JUSTIFIED BY THOUGHT ALONE

Andrei MĂRĂŞOIU

ABSTRACT: The new rationalists – BonJour and Bealer – have characterized one type of *a priori* justification as based on intellectual intuitions or seemings. I argue that they are mistaken in thinking that intellectual intuitions can provide *a priori* justification. Suppose that the proposition that a surface cannot be red and green all over strikes you as true. When you carefully consider it, you couldn't but realize that no surface could be both red and green all over. Ascertaining the truth of what you believe (when you believe that a surface cannot be red and green all over) requires conscious experiences of thinking. The character of such experiences (propositions' striking you as true, and the sense of incoherence you would experience were they to be false) is what justifies your belief. It should follow that the justification for such propositions (and your believing them) is *a posteriori*, i.e., based on conscious experience. Your cognitive phenomenology plays a constitutive role in justifying your belief. Hence your belief is not *a priori* justified, *contra* the new rationalists.

KEYWORDS: *a priori* justification, cognitive phenomenology, intuitions, intellectual seemings, rationalism

1. Introduction: The Problem

Let's start with a well-known example. Suppose you believe that a surface cannot be (wholly) red and (wholly) green all over. What justifies your belief? All it takes is for you to *understand* the proposition you believe, in order for your belief to be justified. When you *carefully consider* what it is for a surface to be red, and what it is for a surface to be green, you *couldn't but realize* that no surface could be both red and green all over. So, in *ascertaining* why you believe this, all you need to do is aptly use concepts you possess. The proposition that a surface cannot be red and green all over then *strikes you as true*. Your belief is *a priori* justified. Or so the thought goes.

Crucially, *a priori* justifications are independent from experience.[1] But the phrases in italics just used sound very much as if one undergoes *conscious experiences of thinking*.[2] You come to understand a proposition: it dawns on you,

[1] This, I believe, is in tune with how almost everyone uses the terms "justification" and "experience." But see the next section for some controversy.

[2] I remain neutral about whether conscious thinking presupposes that what is experienced are conscious thoughts, or if, on the contrary, the imagery underpinning what it is like to undergo

you now fully grasp it. You carefully consider what the proposition says, comparing it to your own conceptions of red and green, weighing if there is anything that might make you doubt it in the least. You ascertain, grasp, or apprehend the truth of the proposition, 'holding it before your mind's eye.' You *perceive* its truth.[3]

This poses a *straightforward problem:* if justifying your belief (that a surface cannot be both red and green all over) depends on your having certain cognitive experiences – of grasping concepts, considering what your conceptions are, weighing alternatives to them, pondering how your concepts fit together, etc. – then a justification had on the basis of such experiences cannot be *a priori*; it has to be *a posteriori*: following, and due to the having of, those cognitive experiences.[4] In argument-form:

1) Intuitions are experiences.
2) So, any justification based on intuitions is based on experiences.
3) No *a priori* justification is based on experiences.
4) So, no *a priori* justification is based on intuitions.

The argument is valid.[5] (2) follows from (1): if all intuitions are experiences, then anything based on intuitions is based on experiences; so any justification based on intuitions is based on experiences. Premise (3) is definitional: not being

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conscious thoughts is primarily sensory; cf. Michael Tye, "*Mental Reality* by Galen Strawson [Review]" *Journal of Philosophy* 93 (1996): 421-424. I also remain neutral about whether we can neatly carve out what it is like to think into what it is like to have a certain propositional attitude, and what it is like to be related to a proposition as a content of that attitude, cf. David Pitt, "The Phenomenology of Cognition, or, What is It Like to Think That *P*?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 69 (2004): 1-36.

[3] You may, of course, be wrong about what justifies what. Perhaps surfaces *can* be red and green all over. Or perhaps your conceptions of red and green don't rule this out. Or both. Or perhaps you can't clearly grasp the conceptions of red and green you possess. Or, grasping them, you have trouble applying them in imagination when considering whether there can be a surface red and green all over. Mishaps are everyday occurrences. But if philosophical trouble looms even when everything *goes well*, mishaps are by the by.

[4] As I use the word "experience" in what follows, experiences are always conscious, in the sense that there is something it is like to undergo them. I don't assume that experiences are conscious in any other sense, e.g., as objects of one's attention – though this isn't excluded either, obviously.

