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Saving the Doxastic Account of Intuitions

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In order to evaluate philosophical theories of knowledge, causation, consciousness, meaning, properties, free will, and the like, philosophers habitually do not make do with what is gathered by paradigmatic empirical methods, or with what we learn from logic and mathematics. They also rely on what they term their ‘intuitions’. This widespread practise of using intuitions as evidence prompts two questions. First, what are intuitions? And secondly, is reliance on intuitions a reliable way to attain insight into the nature of knowledge, causation, consciousness, and the like? Although the second is of greater philosophical import, I will here solely be concerned with the first question.¹ In line with common practise, I suppose that answering it requires providing an account detailing how intuitions fit into our taxonomy of mental states.

Many philosophers subscribe to a *doxastic account* of intuitions. Rather than accepting intuitions as mental states of a *sui generis* basic kind, doxastic accounts aim to explain intuitions in terms of the established mental kind of belief. This idea has proven rather popular. Lewis (1983, p. x) and Dennett (e.g. 1987c, p. 4f, 1991, p. 332, p. 399f) have prominently identified intuitions with beliefs. Taking judgments to be occurrent beliefs, and statements to be linguistic manifestations of beliefs, we find analogous ideas at the heart of numerous other elucidations of ‘intuition’.²

For all their deflationist appeal, doxastic accounts are widely suspected to founder on a straightforward objection: There are clear cases of someone having the intuition that *p* whilst *not* believing that *p*. Hence, intuitions cannot be beliefs. This *argument from intuition without belief* has been forcefully employed by George Bealer to argue the case for an alternative view.³ Intuitions, Bealer maintains, form a mental kind *sui generis*: they are intellectual seemings. To have the intuition that *p* is to have the intellectual seeming that *p*. Champions of a Bealer-style *intellectual seeming account* deny that we can explain intuitions in terms of the established mental kind of belief. They maintain that we need to broaden our traditional taxonomy and acknowledge intuitions as a basic mental kind.

In this paper I defend the doxastic account. I argue that the argument from intuition without belief can be accommodated by a *disjunctive* doxastic account. In fact, such an account receives motivation as well as support from the cases of intuition without belief the argument pivots on. My argument proceeds as follows. I first of all identify the states an account of intuitions has to cover (§1), proposing three criteria to mark them off from other so-called ‘intuitions’. I go on to discuss the austere doxastic account equating intuitions with beliefs, arguing that its key contention is well-supported by our practise of philosophical thought-experimenting (§2). In a third step, I canvass the rival intellectual seeming theory of intuitions and raise some worries about it (§3). I then turn to the argument from intuition without belief (§4). I argue that, put in context, we find the cases of intuition without belief quite to naturally motivate and support a disjunctive doxastic account which holds that to have the intuition that p is to *either* have the belief that p , *or* to have an inclination to believe that p . I go on to elaborate the disjunctive account and to defend it against some objections (§5).

Although my reasons for embracing a disjunctive account will be distinctive, I cannot claim to have invented it. Its core idea can rather be traced back to van Inwagen. A proper way to understand the claim I put forth, then, is that van Inwagen is right when he observes:

Our ‘intuitions’ are simply our beliefs—or perhaps, in some cases, the tendencies that make certain beliefs attractive to us, that ‘move’ us in the direction of accepting certain propositions without taking us all the way to acceptance. (van Inwagen 1997, p. 149)

1. What an Account of Intuitions Needs to Cover

Talk of ‘intuitions’ is as widespread in contemporary philosophy as it is disparate. Philosophers use ‘intuitions’ to refer to, amongst other things, non-deliberative or ‘intuitive’ judgments, widely held pre-theoretic convictions, informed hunches, fundamental articles of faith, evident truths, or apparently unfounded yet appealing claims. It should be evident that not all these states are of interest to the present endeavour. Our aim is to determine what those so-called ‘intuitions’ are that philosophers use as evidence in evaluating philosophical theories of knowledge, causation, consciousness, meaning, and the like. The account we seek needs to cover intuitions in this sense, and in this sense only. I refer to these states by the term ‘philosophical intuitions’ and I propose to single them out by three criteria.

First, philosophical intuitions are cognitive mental states that have propositional contents (one has the intuition that p), that are truth-apt (intuitions are typically true or false), but that aren’t factive (one can have the intuition that p even if p is false). Admittedly, this is not much of a constraint. All the diverse states mentioned above fit this profile. Secondly, philosophical intuitions are states philosophers appeal to in order to (dis-)confirm philosophical accounts. Philosophical intuitions thus are employed in a distinctive epistemic role.⁴ This is precisely why we are interested in them. Thirdly,

philosophical intuitions are straightforwardly—that is to say, without manifest inferences—reaped from reflection on hypothetical cases such as Jackson’s Mary, or Searle’s Chinese Room (see §2). It is within the context of such philosophical thought-experiments that intuitions employed as evidence make their appearance.

