INTUITION AS A PHILOSOPHICAL ARGUMENT

Ota WEINBERGER
Universität Graz

1. The psychological fact of intuition

It is a fact that we experience evidence which is not a result of proof or argumentation, but which is not doubted and seems undubitable. Intuition provides the feeling of certainty. But experienced intuitive evidence does not entail objective validity of the immediately evident content. Experienced intuition as a psychological fact provides the basis for the philosophical problems of intuition, but is not identical with it. The philosophical problems of intuition concern the very basis of metaphysics, gnoseology and practical philosophy.

2. Kinds of intuitive evidence

There are different kinds of intuitive evidence:
- Logical evidence: The structure of our theses and the validity of entailment are mostly experienced as intuitively evident. If we consider the matter more deeply we find that logical intuition is determined by the accepted logical system.
- Analytical evidence: Analytical theses – as e.g. "If a is greater than b then b is smaller than a" – are intuitively evident. Such relations are justified by well established definitions which are elements of the framework of the field under consideration.
- Intuition from subjective authenticity: Theses like "This is my right hand", "I have toothache" seem intuitively evident, because they are based on the immediate experience of the subject which cannot be subjected to external criticism.
- The presuppositions of gnoseological realism, namely the existence of the real world and the existence of other minds with whom I
can communicate are experienced as intuitively evident.

- Some kinds of interpersonal persuasion produce feelings similar to intuitive evidence: education, propaganda and different methods of establishing dogmas. These phenomena are interesting from the point of view of sociology of science and politics, but do not concern our present enquiry.

- Intuition in the field of values and moral considerations has rather specific features. Some value standards and moral principles are conceived of as intuitively evident. As in the cognitive field we should distinguish also in the practical realm formal and analytical evident theses, e.g. the transitivity of value equality, and intuitive acceptability of some values or value statements, e.g. "Truthfulness is morally good".

3. *Philosophical explanation of intuitive evidence*

The different kinds of intuition just listed are not relevant in the same way for the philosophical problems of intuition. Essential is the role of this experience in the processes of philosophical argumentation. The philosophical justification of intuition as basis of metaphysics and methodology of recognition is always determined by a question of a Kantian type "How is metaphysical knowledge possible, and how is empirical knowledge possible?" In the Kantian sense there is an immanent framework valid a priori which provides the possibility of empirical knowledge, and critical analysis allows to recognize the limits of possible empirical recognition. The principle of causality, local and temporal determination are roughly speaking the framework of empirical knowledge of nature. In the field of practical argumentation the frame for argumentation is delimited by Kants notion of freedom (causality through freedom) and universality in the sense of the categorical imperative. With Kant the framework is conceived as an immanent feature of our mind; it is analytically detected by the fact that a priori theses (or framework knowledge as I would call it) are experienced as necessary, immediately evident and universally valid truth. A priori knowledge describes the immanent structure of our mind, and is therefore unchangeable.

[As I read Kant his conception of mind (of Erkenntnisvermögen)