[5] If formalized as follows, where "B" denotes the basing relation, "J" denotes justifications, "I" intuitions, "E" experiences, and "A" aprioricity:

1. $(\forall x)(Ix \rightarrow Ex)$
2. $(\forall x)(Jx \rightarrow ((\exists y)(Iy\&Bxy) \rightarrow (\exists y)(Ey\&Bxy)))$
3. $\sim(\exists x)(Jx\& Ax \& (\exists y)(Ey\&Bxy))$
4. $\sim(\exists x)(Jx\& Ax \& (\exists y)(Iy\&Bxy))$

based on experiences simply *is* what it is for a justification to be *a priori*. So: if (1) is true, (4) is true. (1) might seem overly demanding; I will return to why it isn't.

This argument spells trouble for the view articulated by *the new rationalists*.[6] BonJour[7] writes:

> It is common to refer to the intellectual act in which the necessity of such a proposition [that a surface cannot be red and green all over] is seen or grasped or apprehended as an act of *rational insight* or *rational intuition* (or, sometimes, *a priori* insight or intuition), where these phrases are mainly a way of stressing that such an act is seemingly (a) direct or immediate, non-discursive, and yet also (b) intellectual or reason-governed, anything but arbitrary or brute in character...Since this justification or evidence apparently depends on nothing beyond an understanding of the propositional content itself, a proposition whose necessity is apprehended in this way... may be correlatively characterized as *rationally self-evident*: its very content provides, for one who grasps it properly, an immediately accessible reason for thinking that it is true.[8]

For Bealer,[9] *a priori* justification obtains when intellectual seemings are a source of evidence for beliefs. Grant Bealer that beliefs are justified, and ask: what are those intuitions?[10] He answers:

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[6] In what follows I mainly discuss BonJour, Bealer and Peacocke. But similar remarks may well apply much more widely. Thus, Chalmers writes: "A sentence S is *a priori* relative to a speaker if the sentence as used by that speaker expresses a thought that can be justified independently of experience, on ideal rational reflection." (David Chalmers, "On Sense and Intension," *Philosophical Perspectives* 16 (2002): 135-82).Why ideal rational reflection should be devoid of conscious character – or shouldn't even in part be constituted by conscious cognitive experience, Chalmers doesn't say. A different way of expanding the scope of the problem I raise considers intuitions not as conscious experiences but as inclinations to believe, or (another option) as propensities to undergo such conscious experiences. Both options are considered by Ernest Sosa, "Intuitions", in *Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44-69. And we may raise analogues of the problem I point to in the text with respect to each of these. If intuitions as conscious experiences make the justification they contribute to count as *a posteriori*, it is only natural to think that a similar effect is obtained by inclinations to so believe, or propensities to so experience. After all, such inclinations or propensities have justificatory weight only when realized in intuitions (or in the beliefs such intuitions would support, were we to come to acquire them). I refrain from considering related issues (which remarks made by Chalmers and Sosa illustrate) for reasons of space and to keep the discussion fairly contained.

[7] Laurence BonJour, "A Moderate Rationalism," in *In Defense of Pure Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 98-129.

[8] BonJour, "A Moderate Rationalism," 102. I have elided a qualification BonJour makes that I will return to later in the text.

[9] George Bealer, "A Theory of the A Priori," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 81 (2000): 1-30.

[10] Elijah Chudnoff, "Is Intuition Based On Understanding?" *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 86 (2013): 42-67, offers a convincing criticism of the idea that intuitions – as

> For you to have an intuition that A is just for it to *seem* to you that A. Here 'seems' is understood, not as a cautionary or 'hedging' term, but in its use as a term for a genuine kind of conscious episode. For example, when you first consider one of de Morgan's laws, often it neither seems to be true nor seems false; after a moment's reflection, however, something new happens: suddenly it just *seems* true. Of course, this kind of seeming is intellectual, not sensory or introspective (or imaginative). For this reason, intuitions are counted as 'data of reason' not 'data of experience.'[11]

The obvious reply to Bealer has to be that once you admit the existence of the relevant "conscious episodes" (intellectual seemings), then, whatever else "data of reason" might be, they *must* be data of experience too – since they are procured in experiences of thought.