The account we seek needs to detail how philosophical intuitions as marked off by these three criteria fit into our taxonomy of mental states. Intuitions in the relevant sense hence are those truth-apt yet non-factive cognitive mental states that are widely employed to support or invalidate philosophical views and that are straightforwardly reaped from reflection on hypothetical cases. Exemplar specimens of philosophical intuitions thus delineated are easy to find. Just think of the intuition that Mary learns something on seeing red for the first time, the intuition that the watery stuff on Twin Earth isn’t water, the intuitions that there could be philosophical zombies, or the intuition that Swampman doesn’t have any thoughts.⁵

Everyone agrees that these intuitions are paradigm examples of what an account of intuitions of relevance to philosophy needs to cover (Kornblith 1998, p. 130, Cummins 1998, p. 116, Bealer 1998, p. 206f, Miller 2000, p. 235, Pust 2000, ch.1, Williamson 2004, p. 110f, Weinberg et. al., this volume, Ludwig, this volume).⁶ Still, taking issue with my third criterion, many philosophers think that such an account needs to cover more. Some hold that an account of intuitions should also cover beliefs in obvious truths such as “I have two hands”, or “There are mountains in Switzerland” (Williamson 2004, p. 113, see Williamson 2007, ch.7). Others maintain that such an account should cover everything that can sensibly be termed a “rational intuition” (Bealer 2002, p. 74, Sosa 1998, e.g. p. 258), where these are understood to comprise philosophical intuitions as marked off above as well as, in particular, putative direct logical and mathematical insights such as that there is a set for every property, or that the part/whole relation is transitive (Bealer 1998, pp. 207–211; see below §3).

I hold that our focus should be narrower. As for beliefs in obvious truths, they issue from epistemic capacities (perception, memory, reasoning) whose general trustworthiness is granted by everyone save a true skeptic (whose worries we can safely ignore here). Everyone agrees with Williamson that “[t]here is no distinctive mystery as to how we know that there are mountains in Switzerland” (2007, p. 275). But if there isn’t, then we shouldn’t worry about beliefs in obvious truths. For there *is* a distinctive mystery as to how we know, say, that Mary learns something (if we do so at all). Using the intuition that Mary learns something as evidence is a contentious thing to do. Using the claim that there are mountains in Switzerland isn’t.

As for putative direct logical and mathematical insights, philosophical intuitions clearly deserve our attention in their own right. Everyone grants that we can reliably ascertain mathematical and logical truths from the armchair. What is in dispute is whether armchair reflection allows us to establish truths *beyond* those. It is this claim that friends and foes of appeals to intuitions in philosophy argue about, and I take it that we should focus on what is actually in dispute. Let me add that I can see no reason to burden our discussion of the nature of intuitions as employed in philosophy with the

task of accounting for our knowledge of mathematics and logic. Some philosophers are prone to assimilate these tasks (see Katz 1981, 2002). But the marked differences in acknowledged reliability between mathematical and philosophical armchair methods should give them pause.

In what follows, then, I take it for granted that the account we seek needs to detail for all and only those intuitions satisfying our three criteria how they fit into our taxonomy of mental states. I won't be too parochial about this, though. I will concentrate throughout on philosophical intuitions as delineated above, thereby ensuring that I deal with states everyone takes to be paradigm specimen of intuitions as relevant to philosophy. Yet I allow that the accounts to be discussed may cover at least some non-philosophical yet paradigmatic rational intuitions as well.

2. Philosophical Thought Experiments and the Austere Doxastic Account

Philosophical intuitions—I drop the ‘philosophical’ when no harm is done—make their appearance in the context of philosophical thought-experiments. So if we want to arrive at an understanding of intuitions, we should take a close look at the likes of the Gettier cases, the fable of the philosophical zombie, Searle's Chinese Room, or Jackson's tale of Mary. Here is how Jackson tells it:

Mary is a brilliant scientist who is, for whatever reason, forced to investigate the world from a black and white room *via* a black and white television monitor. She specializes in the neurophysiology of vision and acquires, let us suppose, all the physical information there is to obtain about what goes on when we see ripe tomatoes, or the sky, and use terms like ‘red’, ‘blue’, and so on. (...) What will happen when Mary is released from her black and white room or is given a colour television monitor? Will she *learn* anything or not? It just seems obvious that she will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it. But then it is inescapable that her previous knowledge was incomplete. But she had *all* the physical information. *Ergo* there is more to have than that, and Physicalism is false. (Jackson 1982, p. 130)

Where are the intuitions here? There is a natural answer: the intuitions here are the beliefs we rather directly adopt and hold to be justified on the basis of Jackson's story. Jackson expects us to believe that Mary will learn something about the world and our visual experience of it in leaving her cell, and he considers this belief justified by the story told. This is the intuition he highlights, yet of course, the contrary belief that she does *not* learn something would also qualify. Suppose Jackson's story works for me just the way he thought it would. Being told of Mary, I judge and hence believe that Mary learns something. I have acquired this belief because I have been confronted with Jackson's case⁷. More importantly still, I deem it to be right because I have reflected on Jackson's case. Suppose I conclude with Jackson that there could be a physically

omniscient being that still did not know everything about a world like ours. If someone were to challenge this claim, I would follow Jackson's lead and produce the Mary case to warrant my judgment.

We arrive at the same result when we consider other cases. Take Davidson's case of the Swampman (Davidson 1987, p. 46f).⁸ Davidson invites us to imagine that a freak event reduces him to his elements, and simultaneously turns a nearby tree into a physical replica of his. This replica, the Swampman, takes up Davidson's life where he so unexpectedly left it, and no one can tell the difference. Still, Davidson maintains that there is one:

My replica can't recognize my friends; it can't *recognize* anything, since it never cognized anything in the first place. It can't know my friends' names (though of course it seems to), it can't remember my house. It can't mean what I do by the word 'house', for example, since the sound 'house' it makes was not learned in a context that would give it the right meaning—or any meaning at all. (Davidson 1987, p. 47)

Davidson concludes that the Swampman doesn't have any thoughts at all. This is the intuition he assumes we too will have. Again, this belief is not merely supposed to be generated by the case presented. It also is understood to be validated by the story told.

