Philosophy 110W
Introduction to Philosophy

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Class 10 - The B-Theory
Some Thoughts About Intuitions

Temporal Intuitions

- Zimmerman relies on our intuitions about the present to motive the A-theory.
  - "Thank goodness that's over."
- Smart instead focuses on details of the construction of scientific theory.
- It looks like we're contrasting philosophical intuition with science.
- In order to understand philosophical intuition and its role in philosophy, we have to understand a basic epistemological problem facing philosophical methods.

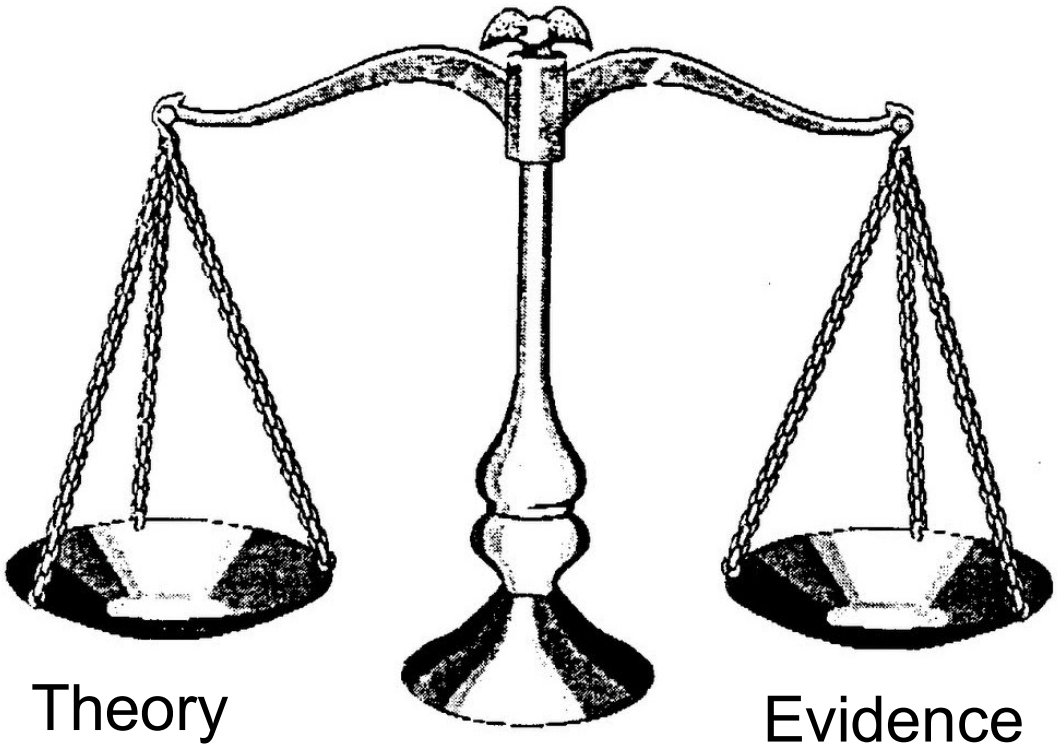
An Epistemological Problem

1. Beliefs must be justified either foundationally or coherently.
   - Descartes is a foundationalist.
   - Coherentism is basically consistency.
2. No beliefs can be justified foundationally.
   - Descartes appeals to the goodness of God.
3. No beliefs can be justified coherently.
   - People can have consistent but false beliefs.
4. Some of our beliefs are justified.

Uh-oh.

Reflective Equilibrium to the Rescue!

Reflective Equilibrium



Philosophical Evidence

- In science, the evidence is supposed to be observational.
- In philosophy, the evidence is often intuitive.
  - Many philosophical claims are modal, about necessity and possibility.
  - We have no observational evidence of modality.
- Intuitions are often the results of thought experiments.
  - What if there were a sixth sense inaccessible to humans?
  - What if we lived in a cave?
  - What if we melted a piece of wax?
  - What if we moved the universe over three inches or ahead ten minutes?
  - What if there were another world just like ours except...?

Philosophers on 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. (George Bealer).
- "The term 'intuition' here is not being used in the sense of Spinoza, Bergson, or Husserl. It does not describe a cognitive act that is somehow superior to sensory perception. Nor, on the other hand, does it refer merely to hunches that are subsequently checkable by sensory perception or by calculation. Nor does this kind of intuition entail introspection, since it may just be implicit in a spoken judgment. Its closest analogue is an intuition of grammatical well-formedness. In short, an intuition that *p* is here just an immediate and untutored inclination, without evidence or inference, to judge that *p*" (L. Jonathan Cohen).
- "We will call any judgment an *intuitive judgment*, or more briefly an intuition, just in case that judgment is not made on the basis of some kind of explicit reasoning process that a person can consciously observe" (Alison Gopnik and Eric Schwitzgebel).
- The Elephant and the Rider
  - "The elephant dwarfs the rider, who will have a hard time getting the elephant to do anything it doesn't want to. Still, one might think that the rider is basically in charge. Yet Haidt points out that the analytic system is a recent - and still somewhat buggy -evolutionary innovation, appended to a basically intuitive brain that previously managed pretty well without it... It's not that intuition is a tool that a rational creature often employs; it's rather, to put it crudely, that reason is a tool that a basically instinctual creature often employs to accomplish certain ends. For the most part, the intuitive system sets the agenda" (Haybron).