BonJour and Bealer wish to *both* ground our*a priori* knowledge in intellectual seemings, or intuitions (per 1),[12] *and* claim that the resulting justifications are *a priori* notwithstanding their intuitive source (contra 4). The argument from (1) to (4) shows that can't be done.[13]

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intellectual experiences – fully justify the conceptual understanding they manifest. My project is different: grant any justification being claimed, and conclude that any such justification – *if* it succeeded – would have to be *a posteriori*, rationalist claims to the contrary notwithstanding.

[11] Bealer, "A Theory of the A Priori," 3.

[12] I will indiscriminately speak of intuitions, insights, intellectual seemings, conscious experiences of apprehension, grasping, thinking appearances, and the like. Each may be quite different from the others, but their minute experienced differences matter little for the epistemological point I'm interested in. Just to illustrate here, BonJour seems to use "insight" and "intuition" interchangeably. For a nice distinction between them, see Rachel Henley, "Distinguishing Insight from Intuition," *Journal of Consciousness Studies* 6 (1999): 1-8. I myself construe Henley's differences as follows: in intellectual intuitions, we exploit an understanding we already possess, whereas, in insights, we come to understand something new. Michael Lynch, "Understanding and Coming to Understand," in *Making Sense of the World: New Essays on the Philosophy of Understanding*, ed. Stephen Grimm (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) highlights the connection between insights and conceptual creativity, while E. M. Bowden, M. Jung-Beeman, J. Fleck, and J. Kounios, "New Approaches to Demystifying Insight," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 9 (2005): 322-328, explore the role of insightful experiences in problem-solving.

[13] The challenge is wider in scope than traditional *synthetic a priori* justifications. If we identify cardinal numbers with a representative sequence of sets and then prove counterparts of Peano's axioms in set theory, the justification is traditionally thought to be analytic (modulo set-theoretic axioms), but our problem is there. We need to *keep track* of assumptions throughout, *represent to ourselves* what a solution to the deductive problem should look like, *make sure* we haven't misapplied any rules or axioms. Problem-solving phenomenology (e.g., Bowden et al., "New Approaches to Demystifying Insight") is rich, varied, and primarily cognitive – even when what is proven turns out to be an analytic statement.

What replies can rationalists make? Three, as far as I can see. They can claim that (1) is false. Or they can claim that (3) is false. Or they can qualify (3) in a way that makes (1) irrelevant to how they construe *a priori* justifications. These defensive moves are, I believe, ultimately unsatisfactory. Each of the next three sections explores one such defensive move.

2. Intuition without Experience?

"Intuition" is said in many ways. Perhaps a belief is intuitive when it doesn't require justification at all, or when the way one arrived at the belief isn't also the way to justify it. For experimental philosophers, intuitions are verbal reports by philosophically naive but linguistically competent speakers of English, French, etc. An intuitive belief might be a belief one is *inclined* (or disposed) to hold, perhaps because one has the cognitive skills and expertise requisite to produce the belief in question.[14] Understood in any of these ways, intuitions aren't conscious experiences, so (1) would be false.

But none of these meanings of "intuition" is at play in the new rationalism. What *is* at play is a kind of intellectual seeing, a "quasi-perceptual" model of intuitions, per (1). If intuiting is much like seeing, only of matters intellectual, then justification on the basis of intuitions can be thought of along the lines of *perceptual* justification.[15] New rationalists exploit this – while insisting the resulting justification is *a priori* notwithstanding. But one can't have one's cake and eat it too. Perhaps (1) is false; but, given their epistemological project, it's not open to rationalists to deny (1).

To illustrate: BonJour says[16] that his use of "intuition" differs from Kant's, perhaps also meaning to suggest that intuitions are, for him, non-experiential. Yet BonJour also describes my intuiting that nothing can be red and green all over by saying "I am able to see or grasp or apprehend in a seemingly direct and

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And, even when problem-solving phenomenology seems absent, we should beware. J. Nakamura and M. Csikszentmihalyi, "The Concept of Flow," in *Handbook of Positive Psychology*, eds. C. R. Snyder and S. J. Lopez (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 89-105, theorize experiences of flow, where subjects are simply *absorbed* by the problems they are solving, their attention fully focused, not minding anything else – and not minding what they themselves might be experiencing in solving problems. This is consistent with undergoing incredibly rich conscious episodes that one simply fails to *attend to.*

[14] Ernest Sosa, "Intuitions", in *Virtue Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 44-69.