Consider, finally, a Gettier case (Gettier 1963). Gettier describes a situation in which Smith is utterly ignorant of Brown's whereabouts, whilst he believes on strong evidence that Jones owns a Ford. Gettier concludes that Smith is entirely justified in believing the proposition (h) "Either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona" he correctly infers from his belief. Still, Gettier maintains, Smith doesn't have knowledge:

But imagine now that two further conditions hold. First, Jones does *not* own a Ford, but is at present driving a rented car. And secondly, by the sheerest coincidence, and entirely unknown to Smith, the place mentioned in proposition (h) happens really to be the place where Brown is. If these two conditions hold, then Smith does *not* know that (h) is true, even though (i) (h) is true, (ii) Smith does believe that (h) is true, and (iii) Smith is justified in believing that (h) is true. (Gettier 1963, p. 122f)

Being told of Smith's situation, you judge and hence believe that he does not—or maybe: does—know that (h). It again is natural to identify your intuition with the belief you will acquire, and deem justified, on this basis.

The same picture emerges when we consider other instances of thought-experimenting such as Searle's (1980, 1984) Chinese Room, Parfit's (1984) mishaps in teletransportation, or Putnam's (1975b) Twin Earth. I take it, therefore, that a survey of paradigmatic philosophical thought-experiments lends at least *prima facie* support to the *austere doxastic account*

ADA Intuitions are (occurrent or dispositional) beliefs. To have the intuition that p is to have the belief that p .

The austere doxastic account has something to recommend itself beyond the fact that it fits philosophical thought-experimenting. First of all, it explains what intuitions are in terms of an already familiar mental category. By consequence, ADA relies solely on mental states we anyway need to account for a variety of phenomena and avoids postulating an extra basic mental kind whose sole function is to account for intuitions. Secondly, the doxastic account allows us to acknowledge intuitions (plural) without postulating an extra mental faculty—*an* intuition (singular)—delivering those. Taking intuitions to be beliefs allows us to grant that we may arrive at intuitions exploiting whatever background belief we harbour on the issues in question in combination with whatever belief-forming mechanisms the thought experiment in question may require, be they (off-line) perceptual, imaginative, inferential, conceptual, or what-not.

Thirdly, intuitions come in an occurrent as well as in a dispositional form. When the Gettier-case convinces you to hold that the protagonist lacks knowledge, the intuition appears as a datable episode in your conscious thinking. Here ‘intuition’ picks out an occurrent cognitive state. Yet following our (self-)ascriptions, we retain this very intuition when we don’t think about Smith’s situation. Here ‘intuition’ picks out a dispositional cognitive state. ADA accounts for these two ways intuitions figure in our mental lives.

Finally, the doxastic account does not even attempt to delineate intuitions in terms of their phenomenal aspects—say, by some accompanying feeling of insight or conviction. Evidently, we regularly experience certain of our cognitive occurrences as insightful, surprising, revealing, fitting or familiar. There also is little doubt that whenever someone arrives at an intuition on the basis of a thought-experiment, this process has some feel to it. But I can see no reason to suppose that there is a specific feel marking off intuitions from other cognitive states. For I can see no reason to think that explicitly inferring a statement from some premises might not feel exactly as right and revealing as coming to see that Mary learns something. I can also see no reason to think that the phenomenal aspect is a stable and hence identifying feature of the intuition, rather than an ephemeral rider an intuition owes to the particular way it is engendered. After all, the feel accompanying one and the same intuition changes over time. For many of us, the feel we had in first considering a Gettier-case is likely to have been that of puzzlement and insight. By now, it might well be that of numbing repetition.

3. Bealer’s Intellectual Seeming Account of Intuitions

The austere doxastic account provides a natural understanding of philosophical intuitions. Still, many philosophers rather embrace the rival account of intuitions advanced above all by Bealer and echoed in Sosa and Pust.⁹ Bealer summarizes this view thus:

Intuition is the source of all a priori knowledge—except, of course, for that which is merely stipulative. The use of intuitions as evidence (reasons) is ubiquitous in our standard justificatory practise in the a priori disciplines—Gettier intuitions, twin-earth intuitions, transitivity intuitions, etc. By intuition here, we mean seemings: for you to have an intuition that A is just for it to *seem* to you that A. Of course, this kind of seeming is intellectual, not experiential—sensory, introspective, imaginative. (Bealer 2002, p. 73)

Bealer here unfolds what I call the *intellectual seeming account* of intuitions. Stressing that ‘seems’ is to be understood not in its cautionary or hedging sense, but as marking off a ‘genuine kind of conscious episode’ (Bealer 1998, p. 207), the account claims that

ISA Intuitions are intellectual seemings. To have the intuition that p is to have the intellectual seeming that p .

The intellectual seeming account is meant to cover everything that can sensibly be termed a ‘rational intuition’. Candidates for the contents of rational intuitions are logical principles like de Morgan’s laws (Bealer 1996b, p. 123), set theoretical or mathematical truths like the naïve comprehension axiom (Bealer 1996, p. 7, Pust 2000, p. 33), semantic truths such as that there are two readings of “Necessarily, the number of planets is greater than seven” (Bealer 1998, p. 210), modal truths (ibid. 207), analytic truths (ibid. 211), principles that are neither conceptual nor analytic such as “The part/whole relation is transitive” (ibid.) as well as, paradigmatically, insights reaped from contemplating hypothetical cases (Bealer 1998, p. 206f, Pust 2000, ch.1).

