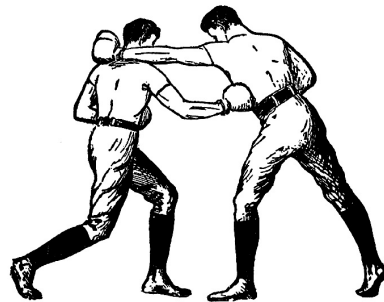


Philosophy 427

Intuitions and Philosophy

Russell Marcus
Hamilton College
Fall 2011

Class 26 - Naturalism and Non-Naturalism
Bealer vs Kornblith



An Epistemological Problem

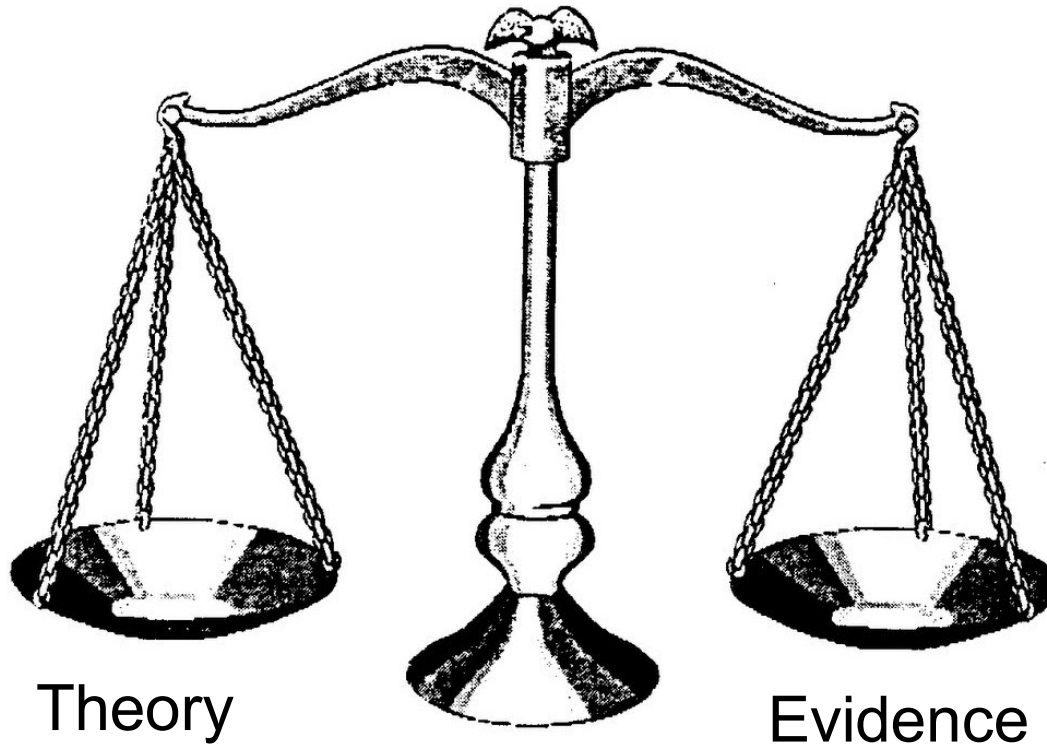
1. Beliefs must be justified either foundationally or coherently.
 2. No beliefs can be justified foundationally.
 3. No beliefs can be justified coherently.
 4. Some of our beliefs are justified.
- Uh-oh.



Reflective Equilibrium to the Rescue!



Reflective Equilibrium



Philosophical Evidence

- In science, the evidence is supposed to be observational.
- In philosophy, the evidence is often intuitive.
- Intuitions are often the results of thought experiments.
 - What if we met a race of non-carbon-based aliens?
 - What if mice could speak?
 - What if there were another world just like ours except...?



Bealer 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.”

- ▶ not beliefs
- ▶ not spontaneous inclinations to belief
- ▶ not the raising to consciousness of nonconscious background beliefs
- ▶ not guesses, or hunches
- ▶ not commonsense opinions
- ▶ not merely linguistic intuitions
- ▶ not judgments

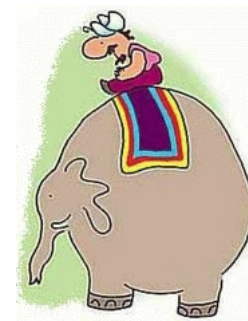
Cohen

“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 .”