[15] Paul Boghossian, "Virtuous Intuitions: Comments on Lecture 3 of Ernest Sosa's *A Virtue Epistemology,*" *Philosophical Studies* 144 (2009): 111-119.

[16] BonJour, "A Moderate Rationalism," 102, footnote 7.

unmediated way that the claim in question cannot fail to be true."[17] How could a *direct* and *immediate* grasp *fail* to be experiential? Immediacy and directness are, presumably, properties of one's conscious experience, so that nothing is *felt* to come in-between the thinker and her thoughts.[18]

Where does this leave the first defensive move? It was, recall, that intuitions aren't experiences, contra (1). In reply, I have distinguished several senses of "intuition" and have argued that, in the sense relevant to the new rationalists and how they construe *a priori* justification, intuitions *are* experiences. Many may balk at (1) – experimental philosophers, for instance. But, then again, they wouldn't contemplate cashing out *a priori* justification in terms of intuitions either.

3. Cognitive and Perceptual Experiences

The second reply rationalists could make would be to say that (3) is false. This may sound awkward. (3), recall, is the claim that "No *a priori* justification is based on experiences." How could anyone deny this? By changing the definition of "*a priori*." Thus, A.C. Ewing writes:

> Most of our knowledge we obtain by observation of the external world (sense-perception) and of ourselves (introspection). This is called empirical knowledge. But some knowledge we can obtain by simply thinking. This kind of knowledge is *a priori*.[19]

Bealer may also be implying a shift from experience-in-general to sensory (and introspective) experience when he says intellectual intuitions are not "data of experience." And, along the same lines, BonJour writes:

> the relevant notion of experience should be understood to include any sort of process that is perceptual in the broad sense of (a) being a causally conditioned response to particular contingent features of the world and (b) yielding doxastic states that have as their content putative information concerning such particular, contingent features of the actual world as contrasted with other possible worlds… [And] mathematical intuition, even though it undoubtedly counts as experience

[17] BonJour, "A Moderate Rationalism," 101.

[18] Bealer also formulates a principle of moderate rationalism by saying: "A person's phenomenal experiences and intuitions comprise the person's basic evidence" ("A Theory of the A Priori," 7). Relevance considerations strongly suggest he thinks intuitions are not phenomenal experiences. But in a quote given earlier, Bealer admitted that an intuition (= an intellectual seeming) is a "conscious episode." To phenomenally experience something simply *is* to undergo (= experience) a "conscious episode." So, unless Bealer (idiosyncratically) restricted the phrase "phenomenal experience" to refer to perceptual experiences alone, his position seems dialectically unstable.

[19] A.C. Ewing, "In Defense of *A Priori* Knowledge," in *The Theory of Knowledge: Classic and Contemporary Readings,* ed. Louis P. Pojman (Wadsworth, 2003), 385.

> in the sense of consciously undergoing a mental process, would not count as experience in this more specific sense so long... as its deliverances consist solely of (putatively) necessary truths.[20]

Let's look at this passage for a moment. BonJour seems to be suggesting that experience, in the intended sense, the sense relevant to *a priori* justification and from which such a justification should be free, is that which roughly fits perceptual experiences.[21] It is, after all, perception which seizes upon the natural world we inhabit whose features are largely contingent. And it is perception which yields beliefs about such contingent states of affair, discriminating the actual circumstances from among conterfactual circumstances. In contrast, mathematical intuition clearly fails to meet both criteria for what counts as genuine experience.

BonJour seems to wish to *derive* the result that intuitions aren't experiences, *contra* (1) – and hence that justifications reliant on intuitions don't rely on experiences, *contra* (3) – from the two criteria, (a) and (b), he proposes. But it is hard to see why such criteria aren't simply question-begging. Consider intuitionists like Brouwer[22] who ground the foundations of mathematics – set theory, natural and real arithmetic – in pure intuition. And pure intuition, for Brouwer, *was* both conscious and cognitive. Why should it matter that this intuition doesn't concern matters contingent? No rationale has been given. BonJour's two criteria only push the problem one floor up. Yes, his notion of "experience" excludes intuitions on the basis of criteria (a) and (b). But these criteria themselves were made to fit, arbitrarily excluding conscious episodes like Brouwer's from consideration.

