

Philosophy 427
Intuitions and Philosophy

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Class 24 - Defending Intuition
George Bealer
“Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy”

Autonomy, Authority, and Intuition

- 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.



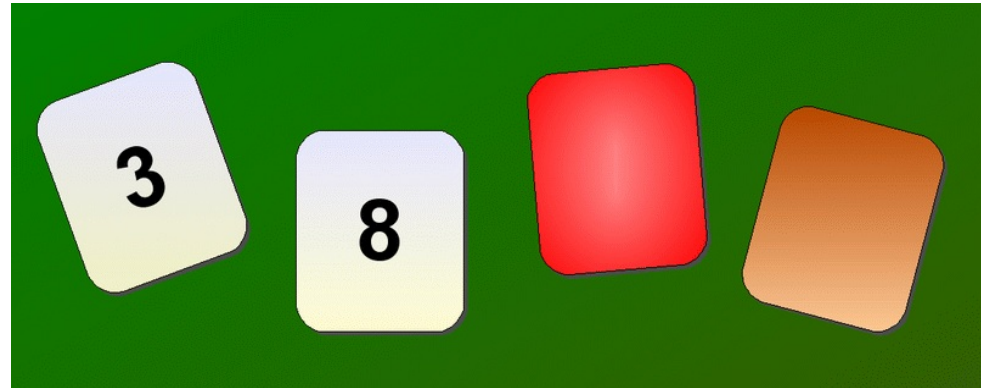
'Philosophy'

- “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.



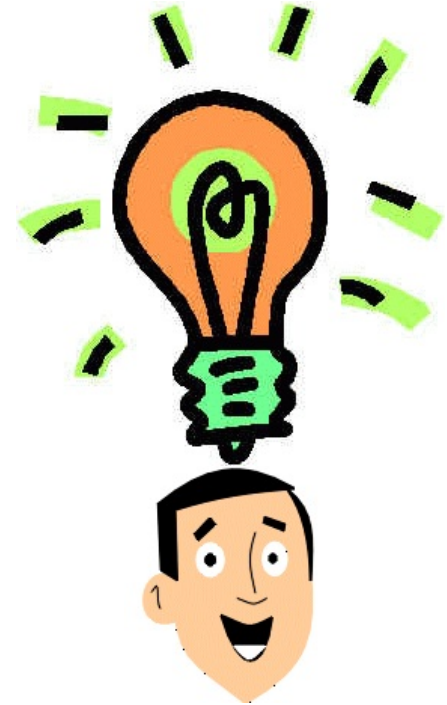
'Intuition'

- 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.



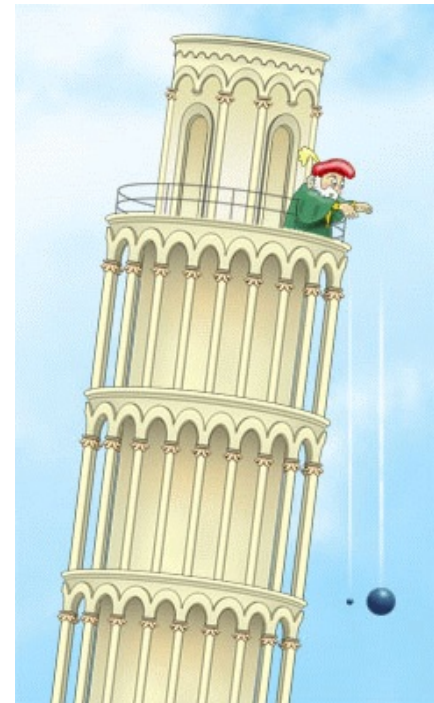
Phenomenology of Intuitions

- “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?

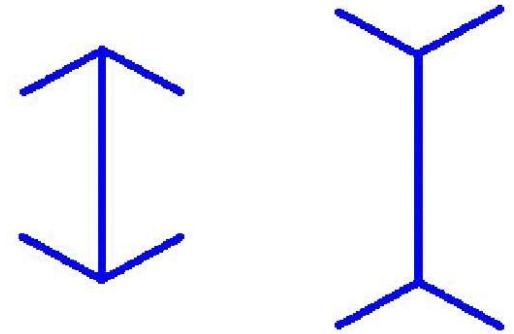


The Phenomenology of Intuition

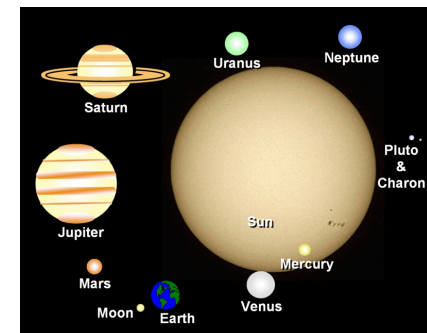
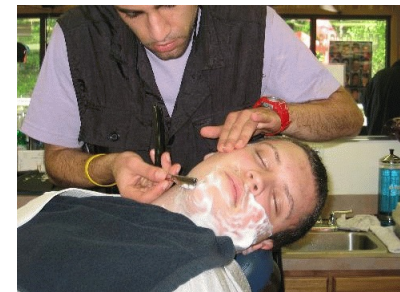
1. Not beliefs;
2. Not spontaneous inclinations to belief;
3. Not the raising to consciousness of nonconscious background beliefs;
4. Not guesses, or hunches;
5. Not commonsense opinions;
6. Not merely linguistic intuitions; and
7. Not judgments.



Beliefs

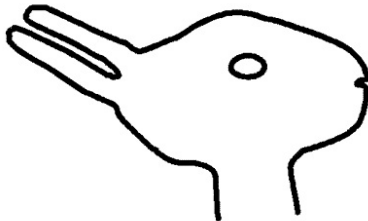
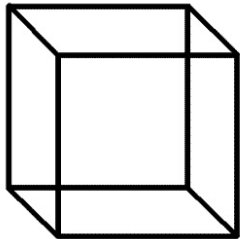


- Both beliefs and intuitions are propositional attitudes.
 - ▶ They take that-clauses as their objects.
 - ▶ I believe that there is a cat that can play the piano,
 - I can desire, or will the proposition.
 - ▶ I intuit that a subject does not know that the sheep is a sheep.
 - ▶ There are many propositional 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





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.

Spontaneous Inclinations to Belief

- Instead of identifying intuitions with a kind of belief, one could identify them with inclinations to believe.
 - Plausible given the distinction between beliefs and intuitions
- Bealer interprets spontaneous inclinations to belief as being like dispositions.
- I have a spontaneous inclination to believe that $634+783=1417$.
- But, prior to working it out, I had no intuition about that sum.
 - “If I am to have an intuition about numbers, then above and beyond a mere inclination, something else must happen -a sui generis cognitive episode must occur. Inclinations to believe are simply not episodic in this way” (209).
- Inclinations are dispositional and lack the phenomenal content we experience when we intuit.
- We have many more inclinations to believe than we could ever experience.