

Philosophy 427
Intuitions and Philosophy

Russell Marcus
Hamilton College
Fall 2009

Syllabus

- Assignments
 - Prècises
 - Seminar Papers
 - Term Paper
 - Final
- Thought Experiments Radio Show
- Maybe a change (Bogotá)
- Pinker, Monday, September 28, 7pm
- Buffalo Conference



The [Experimental Epistemology Research Group](#) and the [Philosophy Department](#) at the [University at Buffalo](#) present:

Experimental Philosophy Graduate Conference

Keynote Speaker: Stephen Stich (Rutgers)

We invite submissions of high quality papers from graduate students and young professionals that apply experimental methods to any philosophically relevant topics. While special consideration will be given to papers in epistemology, articles in any area of experimental philosophy are encouraged. We also welcome critical discussions of experimental philosophy. Papers should not exceed **4000 words** in length and be prepared for blind refereeing.

The Graduate Conference will be hosted by the University at Buffalo on Friday, October 2, 2009. **Submission Deadline: August 15, 2009.**

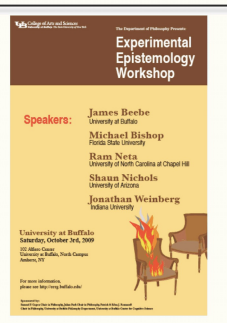
Submission Guidelines: Please send the following to BuffaloEERG@gmail.com as separate documents in .doc or .pdf format:

- (1) A cover letter containing the following information: author's name, title of paper, institutional affiliation, contact information, word count, and an abstract of no more than 150 words.
- (2) The paper itself (with no identifying information).

All questions related to the conference can be sent to BuffaloEERG@gmail.com.

Please also see our website <http://eerg.buffalo.edu/> for more information.

Following the conference all speakers are invited to attend the subsequent [Experimental Epistemology Workshop](#) on October 3, 2009, with host speaker James Beebe (Buffalo), and invited speakers Michael Bishop (Florida State), Ram Neta (UNC), Shaun Nichols (Arizona) and Jonathan Weinberg (Indiana).



 College of Arts and Sciences
University at Buffalo The State University of New York

The Department of Philosophy Presents:

Experimental Epistemology Workshop

Speakers:

James Beebe
University at Buffalo

Michael Bishop
Florida State University

Ram Neta
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Shaun Nichols
University of Arizona

Jonathan Weinberg
Indiana University

University at Buffalo
Saturday, October 3rd, 2009

102 Alfiero Center
University at Buffalo, North Campus
Amherst, NY

For more information,
please see <http://eerg.buffalo.edu/>

Sponsored by:
Samuel P. Capen Chair in Philosophy, Julian Park Chair in Philosophy, Patrick & Edna J. Romanel
Chair in Philosophy, University at Buffalo Philosophy Department, University at Buffalo Center for Cognitive Science



Three Themes in the Course

1. Epistemology in a post-foundationalist world
 - ▶ Or, How can we know anything if everything can be doubted?
2. Intuitions and their role in philosophy
3. Thought experiments, armchair philosophy, and X-Phi

Three Parts of the Course

1. Laying out the epistemological framework of the course
2. Looking at the data concerning intuitions and experiments
 - ▶ presuming a range of philosophical background
3. Reflecting on the lessons learned
 - ▶ trying to answer the question of whether intuitions play an appropriate role in philosophy.