In general, one could hardly quarrel with a stipulation. But such a *re*-definition of "*a priori*" as Ewing, BonJour and Bealer operate *isn't* standard. Boghossian and Peacocke start their anthology by writing: "An *a priori* proposition is one which can be known to be true without any justification from the character of the subject's experience."[23] Later on, Peacocke repeats it, talking about "[p]ropositions that can be known in a way which is justificationally independent of experience – propositions knowable in a way which is *a priori*, as I will say for brevity."[24] Notice "experience" isn't qualified in any way, as it should be if mention were made of only certain *kinds* of experiences (sensory and introspective).[25]

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[20] BonJour, *In Defense of Pure Reason*, 8.

[21] BonJour mentions introspection, memory etc. as well but I focus on perception for clarity. The remarks to follow apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to these as well.

[22] L.E.J. Brouwer, "Intuitionism and Formalism," in *Philosophy of Mathematics*, eds. Hilary Putnam and Paul Benacerraf (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2nd ed. 1983), 77-89.

[23] Paul Boghossian and Christopher Peacocke, "Introduction," in *New Essays on the A Priori* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 1.

[24] Christopher Peacocke, "Explaining the *A Priori*: The Programme of Moderate Rationalism," in

What to make of all this? One might think the issue here is merely terminological: on one characterization of "experience" the problem I put to the new rationalists gets a bite, on another definition it doesn't. But the issue is far from *merely* terminological. Recall Brouwer. The bulk of our intellectual intuitions in logic, mathematics and philosophy are, on one characterization of "experience," simply ignored. An arbitrary distinction is set up between experiences of contingencies and intuitions of necessity – arbitrary because it hasn't been shown what, *in point of conscious character*, separates them, and why such a putative distinction *should* matter when it comes to matters of justification.

The Ewing-style re-characterization of apriority and experience sets things up in a way that suits the new rationalism. But it itself lacks motivation. And it is, as far as I can tell, the only reason one might have to deny (3). Criticizing this reason undermines the rejection of (3).

4. Enabling and Justifying

The more logically minded might think the argument I have given in Section 1 is not so much wrong as it is misguided. Premises and conclusion are true alike, only premise (1) is irrelevant to both premise (3) and the conclusion. This is because the proper role of intellectual intuitions – admitted to be experiences for the sake of argument – is not to *justify* the beliefs they trigger, but to *enable* one to justify one's beliefs.[26] Much like breathing is a prerequisite for thinking anything at all, so would *conscious grasp in thinking* be a condition to access what, quite independently of the grasp, would justify one's belief. For instance, suppose you believe that a surface cannot be both red and green all over; and suppose it also seems to you that things are so. Things seeming to be so to you wouldn't justify your belief; the seeming would merely enable you to access the *conceptual*

New Essays on the A Priori, eds. Paul Boghossian and Christopher Peacoke (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), 256.

[25] One might have thought that this is mere ellipsis that can only now be questioned, in light of debates about cognitive phenomenology. See, e.g., Tim Bayne and Michelle Montague, "Introduction," in *Cognitive Phenomenology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). But characterizing *a priori* justification in terms of experience-in-general persists as late as Bruce Russell, "*A Priori* Justification and Knowledge," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta (Revised 2014, accessed April 20, 2020 from https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/apriori/). For Russell: "*A priori* justification is a type of epistemic justification that is, in some sense, independent of experience." (Parenthetically, note that Russell's is also a *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* article, presumably capturing a conception of *a priori* justification in wide currency nowadays.)

