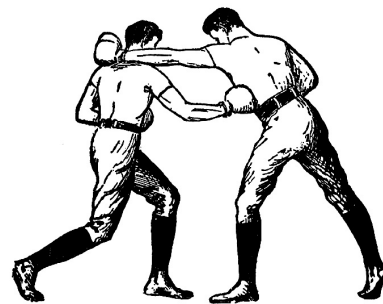


Philosophy 427

Intuitions and Philosophy

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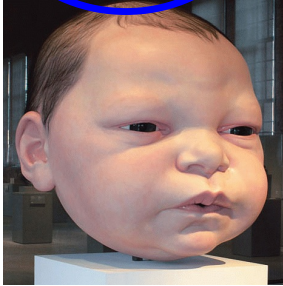
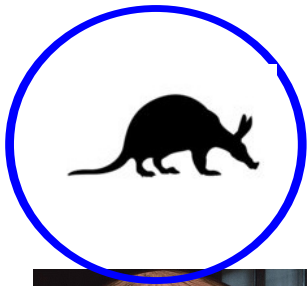
Class 25 - Naturalism and Non-Naturalism
Bealer vs Kornblith



A positive account of intuition

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

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



The concept of an armadillo is in a third realm: not an idea, not a physical object

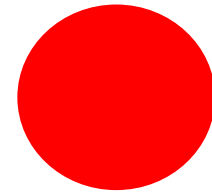
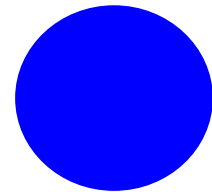
Concepts

Abstract objects

- Thoughts are concrete individuals.
- Concepts are universals, and can be understood, or grasped.
- Concepts may be taken as constituents of propositions, which are similarly abstract.
- The proposition that the sun is shining may be taken as containing the concepts of the sun and of shining.
- Similarly, the concept of a bachelor might be taken to contain the concept of being a man and the concept of being unmarried.
- Bealer claims that rational intuitions are grounded in our understanding of concepts, and their applicability.
- “The typical philosophical counterexample requires a possibility intuition (that such and such condition is possible) as well as an ordinary concept-applicability intuition (that in such and such situation a relevant item would, or would not, count as an F). Without such possibility intuitions, philosophy would be fatally crippled” (B, 212).

Possibility is not consistency or analyticity

- There are impossible states of affairs which are not analytically false nor inconsistent.
- Color incompatibility
- It is impossible for the same spot to appear (in my field of vision) as both red and blue.
- It is not inconsistent with the laws of logic.
- It is not analytically false, on standard construals of analyticity, that a spot could be both red and blue.
- Alternatively, one could identify possibility with analyticity, if one tweaked the notion of analyticity!



Modal character

- “Typically, the central questions of philosophy - and their answers - are phrased in quite general terms without mention of particular individuals, species, and so forth. These questions are necessary in the sense that they call for answers that hold necessarily. In being interested in such things as the nature of mind, intelligence, the virtues, and life, philosophers do not want to know what those things just happen to be, but rather what those things *must* be, what they *are*, in a strong sense. It is not enough that the virtue of piety happened to be what Euthyphro exhibited: a philosopher wants to know what piety *must* be” (B, 203-4).
- The modal character of intuition makes it apt for philosophy, logic, mathematics, and linguistics.
- Rational intuition need only pronounce on the possibilities of particular cases.
 - ▶ We need only know that Twin Earth is possible to see that it is necessary that water is H₂O.
 - ▶ Similarly, while blind sight is an actual phenomenon, philosophers only need it to be possible.
- We can modalize any empirical appeals.
 - ▶ “For the purposes of settling central questions of philosophy...it is enough that the phenomenon of blind-sight be *possible*. And intuitively it is. The experiments are required to establish that it *actually* occurs; but to establish that it is *possible*, intuition suffices” (B, 206).



Examples of rational intuitions

Some logical inferences and truths, e.g. that if p then not not p (B, 205, 209, 211, 217)

The axiom of comprehension (B, 202, 208, 209)

The axiom of choice (B, 211)

Mathematical limits (B, 211)

Congruence is symmetric (B, 211)

The part-whole relation is transitive over the field of regions (B, 211)

Infinite divisibility of space and time (B, 211)

'Necessarily, the number of planets is greater than seven' (B, 210)

Phenomenal colors are incompatible (B, 211, 212)

A determinate falls under its determinables (B, 211)

Gettier cases/poodle-sheep cases (B, 204-5, 208, 210-1, 211, 211-2, 217).