The proponents of ISA maintain that rational intuitions have three distinctive features. First of all, they are seemings: “[w]hen you have an intuition that A, it *seems* to you that A” (Bealer 1992, p. 101). This kind of seeming is, we learn, intellectual rather than sensory or introspective, for one can very well have a certain intuition without having a perception or an introspection at all (Bealer 1992, p. 101f, Sosa 1998, p. 258f, Pust 2000, p. 45). Thus someone has the intuition that p just in case she “has a purely intellectual experience (...) that p ” (Pust 2000, p. 39).

This account deliberately models having an intuition on having an “‘ostensible’ perception” (Sosa 1998, p. 258). In both cases it seems to a person that something is the case. What differs is the mode of the appearance involved, which is sensory in the latter and intellectual in the former case. Although it is not to be identified with a perceptual belief, the ostensible perception that p stands poised to yield a belief. The intellectual seeming that p is not to be confused with the belief that p either; but it, too, stands poised to yield this belief. As Sosa points out, “such seemings or appearances, whether sensory or intellectual, may still be inclinations to believe based on direct experience (sensory) or understanding (intellectual)” (1998, p. 259). Given that inclinations to believe are functionally individuated, we may understand Sosa here to claim that intellectual seemings realize the functional role of inclinations to believe. And just as we are commonly directly aware of how a scene perceptually appears to us, we are directly

aware of how something intellectually appears to us in having the intuition that p —or so the adherents of ISA claim.

Turning to the second features of ISA, its advocates agree that rational intuitions are marked off from other kinds of intuitions by their modal status: “when we have a rational intuition (...) it presents itself as necessary: it does not seem to us that things could be otherwise” (Bealer 1998, p. 207, see Pust 2000, p. 46, Sosa 2005, p. 24). As Pust (2000, pp. 35–39, p. 46) points out in correcting Bealer, this phrase invites the mistaken idea that all rational intuitions are “phenomenologically like seeing that p *must be true*” (Pust 2000, p. 36). But they are not. Reflecting on a Gettier case, it might not straightforwardly seem to you that *necessarily*, Smith doesn’t know that either Jones owns a Ford, or Brown is in Barcelona. Following Pust, we can avoid the flawed construal if we understand the modal character of rational intuitions to be apparent on reflection (Pust 2000, p. 38f). Hence, you might have the rational intuition that p although it does not *ipso facto* seem to you that p must be true. But once you reflect on the matter, this is how things will appear.

The third feature advocates of ISA emphasize is the episodic character of rational intuitions (Bealer 1998, p. 207, Pust 2000, p. 44). It should come as no surprise that there are episodic intuitions. However, since Bealer relies on the episodic character of intuitions to argue that they cannot be spontaneous inclinations to believe, he apparently holds that intuitions are *essentially* episodic. If I am to have an intuition, something must *happen*—“a *sui generis* cognitive episode must occur” (Bealer 1998, p. 209). Taking intuitions to be essentially episodic would strengthen the analogy to perception. Perceptions clearly are exclusively episodic. You can recall a perception you had, or imagine one you will have, but you do not *have* the perception that p unless you actually perceive that p . In much the same vein, one could hold that you do not *have* the intuition that p unless you actually intuit that p .

However, taking intuitions to be exclusively episodic would run counter to our practise of (self-)ascribing them. We ascribe to someone the intuition that the naïve comprehension axiom holds true even though she is right now not thinking about set theory. Clearly we here ascribe a dispositional state, rather than an occurrence. Again amending Bealer’s view, Pust offers a solution by granting that there is a “secondary dispositional sense”(Pust 2000, p. 44) of ‘intuition’, a sense we draw on in ascribing the intuition that p to someone who does not have a current conscious state that p . On this sensible reading of ISA, someone has an intuition in the primary, episodic sense if she currently intuits that p . Pust is not too explicit on what it takes for someone S to have an intuition in the secondary, dispositional sense. Yet in all plausibility, this requires that S would intuit that p , were she to consider whether p , or something along similar lines.¹⁰

The proponents of the seeming account of intuitions highlight a final feature of intuitions, or rather a lack thereof. Perceptual experiences are widely assumed to have *sui generis* phenomenally conscious aspects presenting what is perceived in some qualitatively distinctive way. By contrast, the proponents of the intellectual seeming account seem to agree that episodic intellectual seemings do not have a *distinctive*

phenomenal character (Bealer 1998, p. 207, Sosa 2005, p. 8).¹¹ Intuition is very unlike perception in this respect. As Bealer stresses: “My view is simply that intuition is a *sui generis*, irreducible, natural propositional attitude which occurs episodically. That is all, no ‘glow’ or other ‘positive’ element” (Bealer 1996c, p. 169).

I would like to raise two worries about the intellectual seeming accounts. First, proponents of ISA take intuitions to be states of a basic cognitive kind, *viz.* intellectual seemings. Intellectual seemings are explained to be just like sensory seemings, save for the fact that their mode isn’t sensory, but intellectual. Now it is clear that we do have intuitions. But contrary to what advocates of ISA presume, it is far from clear that we do have intellectual seemings. I have no doubt that there are perceptual seemings: opening my eyes, I find myself having experiential states with a specific sensory phenomenology. But do I have any intellectual seemings, the word understood in the substantial sense explored above? I find myself believing, judging, pondering, rejecting, imagining, concluding, predicting, entertaining, inferring, guessing, and the like, and I do find myself willing to declare, for many propositions *p*, that it seems to me that *p*—for example, it right now seems to me that investing in GM is a bad idea. But I am at a loss to say whether any of those episodes actually belongs to the *distinctive* kind of intellectual seeming, constituting a genuine kind of conscious episode. There is a general lesson in store here: Phenomenal data only goes so far. Mental states do not come with labels revealing what kind of states they are to the glance of the mind’s eye. Dissecting our mental life into separate phenomena and sorting those into kinds is a theoretical task that is decided by the descriptive and explanatory powers of the competing accounts.