An Epistemological Paradox

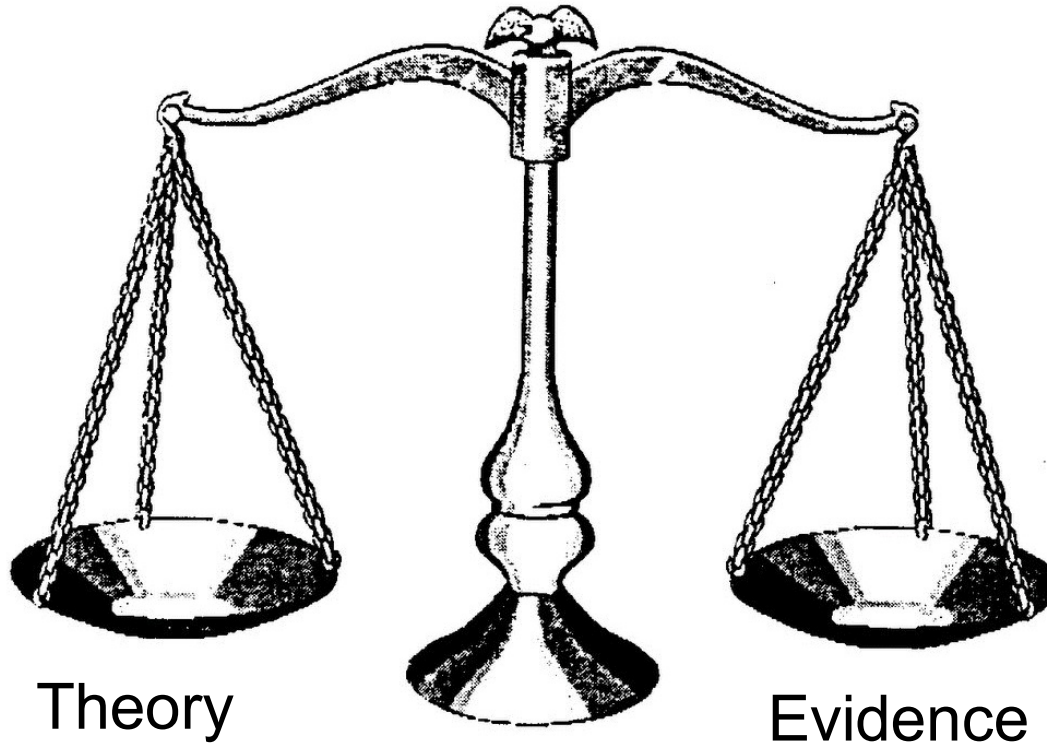
1. Beliefs must be justified either foundationally or coherently.
 2. No beliefs can be justified foundationally.
 3. No beliefs can be justified coherently.
 4. Some of our beliefs are justified.
- Uh-oh.



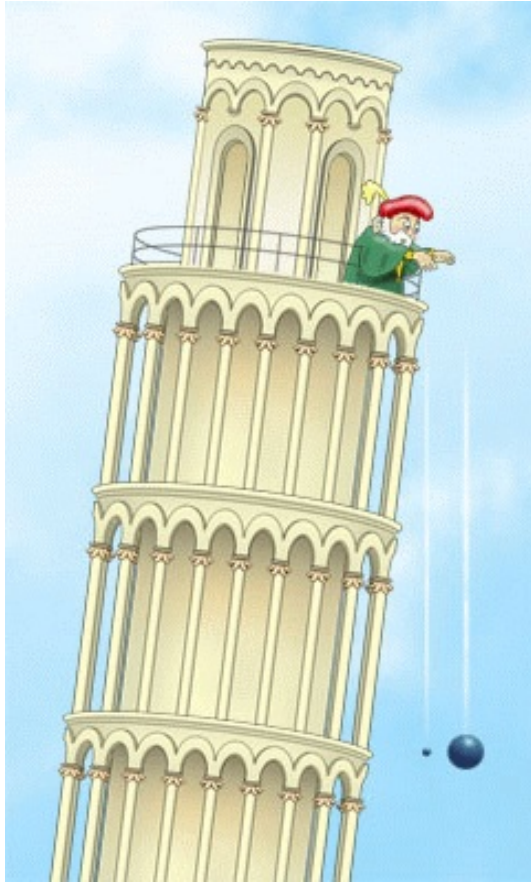
Reflective Equilibrium to the Rescue!