Guessing is not a basic source of evidence (B, 215-6)

That intuitions are a basic source of evidence (B, 217)

Twin Earth arguments for a posteriori necessity or externalism in mental content (B, 205, 208, 227-8)

Chisholm's abnormal-conditions refutation of phenomenalism (B, 205)

Chisholm and Putnam's refutations of behaviorism (B, 205)

Multiple-realizability theses against identity theory (B, 205)

Jackson's Mary case (B, 205)

Burge's arthritis example (B, 205, 208, 221)

Burge's contract case (B, 221-2)

Putnam's beech/elm cases (B, 229)

Moral and aesthetic facts supervene on physical and psychological facts (B, 211, 212)

The multigon and chromic examples (B, 223-5)

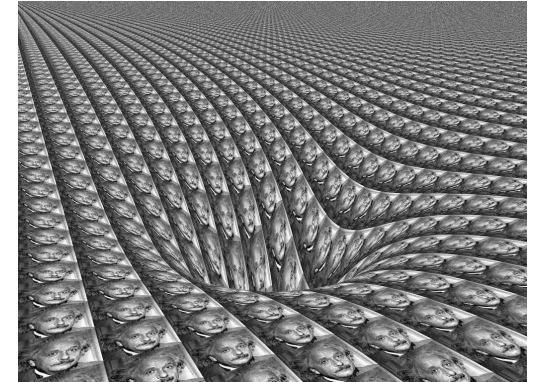
Naturalism and intuition

- Kornblith defends naturalism
 - Rejecting a priori knowledge
 - Rejecting conceptual analysis
- In part, he argues that appeals to intuition are naturalistically defensible.
 - The practice of appealing to intuition has no nonnatural ingredients (K, 137).
- In part, he argues a priori (or rational) appeals to intuition are not defensible.
 - They should be replaced by empirical research.
 - But philosophers should still not transfer to science departments.



Naturalism and empiricism

- Empiricism: all evidence is sense evidence.
 - But we need non-sensory evidence (e.g. mathematics)
 - Concerns about atomism
- Naturalism can allow for evidence or ontology that are ruled out by the empiricist.
 - Space-time points
 - Numbers
- The naturalist can reject the empiricist's principle that everything real must be available to the senses.
- Our best theories must be supported by sense evidence.
 - If our best scientific theories say that there are electrons, then there are electrons.
 - If our best theories appeal to intuition, the naturalist may countenance intuition as a source of evidence.



Bealer against naturalism

- The terms of our best science, including ‘explain’ and ‘evidence’ are not terms available to the empiricist.
- The naturalist who appeals to intuitions seems to contradict the empiricist who rejects such appeals as a priori or rationalist.
- “Naturalistic theory is belied by naturalistic practice... The very terms in which naturalistic theory is formulated...are disallowed as illegitimate by that very theory. Naturalism is...found to be self-defeating twice-over” (K, 131-2).

Points of agreement

- Philosophers' appeals to intuition are often useful.
 - ▶ The method of appeal to intuitions not only plays an important role in actual philosophical practice, but...the method has been used to achieve some substantial insights in a wide range of fields (K, 131).
- Intuitions are not susceptible to criticisms of inter- and intra-subjective instability.
 - ▶ The intuitions to which philosophers appeal... are not idiosyncratic; they are widely shared, and -to a first approximation - must be so, if they are to do any philosophical work (K, 132).

The nature of philosophy

Not much agreement

- Bealer: we can modalize our appeals to empirical science
 - Philosophers only care about the possibilities of particular results.
 - A priori pursuit of a wide range of problems which are mainly conceptual
- Kornblith: appeals to empirical results are often essential
 - Appeals to intuition are limited and irrelevant to philosophical conclusions.
 - Empirical pursuit of concrete problems
- “Epistemologists ought to be concerned with the nature of knowledge, not the concept of knowledge; the proper subject matter of ethics is the right and the good, not the concepts of the right and the good; and so on” (K, 133).

The nature of intuition

- “What we are doing, as I see it, is much like the rock collector who gathers samples of some interesting kind of stone for the purpose of figuring out what it is that the samples have in common. We begin, often enough, with obvious cases, even if we do not yet understand what it is that provides the theoretical unity to the kind we wish to examine. Understanding what that theoretical unity is is the object of our study, and it is to be found by careful examination of the phenomenon, that is, something outside of us, not our concept of the phenomenon, something inside of us” (133-4).
- Kornblith urges that we look outward at the phenomena, rather than inward at our intuitions.
- Bealer’s point is that the phenomena, being universal and thus being about concepts, are only available to intuition.
- If we are looking at concepts, we have to appeal to intuitions.
- If we are looking at phenomena in the world, then we are better off with a method closer to that of empirical science.
 - ▶ Appeals to intuition are not a priori; they’re just data.
 - ▶ We’re just looking for a good theory, and we start with whatever data we have on hand.

Bealer's argument from evidence

- Radical interpretations of empiricism (all evidence is sense evidence) are self-refuting.
- Any weaker interpretation will allow intuitive evidence.
- We need a criterion for calling something evidence.
 - ▶ The claims of purported psychics are not evidence for scientific theory.
 - ▶ The scientific claims of good scientists are evidence.
- Something is evidence if it has a modal-reliable connection to the truth.