Secondly, it seems to me that the intellectual seeming account is subject to an unfortunate tension. On the one hand, its advocates embrace a substantial reading of ‘seeming’: seemings form a “genuine kind of conscious episode” (Bealer 1998, p. 207); they are “purely intellectual experience[s]” (Pust 2000, p. 39) akin to perceptual experiences, but in the intellectual mode. But how can there be states that are at the same time *experiences*, and thereby belong to a category of states one would expect to have a distinct phenomenology, as well as purely *intellectual* and hence *non-perceptual*, and thereby devoid of a distinct phenomenology? I take it that this tension should quite generally make us wary of postulating non-perceptual experiences as a distinct mental category in the first place.

4. Defusing the Argument from Intuition Without Belief

Advocates of ISA nonetheless feel content that their identification of intuitions with intellectual seemings is on the right track. And they ostensibly have every reason to do so. After all, they can apparently provide a conclusive refutation of the rival doxastic account’s core contention. Here is Bealer’s version of it:

I have an intuition—it still *seems* to me—that the naïve comprehension axiom of set theory is true; this is so despite the fact that I do not believe

that it is true (because I know of the set-theoretical paradoxes). There is a rather similar phenomenon in sense perception. In the Müller-Lyer illusion, it still *seems* to me that one of the arrows is longer than the other; this is so despite the fact that I do not believe that one of the two arrows is longer (because I have measured them). In each case, the seeming persists in spite of countervailing belief. (Bealer 1998, p. 208)

This train of thought develops two arguments—the *argument from analogy to optical illusion* and the *argument from intuition without belief*. I will be brief on the former. Champions of ISA stress that just like postulating perceptual experiences allows us to account for optical illusions, i.e. cases of sense perception without belief, postulating intellectual seemings allows us to account for cases of intuition without belief.

But on the one hand, optical illusions and cases of intuition without belief are not as similar as the advocates of ISA thinks. Perceptual experiences differ substantially from intuitions. The former have a distinctive phenomenal profile and the contents they bear are fine-grained, allowing for a progressive solution of detail. By contrast, intuitions do not have a distinctive phenomenal profile and their contents are not fine-grained in the way noted; they rather bare the coarse-grained contents we find beliefs to have. What is more, optical illusions are peculiar in that changes in our beliefs do not affect our perceptual experiences. Everyone will continue to have the impression of the lines differing in length in the Müller-Lyer illusion, whatever her knowledge of their actual length. But this does not hold true in the cases of intuitions without belief. Russell's proof or Dennett's argument might well make you *lose* the intuitions you used to have.

On the other hand, its supposed potential to account for cases of intuitions without belief may support ISA. But this provides a compelling reason to discard a doxastic account in favour of ISA only if a doxastic account cannot account for those as well. It is here where the *argument from intuition without belief* comes into play (see also Sosa 1998, p. 258f, Sosa 2005, p. 2f, Pust 2000, p. 32f). Its advocates believe the argument to demonstrate that intuitions cannot be beliefs. This directly contradicts the austere doxastic account, whilst it fits rather nicely ISA's core contention that intuitions are cognitive mental states *sui generis*. If it cannot be defused, we have to admit that doxastic accounts are untenable after all.

The argument from intuition without belief owes its appeal to its simplicity: Since you can have the intuition that *p* whilst believing that not-*p*, intuitions can't be beliefs. Putting matters a bit more cautiously, the argument hinges on the idea that these three claims form an inconsistent triad:

- C1 There are clear cases of someone *S* having the intuition that *p* whilst having the belief that not-*p*.
- C2 In (many of) those cases, *S* does not hold contradictory beliefs
- C3 Intuitions are beliefs.

C1 appears to be very well supported indeed. Bealer's example of the naïve comprehension axiom is just one amongst many apparently clear-cut cases of intuition without belief.¹² Say, Dennett (1988) has convinced you. Suppose you believe that there are no qualia. Although you infer and hence believe that Mary does not learn anything, you might avow to still have the intuition that she does. Or consider a paradox and suppose that you have dropped one of its premises to avoid the unwelcome conclusion. For example, consider the Sorites paradox and suppose you no longer believe that, if from a place with a sand dune one removes a grain with no other effect on the sand, then a sand dune will remain in that place. You might still have the intuition that this proposition is true (Sosa 1998, p. 259).

C2 also appears to be manifestly true. We often straightforwardly express two conflicting beliefs by avowing "I strongly believe that not- p , but I still have the intuition that p ". Since these are cases of intuition *with* belief—that is to say, cases where 'intuition' is to be read simply as 'belief'—they do not challenge the doxastic account's identification of intuitions with belief. So I will henceforth ignore them. There manifestly also are cases where we do not simply express two conflicting beliefs by stating "I strongly believe that not- p , but I still have the intuition that p ". You might for instance avow that you cannot shake the intuition that every property defines a set, even though you know this to be false, without conceding an inconsistency in your system of belief. So C2 is surely right. But if C1 and C2 are beyond reproach, C3 has to go. So intuitions aren't beliefs after all.

