

Philosophy 427

Intuitions and Philosophy

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Class 24 - Defending Intuition
George Bealer
Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy
Part II

Autonomy, authority, and intuition

- The critics of intuition, including many of the proponents of experimental philosophy, argue that we should replace our appeals to intuitions in philosophy with references to the hard data of empirical science.
- Bealer argues for autonomy and authority theses
 - ▶ Philosophy is **autonomous** from empirical science
 - We use intuitive evidence rather than scientific evidence.
 - ▶ Philosophy has greater **authority** in philosophical matters
 - Intuitive evidence outweighs empirical evidence in philosophical arguments
 - We can even modalize much empirical evidence
 - Thought experiments are as good as actual ones, in philosophical matters.



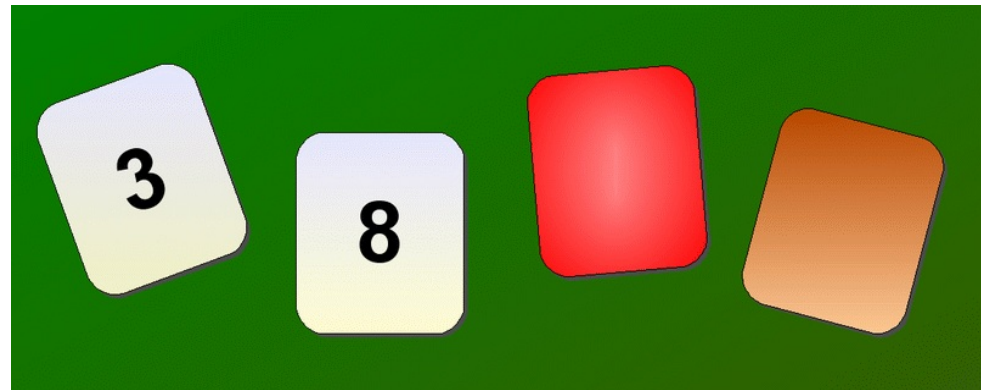
'Philosophy'

- Nearly all philosophers seek answers to such questions as the nature of substance, mind, intelligence, consciousness, sensation, perception, knowledge, wisdom, truth, identity, infinity, divinity, time, explanation, causation, freedom, purpose, goodness, duty, the virtues, love, life, happiness, and so forth (203).
- Fn 28
- Ethics, logic, metaphysics, epistemology, philosophy of mind, and philosophy of science.



'Intuition'

- Gopnik and Schwitzgebel characterized intuitions as judgments not made on the basis of explicit, consciously-observable reasoning processes.
 - They argued that the instability of such intuitions makes them philosophically suspect.
- Cummins searched for the origins of intuitions in tacit theories,
 - He argued that such intuitions have no justificatory force.
- “Many philosophers believe that the empirical findings of cognitive psychologists such as Wason, Johnson-Laird, Rosch, Nisbett, Kahneman, and Tversky cast doubt on their epistemic worth. But, in fact, although these studies bear on “intuition” in an indiscriminate use of the term, they evidently tell us little about the notion of intuition...which is relevant to justificatory practices in logic, mathematics, philosophy, and linguistics” (213).
- Intuitions are based in our abilities to grasp concepts.
- Such abilities have precisely the right characteristics to serve as evidence in philosophical arguments.



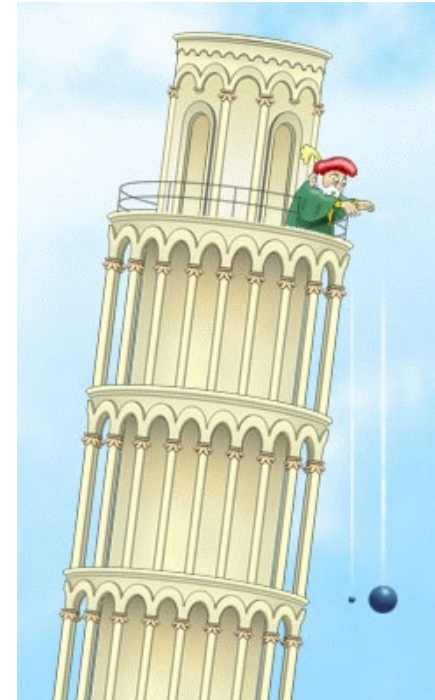
Phenomenology of intuitions

- “We do not mean a magical power or inner voice or special glow or any other mysterious quality. When you have an intuition that A, it *seems* to you that A... a genuine kind of conscious episode” (207).
- Intellectual seemings, rather than sensory seemings.
- “By and large, the two cannot overlap: most things that can seem intellectually to be so cannot seem sensorily to be so, and conversely... [It cannot] seem to you intellectually (i.e. without any relevant sensations and without any attendant beliefs) that there exist billions of brain cells; intuition is silent about this essentially empirical question” (208).