Science and Philosophy

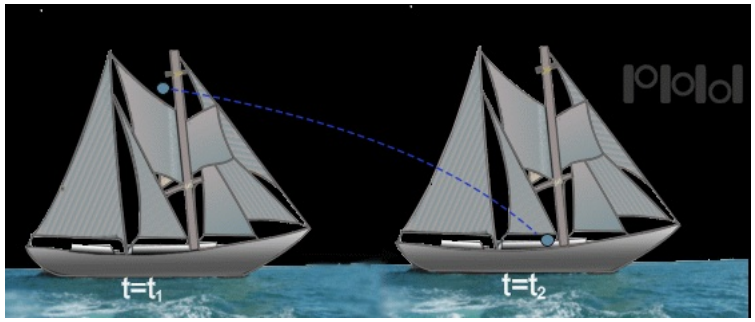
- A standard view:
  - science proceeds empirically, from observation
  - philosophy proceeds *a priori*, from intuitions
- But proper scientific method is actually not empirical in the way that the standard view depicts.

Galileo's Balls

- Aristotle had claimed that a heavier body falls faster than a lighter one (H > L). 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.

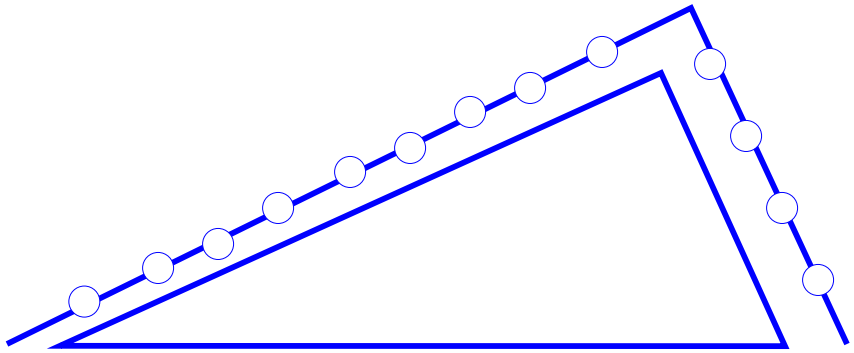
Evidence

- In science, unlike in philosophy, evidence is supposed to be observational.
- But, where is the evidence in Galileo's experiment?
- Regarding the dropping of a rock on a ship (Galilean relativity):
  - "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*)

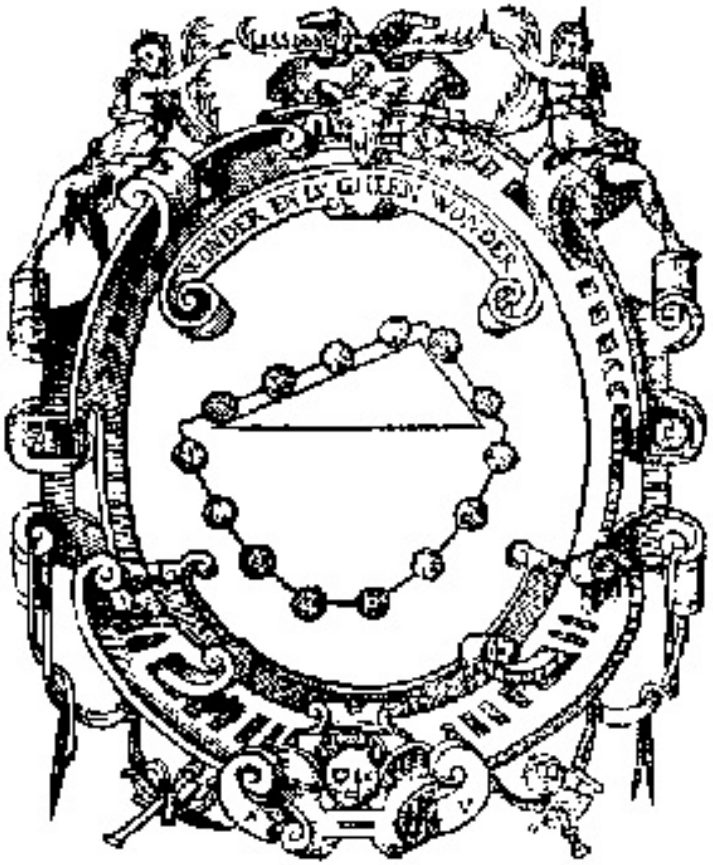


Stevin's Chain

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).

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.

Business

- Papers on Thursday
- *Eternal Sunshine* this evening
  - KJ Aud
  - 7pm