For all its unadorned simplicity, I will argue that the argument from intuition does not refute the doxastic account of intuitions. My effort to resolve the inconsistency of C1–C3 focuses on C1, and it proceeds in two steps. In a first step, I point out that there are perfectly ordinary cases where subjects employ statements of the form " p but it still seems to me that not- p " to speak their mind without thereby avowing a straightforward conflict of belief. Assessing the subject's evidential situation, I argue that in such cases, "it seems to me that p " is employed to (self-)ascribe a mere inclination to believe. In a second step, I argue that since the subjects in cases of intuition without belief are in an analogous evidential situation, they, too, are best understood to (self-)ascribe inclination to believe. I conclude that, appearances notwithstanding, C1 stands in need of modest revision, and that the correct reading C1* is not in conflict with C2 and C3.

In our ordinary ways of speaking our minds, we habitually employ "It seems to me that p "-locutions to indicate a conflict between our assessment as based on partial evidence and our assessment as based on total evidence.¹³ Let me give an example. Suppose that Holmes and Watson inquire into the affair of dead McDuff. Reviewing the evidence, Watson avows

- (1) "Moriarty murdered McDuff."

Here Watson directly asserts that Moriarty murdered McDuff. He thereby presents himself as unreservedly believing that Moriarty murdered McDuff. Had the matter been less clear-cut, Watson could have opted for the weaker

(2) “It seems to me that Moriarty murdered McDuff.”

In (2), ‘it seems to me that’ functions as a hedging term. Here we could understand Watson as asserting that he almost, but not quite believes that Moriarty murdered McDuff. Better still, we may accept belief as graded and we may take Watson to assert that he *guardedly*, i.e., to some degree not significantly above 0.5, believes that Moriarty murdered McDuff.

Now suppose that Holmes uncovers that Moriarty was in London the night of the murder and thus cannot have murdered McDuff. Re-assessing his evaluation, Watson changes his mind. He drops his initial belief and now clearly believes that Moriarty did not murder McDuff. For all that, Watson could still be in a position to speak his mind thus:

(3) “Holmes has convinced me that Moriarty did not murder McDuff. But it still seems to me that he did murder McDuff.”

Let me call such a case a *belief-seems-case*, and let me call the statement “*p* but it still seems to me that not-*p*” we employ to report such a case a *belief-seems-statement*. Belief-seems-cases are as common as they are curious. Consider Watson. He does not avow a straightforward conflict of belief. Still, his statement at least indicates some sort of tension. But where are we to find it? And why does this tension not impede Watson in judging that Moriarty did not murder McDuff?

We can make sense of this all if we review Watson’s evidential situation. On the strength of the original evidence before Holmes’ finding, Watson concluded that Moriarty murdered McDuff. On the strength of the overall evidence now available to him, he accepts that Moriarty did not. But since Holmes’ finding provides an overriding rather than an undercutting defeater¹⁴ to the original evidence, it leaves all evidential relations intact. That is to say, if Watson were to base his judgment exclusively on the original evidence, it would sufficiently incriminate Moriarty to make Watson believe that he did it. (3) puts this evidential state into words. Watson expresses his belief, based on his total evidence, that Moriarty did not murder McDuff. He goes on to add that he (still¹⁵) is inclined to believe that Moriarty did it— that he *would* (still) believe this *were* he to base his judgment on the original evidence only, disregarding Holmes’ additional evidence actually providing an undercutting defeater to his original verdict.

The diagnosis generalises. If a speaker *S* asserts an ordinary belief-seems-statement such as (3) in an evidential situation akin to Watson’s, *S* is best understood to self-ascribe two different cognitive states:

- (i) *S* ascribes to herself a belief that not-*p*, and
- (ii) *S* ascribes to herself a mere inclination to believe *p*.

The second self-ascription is meant to characterise S 's doxastic state in counterfactual terms: S would (typically: still) believe that p , were she to discard certain (typically: new) evidence warranting her belief that not- p , evidence proving an undercutting defeater for her (typically: past) belief that p . This does not give rise to a contradiction. It nevertheless indicates a tension. After all, (ii) presupposes that there is some evidence speaking in favour of p , evidence that has to be overridden in order to warrant the judgment that not- p .

Turning to cases of intuition without belief, we find that they bear a striking resemblance to ordinary belief-seems-cases. Suppose you have just learned of Russell's antinomy and therefore believe that the naïve comprehension axiom is false. If you still feel the pull of the idea that every property defines a set, you might speak your mind thus:

- (4) "Russell has convinced me that the naïve comprehension axiom is false. But I still seems to me that it is true."

Likewise, if you happen to be an ardent champion of the Mary case, but Dennett has convinced you that there are no qualia, you might avow

- (5) "Dennett has convinced me that Mary does not learn anything. But it still seems to me that she does."

One might also express (4) and (5) employing talk of 'intuition'. But this would simply be saying the same thing in other words. Bealer himself embraces this kind of paraphrase when he stresses that "for you to have an intuition that A is just for it to *seem* to you that A " (Bealer 2002, p. 73), or when he writes: "I have an intuition—it still *seems* to me—that the naïve comprehension axiom of set theory is true" (1998, p. 208).

There is a simple explanation for the diagnosed likeness: Cases of intuition without belief *just are* belief-seems-cases. We habitually report them in terms of 'intuitions' because they arise in contexts where people are prone to talk in these terms. Beyond this peculiar choice of words, there is nothing special about them. Let me back up this assessment. First, as we have just seen, someone who avows having the belief that not- p whilst having the intuition that p can express what she thinks with a belief-seems-statement. (4) and (5) are cases in point. But if these statements can be put to this use, how can cases of intuition without belief fail to be belief-seems-cases?