Rational intuitions, physical intuitions, thought experiments

- A physical intuition tells us how the world would be in certain counterfactual circumstances.
 - If I were sitting in a different location, say
 - Thought experiments
- A rational intuition tells us how the world must be.
 - Logic
 - Putnam's Twin Earth
 - Burge's arthritis case
- "When we have a rational intuition - say, that if P then not not P - it presents itself as necessary: it does not seem to us that things could be otherwise; it must be that if P then not not P " (207).
- Galileo's falling balls?



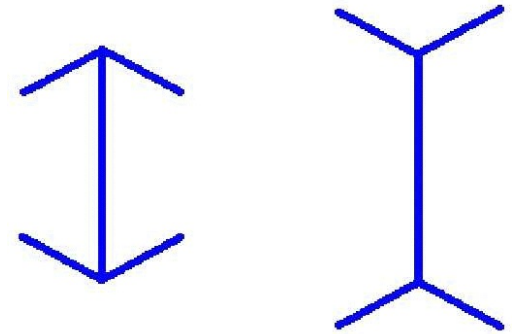
The phenomenology of intuition

1. Not beliefs;
2. Not spontaneous inclinations to belief;
3. Not the raising to consciousness of nonconscious background beliefs;
4. Not guesses, or hunches;
5. Not commonsense opinions;
6. Not merely linguistic intuitions; and
7. Not judgments.

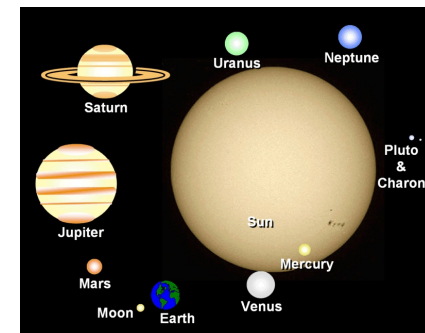
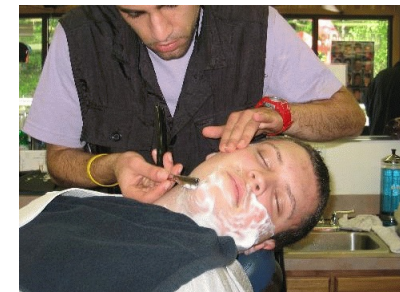
Skipping most of the arguments



Beliefs

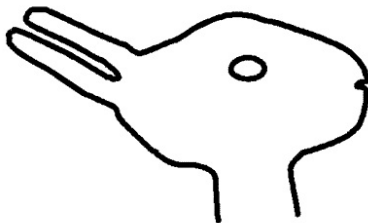
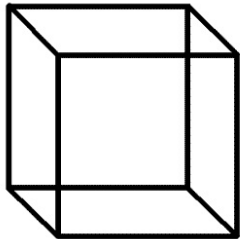


- Both beliefs and intuitions are propositional attitudes.
 - ▶ They take that-clauses as their objects.
 - ▶ I believe that there is a cat that can play the piano,
 - I can desire, or will the proposition.
 - ▶ I intuit that a subject does not know that the sheep is a sheep.
 - ▶ There are many propositional attitudes.
- I can intuit something without believing it.
 - ▶ The Müller-Lyer illusion
 - ▶ The axiom of comprehension and the barber
 - The comprehension axiom seems true.
 - We have over-riding beliefs that show it to be false.
 - ▶ ‘Necessarily, the number of planets is greater than seven’
 - It is false if we take it to mean that it is necessary that there be nine planets.
 - It is true if we take the term ‘the number of planets’ merely to refer to the number nine.
- I can believe without an intuition.
 - ▶ The table is mostly empty space.
 - ▶ $634+783=1417$



Plasticity?