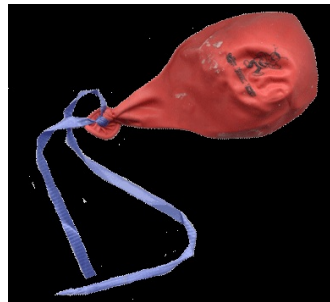
Reliabilism in epistemology

- JTB
- Gettier
 - We can have JTBs without having knowledge
- The causal theory (CTK)
 - The justification has to include appropriate causal connections between the knower and the proposition known.
 - Smith does not have an appropriate causal connection to the object of his knowledge, which in this case is Smith himself, rather than Jones.
 - Causation is weird
 - Fake barns and poodle-sheep
 - You have seen a barn, and you are appropriately causally connected to a barn
 - But, you do not know that you have seen a barn.
- Reliabilism
 - One knows that p iff, one believes that p , p is true, and one has arrived at the belief that p through some reliable process.
 - The process of my coming to believe that there is a barn over there is, given the circumstances, not reliable.
 - Note that reliabilism is naturally compatible with externalist theories of knowledge.



Intuitions as evidence

- Reliabilism is a deflationary theory of evidence: there is no single source for all evidence.
- Sources of evidence may be sensory, intuitive, or rational.
- Intuitions, are legitimate if reliable.
- Take intuitions as basic, rather than derived.
- “Something counts as a basic source [of evidence] iff there is an appropriate kind of strong modal tie between its deliverances and the truth” (B, 216).



Modal and contingent reliabilism



- Contingent reliabilism allows that an experience can serve as evidence if it has a contingent tie to the truth.
 - ▶ The accidentally-reliable guesser
 - ▶ The guesses are indistinguishable, for the guesser, from other experiences that have no reliable connection to the truth.
 - ▶ Even if a certain class of guesses accidentally is reliably connected to the truth, we should not count them as evidence.
- We want to count as evidence only the guesses that have a modal connection, perhaps a necessary connection, to the truth.
- We can not require that the connection be infallible
 - ▶ We are sometimes deceived by both our senses and our rational intuition.
- “A candidate source [of evidence] is basic iff for cognitive conditions of some suitably high quality, necessarily, if someone in those cognitive conditions were to process theoretically the deliverances of the candidate source, the resulting theory would provide a correct assessment as to the truth or falsity of most of those deliverances” (B, 219).

Outline of the argument from evidence

- A defense of a modal-reliabilist theory of evidence.
- Intuitions are modal-reliable.
 - ▶ The details of the argument depend on the particular case.
 - ▶ Linguistic intuitions
 - ▶ Twin-Earth intuitions
 - ▶ Internalist/externalist intuitions
- Philosophy is autonomous and authoritative because intuitions are modal-reliable.
- Big question: How do we reconcile the modal-reliability of intuitions with their diversity?
 - ▶ Bealer gives little help, here.
 - ▶ “Human beings only approximate the relevant cognitive conditions [to support theoretical systematizations of our intuitions sufficient for philosophy], and they do this only by working collectively over historical time. This quest is something we are living through as an intellectual culture. Our efforts have never even reached equilibrium and perhaps never will... Nevertheless, I believe that, *collectively, over historical time, undertaking philosophy as a civilization-wide project*, we can obtain authoritative answers to a wide variety of central philosophical questions” (B, 203).

Kornblith proposes that naturalism has alternative, and better, methods.

- “Naturalistic methodology is now importantly different from that of other philosophers, even if not very long ago it would have been difficult to separate the naturalists from the nonnaturalists by looking at their methods... The approach of examining our intuitions clearly robs us of the best available source of correctives for current mistake. Moreover, the appeal to imaginable cases and what we are inclined to say about them is both overly narrow and overly broad in its focus. It is overly narrow because serious empirical investigation of a phenomenon will often reveal possibilities that we would not, and sometimes could not, have imagined before. It is overly broad because many imaginable cases are not genuine possibilities and need not be accounted for by our theories” (K, 136).
- Two arguments:
 - ▶ Intuitions are too narrow
 - ▶ Intuitions are too broad

Bealer against too-narrow

- The apriorist need not give up empirical research as a heuristic device to stimulate our intuitions.
- The defender of intuition need not demand that the armchair philosopher seclude herself from all empirical data.
- Such data might well be useful to trigger our imaginations.
- But, the theory we construct needs only the modalized version of the data.