- ▶ principled lack of sense evidence
- ▶ no privileged epistemic position

The Elephant and the Rider

Jonathan Haidt



- In psychology, intuition (the elephant) is often aligned with automatic systems where reasoning (the rider) is aligned with analytic systems.
- Some people believe that their analytic systems, their ability to reason, overrides their intuitions.
- Our intuitions are actually in charge most of the time.
 - ▶ “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” (Daniel Haybron).

Intuitions and Instability

- Idiotfest and Human Irrationality
- Intrasubjective instability
 - “Even if philosophical intuition *can* be calibrated, it never *is* calibrated, because philosophers could have no possible use for intuition in a context in which the relevant theory was well enough settled to form the basis of a credible calibration test. Philosophical theory in such good shape is ready to bid the Socratic midwife farewell and strike out on its own in some other department. Philosophical intuition, therefore, is epistemologically useless, since it can be calibrated only when it is not needed” (Cummins).
- Intersubjective Instability
 - X-Phi, Gendler
- Gender Differences
 - Buckwalter and Stich

Bealer's 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)

When Do We Use Intuitions?

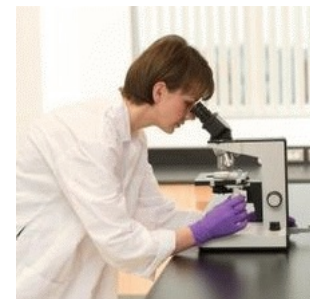
- Modal Claims
 - We can in principle have no observational evidence about possibility and necessity.
- Mathematics
 - Mathematical objects are abstract and so unavailable to the senses.
- Linguistics
 - Chomsky and the poverty of the stimulus
- Science
 - Galileo
 - “So, you have not made a hundred 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*).

Bealer Against Empiricism

- The terms of our best science, including ‘explain’ and ‘evidence’ are not terms available to the empiricist.
- “What does and does not count as an observation or experience? Why count sense perception as observation? Why not count memory as observation? Or why not count certain high-level theoretical judgments as sense experiences? Indeed, why not count intuitions as sense experiences?... What does and does not count as a theory, as justified (or acceptable), as an explanation, as simple? The fact is that empiricists arrive at answers to these questions by using as prima facie evidence their intuitions about what does and does not count as experience, observation, theory, justified, explanation, simple. In their actual practice, empiricists use such intuitions as evidence to support their theories and to persuade others of them. However, such use of intuitions contradicts the principle of empiricism, which includes only experiences and/or observations as prima facie evidence. So in their actual practice, empiricists are not faithful to their principles” (Bealer 1993).
- Instead, we should adopt a rationalism which admits intuitions, especially modal ones, as evidence.

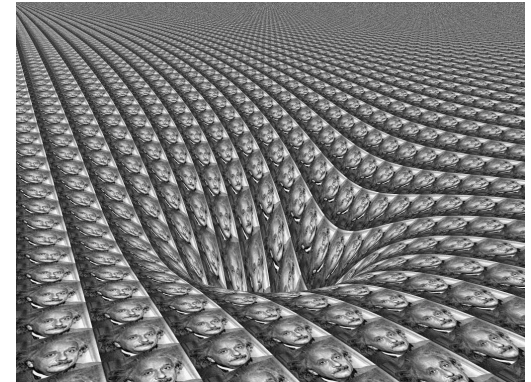
Naturalism and Intuition

- Kornblith defends naturalism
 - Rejecting *a priori* knowledge
 - Rejecting conceptual analysis
- He recognizes the centrality of appeals to intuition.
- In part, he argues that appeals to intuition are naturalistically defensible.
 - “The practice of appealing to intuition has no nonnatural ingredients.”
- In part, he argues that *a priori* (or rational) appeals to intuition are not defensible.
 - They should be replaced by empirical research.



Naturalism and Empiricism

- Empiricism: all evidence is sense evidence.
 - ▶ “Nothing but Nature, the single, all-embracing spatio-temporal system exists” (David Armstrong).
 - ▶ Problems:
 - 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.