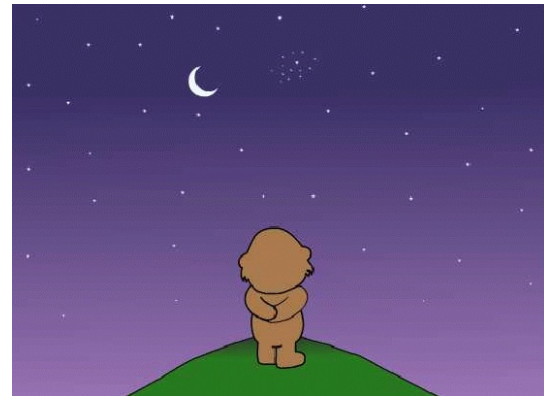
- “We can change our beliefs, but not our intuitions” (208).
- Doxastic involuntarism: we can not choose what to believe.
- Necker cube - just an analogy





Tacit Theory

- Cummins argued that tacit beliefs are likely to be biased.
 - Innate mental structures
 - Environmental conditioning
- A nonconscious theory might not support the requisite modal intuitions used in philosophical arguments.
- We would have to know whether the nonconscious theory is correct.
- But, wishing won't make it so.



Judgments: a category error

Judgments are a kind of occurrent belief;
as such, they are not seemings (210).

- An epistemological error: intuitions fail to carry justificatory weight, as beliefs do.
- A semantic error: because beliefs and judgments and intuitions are all propositional attitudes they are inter-definable.
- A phenomenological error: “It does not *seem* to me that $25^2=625$; this is something I learned from calculations or a table. Note how this differs, phenomenologically, from what happens when one has an intuition. After a moment’s reflection on the question, it just *seems* to you that, if P or Q, then it is not the case that both not P and not Q. Likewise, upon considering [the poodle-sheep example] it just *seems* to you that the person in the example would not know that there is a sheep in the pasture. Nothing comparable happens in the case of the proposition that $25^2=625$ ” (210-1).

A positive account of intuition

“Intuition is a sui generis, irreducible, natural (i.e. non-Cambridge-like) propositional attitude that occurs episodically” (213).

1. Intuitions have phenomenal character
2. Intuitions are natural, not Cambridge, attitudes
3. Intuitions regard concepts
4. Intuitions have modal properties

Intuition, phenomenal character, and contents

Intuitions are conscious episodes of seeming.

- “Here ‘seems’ is understood, not in its use as a cautionary or “hedging” term, but in its use as a term for a genuine kind of conscious episode” (207).
- Consider the intuition that the substance on Twin Earth that feels like water is not water.
 - ▶ The intuition is the conscious experience
 - ▶ The content of the intuition regards Twin Earth
- We can become introspectively aware of our intuitions.
- If we take intuitions, with Bealer, to have justificatory force, to be usable as evidence, then their content is the evidence.
- “I am presently intuiting that if P then not not P. Accordingly, the content of this intuition - that if P then not not P - counts as a bit of my evidence; I may use this logical proposition as evidence (as a reason) for various other things. In addition to having the indicated intuition, I am also introspectively aware of having the intuition. Accordingly, the content of this introspection - that I am having the intuition that if P then not not P - also counts as a bit of my evidence; I may use this proposition about my intellectual state as evidence (as a reason) for various other things” (205).
- The first piece of evidence, the logical claim, is likely to serve as evidence for other logical claims.
- The second piece of evidence, my introspective awareness, is more likely to serve as evidence in epistemological arguments than in logical ones.

Natural and Cambridge attitudes

Intuitions are natural, as opposed to Cambridge-like, propositional attitudes.

- A Cambridge change is the change that I experience when other objects in the universe change.
 - Me and Brad Pitt
 - I have changed only Cambridge properties
- Contrast with natural properties
 - Having mass or momentum
 - Being blue, but not being grue or bleen
- Some relational properties might be natural
 - Being someone's roommate
 - Being shorter than someone
- Intrinsic and extrinsic properties?
- Bealer's claim is that intuitions are natural, as opposed to Cambridge-like, propositional attitudes.



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