Bealer against too-broad

- It is highly unlikely that we ever find ourselves in fake barn country.
- Still, we don't want to say that our best theories of knowledge shouldn't be wary of the causal theory of knowledge.
- Similarly, we are highly unlikely to find ourselves traveling near the speed of light, but we do not want to claim that Newtonian mechanics is true.
- We can use Newtonian mechanics, and we can use JTB, or JTB+CTK, for practical purposes.
- But, when we want the truth, we have to consider even the most abstruse possibilities.

The argument from concepts

Philosophy is autonomous and authoritative because we can possess determinately various philosophical concepts.

- If we could not possess concepts determinately, Bealer argues, then our philosophical intuitions could not be reliably used in philosophical arguments.
- We would have to cede autonomy and authority to empirical science.
- But we can, at least in principle, possess our concepts determinately.
 - x determinately possesses a given concept iff x determinately understands some proposition that has that concept as a conceptual content...
 - determinateness = the mode m of understanding with the following properties:
 - (a) correctness
 - (b) categorial completeness
 - (c) noncategorial completeness (B, 230)

Incomplete concept possession

- Burge cases
 - Arthritis
 - Contracts
- Putnam's trees
 - Some trees are elms and others are beeches, so their concepts differ.
 - Nothing in my thoughts distinguishes the two.
- Bealer argues that these cases are misleading if we take them to be paradigmatic of all of our concept possession.
- We can possess certain concepts determinately, even if we do not possess all of our concepts in that way.



Philosophical concepts are less liable to incompleteness

- Burge and Putnam use semantically unstable terms.
 - The external environment plays a role in its meaning.
- The external environment plays no role in the semantically stable terms used in philosophy.
- “It is at least possible for most of the central concepts of philosophy to be possessed determinately - 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. It would be entirely ad hoc to deny this...the *possibility of determinate possession*” (B, 222).

Scientific essentialism

- Certain things or kinds of things have essential, or necessary, properties.
 - Water is H₂O.
 - Lightning is electrical discharge.
- The discoveries of the essences of natural kinds like water or gold seem a posteriori.
 - They require empirical science.
 - If those identities are really a posteriori, then we could not have any determinate understanding of those concepts a priori.
- Still, we can possess some portion, which he calls the categorial portion, of the concept a priori.
- We just fill-in the empirical portion as we discover the scientific essence.
- The a priori understanding of the categorial portion of the concept requires only the knowledge that some such essence exists, and thus that some such identification is possible.
- We can know that water has an essence a priori, even if we don't know what that essence is a priori.
- Still, such a weakening is unlikely to be required for the concepts used in philosophy.
- “There is an important family of test propositions p that are entirely immune to scientific essentialism, namely, those I call *semantically stable*: p is semantically stable iff, necessarily, for any population C it is necessary that, for any proposition p' and any population C' , if p' in C' is the counterpart of p in C , then $p=p'$... Most of the central propositions in the a priori disciplines -logic, mathematics, philosophy - are semantically stable and, therefore, immune to scientific essentialism” (B, 228).

Questions and observations for Bealer

- Bealer is on the right track with the claim that our intuitions in philosophical cases are no different in kind from our intuitions more generally.
 - Transitivity intuitions in both the cases of spatial regions and biological descendants.
 - “There is no relevant phenomenological difference between these two transitivity intuitions despite the fact that the former would traditionally be counted as synthetic and the latter would be counted as analytic... Nor is there any relevant “formal” difference between these two intuitions... The only cogent way to proceed is to admit all intuitions as evidence, at least provisionally (B, 212).
- The opportunity to modalize-away appeals to actual cases, seems compelling.
- The ubiquity of rational intuition is under-appreciated.
- Galileo’s balls: rational intuition or physical intuition?
- Is our ability to grasp concepts as fecund as Bealer needs?
- Does seeming have concurrent phenomenal character?
 - The Truetemp cases?
 - $25^2=625$?

Questions and observations for Kornblith

- Reliabilism, being a deflationary epistemology, can be used in various ways.
 - ▶ Bealer emphasized the ubiquity of rational intuition.
 - ▶ Kornblith responds that the reliability of such processes makes them legitimate for the naturalist.
- The dispute between Bealer and Kornblith really traces back to the differing conceptions of 'philosophy'.
 - ▶ If we take philosophy to be mainly concerned with concepts and their application, then we need rational intuition to proceed.
 - ▶ If we take philosophy to be mainly concerned with natural phenomena, then we might avoid appeals to apriorist epistemology.
- If the point of a philosophical theory is to provide an account of the natural kind, it has to be universal.
 - ▶ It is difficult to see how knowledge or the good (or whatever) can be a natural kind and not be a concept.
 - ▶ It can't be a thought or a belief; those are particulars.
 - ▶ Kornblith seems to be confusing concepts with thoughts.
 - ▶ "Understanding what that theoretical unity is is the object of our study, and it is to be found by careful examination of the phenomenon, that is, something outside of us, not our concept of the phenomenon, something inside of us" (K, 133-4).