Points of Agreement

Bealer and Kornblith

- 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

- Kornblith: appeals to empirical results are essential.
 - Appeals to intuition are limited and irrelevant to philosophical conclusions.
 - We need 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.”
- Bealer: we can and do modalize our appeals to empirical science
 - Philosophers only care about the possibilities of particular results.
 - Philosophers conduct an *a priori* pursuit of a wide range of problems which are mainly conceptual.



Modal Character of Philosophical Evidence

- The modal character of intuition makes it apt for philosophy, logic, mathematics, and linguistics.
 - ▶ “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).
- 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.
 - ▶ 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).



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.
- The demarcation problem
- Bealer's solution: something is evidence if it has a modal-reliable connection to the truth.



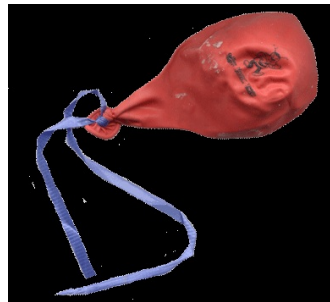
Reliabilism in Epistemology

- Reliabilism is the winner of the post-Gettier epistemology wars.
- 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.



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 they are 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).



Outline of the Argument from Evidence

Bealer's modal-reliabilism

- Intuitions are modal-reliable.
 - ▶ The details of the argument depend on the particular case.
 - ▶ Linguistic intuitions
 - ▶ Twin-Earth intuitions
 - ▶ Internalist/externalist intuitions
 - ▶ Mathematical 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).

The Nature of Intuition

- 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.
- Kornblith urges that we look outward at the phenomena, rather than inward at our intuitions.
 - ▶ "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).
 - ▶ 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.

Intuition as Immaturity

- Kornblith argues that philosophers rely on intuition mainly when their sub-discipline is in its nascence.
 - In the early days of philosophy of mind, philosophers focused on conceptual questions.
- Now, philosophers spend more time on actual empirical research, especially neuroscience..
- Other sub-disciplines see, increasingly, appeals to data replacing intuitive evidence.
- “Appeal to intuition early on in philosophical investigation should give way to more straightforwardly empirical investigations of external phenomena.”
- Properly scientific disciplines such as physics and psychology were once indistinguishable from philosophy.
- Still, it would take a substantially more-detailed argument to establish Kornblith’s claim more broadly.

Kornblith: Naturalism Has 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.

Bealer's Argument from Concepts

Philosophy is autonomous and authoritative because we 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)

Determinately Understanding a Concept

Suppose that in her journal a sincere, wholly normal, attentive woman introduces through use (not stipulation) a new term 'multigon'. She applies the term to various closed plane figures having several sides (pentagons, octagons, chiliagons, etc.). Suppose her term expresses some definite concept — the concept of being a multigon — and that she determinately understands this concept. By chance, she has neither applied her term 'multigon' to triangles and rectangles nor withheld it from them; the question has just not come up. Eventually, however, she considers it. Her cognitive conditions (intelligence, etc.) are good, and she determinately understands these concepts. Suppose that the property of being a multigon is either the property of being a closed, straight-sided plane figure, or being a closed, straight-sided plane figure with five or more sides. Then, intuitively, when the woman entertains the question, she would have an intuition that it is possible for a triangle or a rectangle to be a multigon if and only if being a multigon = being a closed, straight-sided plane figure. Alternatively, she would have an intuition that it is not possible for a triangle or a rectangle to be a multigon if and only if being a multigon = being a closed, straight-sided plane figure with five or more sides. That is, the woman would have truth-tracking intuitions. If she did not, the right thing to say would be that either the woman does not really understand one or more of the concepts involved, or her cognitive conditions are not really ideal. (Bealer: 2002; 103).

Incomplete Concept Possession

- Objection (in Kornblith's spirit): In many philosophical cases, we don't have determinate possession of the relevant concepts.
 - Burge's arthritis case
 - Putnam's elm and beech trees
- Bealer: 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.
- Remember, Kornblith agreed that philosophical intuitions were widely shared.



Bealer: 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).

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.
 - ▶ “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).
 - ▶ But it can’t be a thought or a belief; those are particulars.
 - ▶ Kornblith seems to be confusing concepts with thoughts.