Reflective Equilibrium



Galileo's Balls



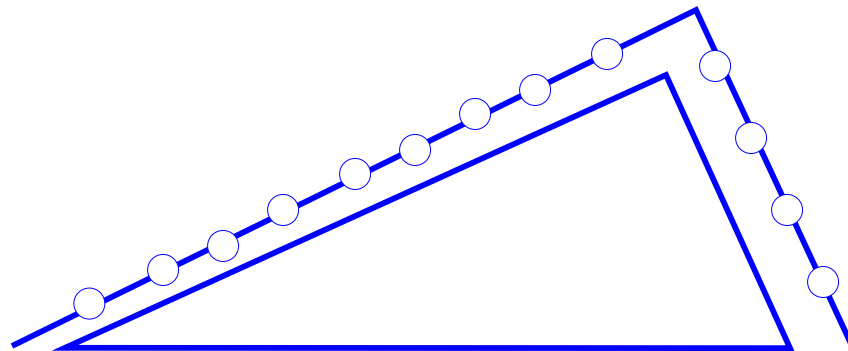
- Aristotle had claimed that heavier bodies fall faster than lighter ones. But...
- Consider a system consisting of the two bodies attached by a string.
- The rate it falls is S .
- Since, the light body falls more slowly than the heavier one, it should act as a drag on the system.
 - So, $S < H$.
- But, since the system is heavier than the single heavy body, it should fall more quickly.
 - So $S > H$.
- That's a contradiction.

Evidence

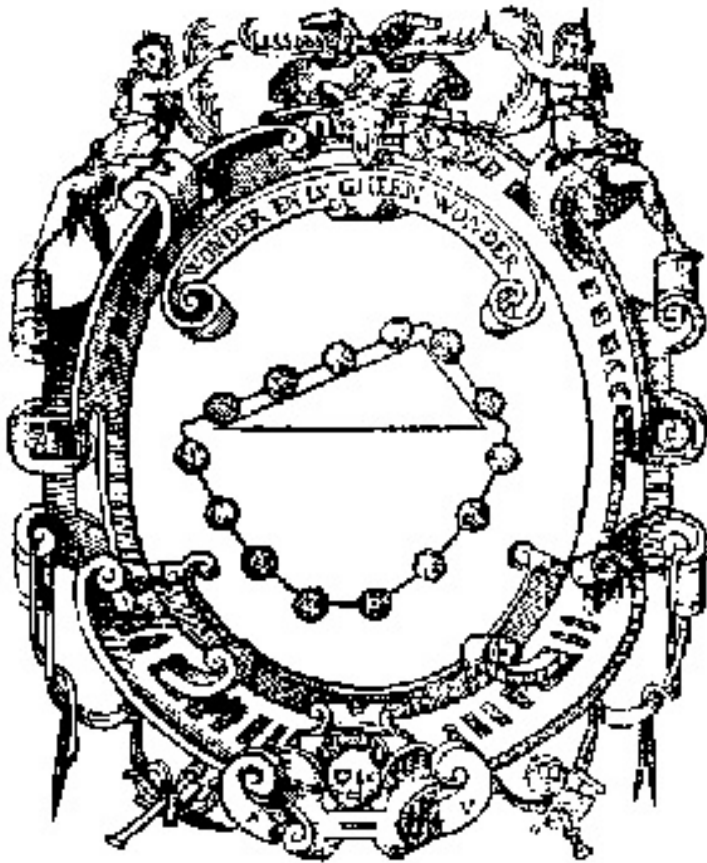
- In science, evidence is supposed to be observational.
- But, where is the evidence in Galileo's experiment?
- “So, you have not made a hundred tests, or even one? And yet you so freely declare it to be certain?... Without experiment, I am sure that the effect will happen as I tell you, because it must happen that way” (Galileo, *Dialogue Concerning the Two Chief World Systems*, p 145.)

Stevin's Chain

Which way does the chain fall?



Stevin's Solution (1605)



- “Unquestionably in the assumption from which Stevin starts, that the endless chain does not move, there is contained primarily only a *purely instinctive* cognition” (Mach).

Intuition Pumps

- Jackson's Mary
- Dennett's response:
"Color perception is just
as I thought it would be!"
- Problem: Our intuitions
may conflict.
- Further: Recent work in
psychology has
undermined faith in
intuition.



Methods

- In philosophy, unlike science, our evidence is not even supposed to be observational.
- Traditionally, we rely essentially on intuitions, on the results of thought experiments.
- This method has lately been derided as armchair philosophy.
- In contrast, experimental philosophy is supposed to avoid some of the pitfalls of traditional methods.
- This is a class in philosophical methods.
- It requires a double level of abstraction
 - Philosophical problems
 - The methods used to approach those problems



**Holbein
The Ambassadors
1533**



Can X-phi save epistemology?

- Knobe on Intentions (video)
- Are our intuitions really unreliable?
- Does X-phi substitute intersubjectivity for objectivity?
- Why should we care about what the folk think?

Let's Start With Descartes