Secondly, and more importantly, consider the evidential situation someone is in who avows having the belief that not- p whilst having the intuition that p . In cases of this type, the subject typically has a general reason to hold her belief that not- p — e.g. a proof of an ensuing antinomy, or a convincing argument to the effect that there are no qualia to begin with. At the same time, she is aware of independent evidence to the contrary that is overridden rather than undermined by the general reason mentioned— say, p happens to be a simple mathematical principle we cannot find any fault with, or there is a thought experiment apparently warranting p . This evidential situation

perfectly matches the evidential situation we found Watson to be in. But if that is so, we have every reason to take cases of intuition without belief to be belief-seems-cases. Even more so, by the way, since the cases of intuition without belief actually presented are almost always cases where a belief that p predates the countervailing belief that not- p registered in the relevant belief-seems-statement. You first believe that Mary learns something, and you later drop that belief. But the reason why you held the belief in the first place is still in place; after all, reflection on Jackson's case still lends support to it.

By consequence, we have every reason to hold that the analysis presented above for ordinary cases of belief-seems-statements carries over. In asserting a statement such as (4) or (5) under the evidential circumstances described, the speaker S is best understood to self-ascribe two different cognitive states:

- (i) S ascribes to herself a belief that not- p , and
- (ii) S ascribes to herself a mere inclination to believe p .

As before, the second self-ascription is meant to characterise S 's doxastic state in counterfactual terms: S would (typically: still) believe that p , were she to discard certain (typically: new) evidence warranting her belief that not- p , evidence proving an undercutting defeater for her (typically: past) belief that p . And as before, this does not give rise to a contradiction, although the doxastic state self-ascribed is prone to exhibit a certain tension.

So, contrary to what the champions of the argument from intuition without belief want us to believe, we do not end up with a contradiction if we accept a doxastic account of intuitions. For phrased somewhat more carefully, here is what C1 actually amounts to:

C1* There are clear cases of someone S having the belief that not- p whilst having the inclination to believe that p .

C1*, C2, and C3 evidently form a consistent triad. Looked at closely, then, the argument from intuition without belief dissolves. It provides no reason to forego a doxastic account of intuitions. Much less does it support postulating seemings of the intellectual kind.

5. A Disjunctive Doxastic Account

I have argued that thinkers in cases of intuition without belief employ belief-seems-statements to characterise their state of mind. But someone employing a belief-seems-statement is naturally understood to (self-)ascribe a belief that not- p and an inclination to believe p . Taking these (self-)ascriptions at face value, the cases of intuition without belief turn out to be cases of inclination to believe without belief. Such cases still undermine ASA's austere identification of intuitions with beliefs. But they can be accommodated by a *disjunctive doxastic account* acknowledging an ambiguity in our use of 'intuition' in addition to the ambiguity rooted in the dispositional/occurrent distinction granted by all parties:

DiDA Intuitions are beliefs *or* inclinations to have beliefs. To have the intuition that p is to *either* have the belief that p , *or* to have an inclination to believe that p .

There is a sense of ‘intuitions’ we employ to (self-)ascribe beliefs, paradigmatically those we deem justified by philosophical thought-experiments. It is intuitions in this sense we rely on as evidence to (dis-)confirm philosophical theories of knowledge, causation, consciousness, and the like. According to DiDA, there is another sense of ‘intuitions’ we employ to (self-)ascribe mere inclinations to believe *without the respective beliefs*. It is intuitions in this sense we acknowledge even if we know, or strongly suspect, that the deliverances of the belief-forming mechanism involved are not to be trusted.¹⁶

I think that DiDA is an attractive stance to take. It inherits the key virtues from the austere doxastic account, avoids the worries of the intellectual seeming account, and is not threatened by cases of intuition without belief. To the contrary, when properly understood, these cases support rather than undermine the disjunctive account. Still, in order to dispel worries about it, I would like to close by discussion three objections to the disjunctive account and the argument for it that I have presented.

Objection 1: DiDA does not save the doxastic account. For the argument from intuition without belief reoccurs as the argument from intuition without inclination to believe.

There clearly are situation where someone is right to avow “I have the intuition that p , but I am *not* inclined to believe that p ”. But here the second sentence registers an unwillingness to believe that p in the actual epistemic situation, rather than an unwillingness to believe that p in a relevantly different counterfactual epistemic situation. As explained above, DiDA’s ‘inclination to believe’ is to be read in the latter sense.

Objection 2: The case made for DiDA is hardly comprehensive. For it does not conclusively establish that the disjunctive doxastic account is explanatorily superior to a Bealer-style intellectual seeming account.

My explicitly stated aim has been to (re-)establish the viability of the doxastic account, defending it against the argument from intuition without belief. This focus reflects the argument’s potential force. Put bluntly, the argument’s advocates claim that there is no need to even assess the doxastic account’s explanatory virtues *for we know for independent reason that it must be flawed*. I have defused this line of thought. This is what I set out to do. That said, I have highlighted key virtues of the doxastic account along the way: It explains intuitions in terms of familiar mental kinds we need anyway, it avoids postulating an extra mental kind solely to account for the states we pick out as ‘intuitions’, it avoids postulating an extra mental faculty, it avoids commitment to a problematic phenomenology, and it fits well with philosophical thought-experimenting. I have also raised worries about the intellectual seeming account, pointing out that modelling intellectual seemings on perceptual states does not sit well with their relatively coarse-grained contents and their alleged non-specific phenomenology, and

bringing home that intellectual seemings are theoretical postulates rather than uncontentious entities. Although far from comprehensive, I take this to provide ample reason to prefer the doxastic account. The onus is on the advocate of ISA to defend her problematic postulation of intellectual seemings, given that cases of intuition without belief don't compel us to do so.

