the significance of slob. They have done so with unfailing politeness, even if some of their suggestions—'Thick Evaluation? Why not just call it Stupid Thoughts and have done with it?'—I have had to put aside. My parents, to their great surprise, produced and nurtured a philosopher, and they have supported me in more ways than one throughout many years. I dedicate this book to them with much love and respect. Penny, Freddie, and Molly have had to put up with my 'book melancholia' and have done so with hugs and kindness. They have also shown insights into my own thought that I had missed. I would not be the thinker or person I am without them.

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