Objection 3: Does the disjunctive account really get rid of a Bealer-style view? Can't an advocate of intellectual seemings simply take the inclinations acknowledged in DiDA to rest on intellectual seemings?

What would it take to *really* refute Bealer's view that philosophical armchair inquiry essentially relies on intellectual seemings as characterised above (see §3)? Claims about intuitions such as ADA or DiDA won't do. An advocate of Bealer's view can always grant that we employ 'intuition' to pick out a belief that *p*, or an inclinations to believe that *p*, whilst insisting that if we dig deeper, we will inevitably find an intellectual seeming figuring in how the belief came about, or realizing the functional role of yielding-the-belief-that-*p*-under-certain-conditions that defines the inclination. *Really* refuting Bealer's view requires an explanation of how philosophical armchair inquiry works that is superior to Bealer's and that makes do without seemings. Going by the disjunctive account, this amounts to identifying a suitably innocuous belief-forming mechanism that (i) is devoid of intellectual seemings on all levels, yet that (ii) is well-suited to generate the beliefs, and realizes the inclinations to believe, characteristic of philosophical thought-experimenting. I have not provided something like this here.¹⁷ In proposing and defending DiDA, I have argued that we can eschew intellectual seemings on the level of intuitions. I have not made a case that we can do so beyond this level. Still, my argument goes some way towards keeping the promise that we can account for our philosophical methodology with mental kinds we anyway need in our mental taxonomy, establishing that in this respect at least, there is nothing special about philosophy after all.¹⁸

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Notes

¹ For a debate focussing on the second question see Williamson (2007), who argues that philosophical thought-experiments are exercises of mundane counterfactual thinking drawing on empirical data, or Jackson (1998), who maintains that philosophical thought-experiments are exercises in conceptual analysis. See also Nimtz (2009, 2010) for arguments against Williamson’s account and Nimtz (2007) for a comprehensive treatment along Jacksonian lines.

² See Boucouvalas (1997, p. 7), Sosa (1998, p. 259), Gopnik & Schwitzgebel (1998, p. 77), Goldman & Pust (1998, p. 179), Parsons (2000, pp. 300—304), Miller (2000, p. 235), and Pust (2000, p. 44). See also Weinberg (this volume) who uses “intuitions” as abbreviating “armchair intuitive judgments about cases”.

³ See §4 and the references in note 9.

⁴ This is to note a practise, not to claim that this practise is epistemically viable.

⁵ If you prefer an introduction by ostension, you can take philosophical intuitions to be putative insights *just like these*.

⁶ Experimental philosophers share this focus. They, too, concentrate on intuitions in the sense of putative insights derived from contemplating hypothetical cases. See Weinberg (this volume), Nadelhofer (this volume), and Knobe & Nichols (2008).

⁷ In principle, reflection on a case may (A) make one acquire an entirely new belief, it may (B) bring to light a belief one already has but one was not aware of having, or (C) it may make one acquire a belief one didn’t have but that one had the disposition to have, given one’s other mental states (see Audi 1994). I want to be neutral on this and understand talk of cases ‘making us have’ or ‘inducing’ beliefs in a wide sense compatible with all three options.

⁸ Davidson later expressed misgivings about this and others of his ‘sorties into science fiction’ (1999, p. 193). Still, his swampman case has become a widely discussed thought-experiment. See e.g. the contributions to Guttenplan/Patterson 1996.

⁹ The best overview of Bealer’s ideas about intuitions is still provided by Bealer 1998, pp. 204–214. Bealer ventures very much the same ideas in Bealer 1992, pp. 101–104, Bealer 1996, pp. 4–8, Bealer 1996b, p. 123f, Bealer 2000, p. 3f and Bealer 2002, pp. 73–75. Sosa sets out his views in Sosa 1996, Sosa 1998 and Sosa 2005. For Pust’s ideas, see Pust 2000, especially ch.2.

¹⁰ See Pust 2000, p. 44, §3 and his account [A1], *ibid.*, p. 39. Pust here clearly makes use of the counterfactual dependencies I have explicitly employed in phrasing the secondary sense.

¹¹ Pust understands intuition to be ‘purely intellectual experience[s]’ (Pust 2000, p. 39). Still, he does not believe that experiences of this kind have distinctive phenomenal aspects.

¹² For this well-worn example, see Katz 1981, p. 220, Pollock 1990, p. 4, Plantinga 1993, p. 110, Bealer 1996, p. 7 and Pust 2000, p. 33.

¹³ Although ‘it seems to me that’-locutions are tied to epistemic modals, I won’t dwell on that matter here. For epistemic modals, see von Finkel/Gillies 2008.

¹⁴ This distinction goes back to Pollock 1970.

¹⁵ The ‘still’ indicates the temporal order of events. But this is inessential to the case. By varying the example, one can make Watson first judge that Moriarty did not murder McDuff, and then acquire the inclination to believe that he did.

¹⁶ Since DiDA is to be read inclusive, we can employ ‘intuition’ to (self-)ascribe a belief *and* an inclination to have that belief. Nothing much hinges on that.

¹⁷ See the references in footnote 1.

¹⁸ I am indebted to the participants of the „Amrchair in Flames“-conferences in Cologne (September 2008) for critical comments on this material, to Lars Dänzer for reading the proofs, and to an anonymous referee whose meticulous objections did a lot to substantially improve the paper.