[26] Bruce Russell, "*A Priori* Justification and Knowledge," Section 4.1.

knowledge of redness, greenness, and surfaces that you possess quite independently of any insights you might have into it.[27]

Before looking into how the enabling/justifying distinction[28] might save the rationalist, it is important to ponder on just which ones the enabling experiences are supposed to be. Peacocke writes:

> When you come to know a logical truth by way of your having a proof of it, you may need to perceive the inscription of the proof, and you may need various perceptual capacities to appreciate that it is a proof. But the justification for your belief in the logical truth is the proof itself. Perceptual experience gives access to the proof, which provides an experience-independent justification for accepting its conclusion. By contrast, if you come to believe 'That's Mikhail Gorbachev,' when you see him at the airport, what entitles you to your belief is (in part) the perceptual experience by which you recognize Gorbachev. Your perceptual experience is not a mere means which gives you access to some experience-independent entitlement to believe 'That's Gorbachev.' This classical rationalist distinction between experience-dependent and experience-independent justifications or entitlements has been controverted, and objections to it raised and (in my own view) answered.[29]

Peacocke, here, makes a transition that is fairly standard, and which illustrates the problem I fleshed out earlier. He rightly starts from the fact that

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[27] Is this what rationalists have in mind? It would seem so; Bealer writes: "The analysis of concept-possession has further explanatory pay-offs. To begin with, in so far as *a priori* knowledge is a product, directly or indirectly, of *a priori* intuitions, the analysis of concept-possession serves as a cornerstone of a unified account of *a priori* knowledge. On the one hand, the correctness property provides the basis of an explanation of the *reliability* of *a priori* intuition and, in turn, *a priori* knowledge itself. On the other hand, the completeness property provides the basis of an explanation of the *scope* of *a priori* intuition and, in turn, *a priori* knowledge" (Bealer, "A Theory of the *A Priori*," 22). For Bealer, concepts have correctness conditions that ensure their reliability – if they are possessed at all. Concepts also have completeness conditions, which ensure that concepts are defined for all possible circumstances we evaluate propositions at. Intuitions, in turn, source not from some mysterious faculty of insight, but from our conceptual knowledge. So intuitions inherit their modal reliability from the conceptual knowledge *they* are based on. Intuitions, on this view, *transmit* justification but don't *generate* it.

[28] Sometimes the distinction is made as one between enabling and warranting. For instance, see Jonathan Jenkins Ichikawa and Benjamin Jarvis, "A Theory of the *A Priori*," in *The Rules of Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 161-178. With them, I agree that the distinction doesn't presuppose any form of epistemic internalism. However, I demur from thinking that the justificatory power of, say, intellectual intuitions, needs to be warranting in order to carry justificatory weight at all.

[29] Peacocke, "Explaining the *A Priori*," 255.

consciously perceiving the proof (that justifies your belief that a proposition is a theorem) merely *enables* you to access the justification, rather than constitute the justification itself. Peacocke then seems to infer what doesn't in fact follow, namely, that *no* conscious experience constitutes your justification. But consider this example. Producing a proof of a theorem is a problem facing everyday reasoners – sometimes a quite difficult problem. Solving it requires *careful* thinking. Reasoners undergo conscious experiences that at least *seem* to them to be cognitive through and through; such experiences go far beyond perceiving an already written-out proof. The effort involved in constructing a proof, the constant double-checking, reflectively considering and rejecting ways of challenging the proof: these are as many ways in which problem-solving differs from merely cognitively ingesting a ready-made proof on the basis of mere visual inspection.[30] In drawing the distinction between experiences that enable and experiences that constitute justifications, we should leave behind prejudice against cognitive phenomenology – at least for the purpose of argument.[31]

Can the enabling/justifying distinction save BonJour and Bealer's rationalism of intuitions? The resulting rationalist picture is, I think, implausible. I next point to two theoretical problems and two intuitive cases where the picture seems inadequate.[32] Let me preface those problems with a challenge. As far as I can tell,

[30] For the intricate ways in which reliable problem-solving, conscious cognitive experiences, and our reflective abilities as epistemic agents might relate to each other, also see Andrei Mărăşoiu, "Understanding, Problem-Solving, and Conscious Reflection," *Acta Analytica* 34 (2019): 71-81.

[31] It turns out to be surprisingly tricky to draw the enabling/justifying distinction in a way that could serve the new rationalism. In their recent defense of (their version of) rationalism, Ichikawa and Jarvis do draw the distinction appropriately. But they explicitly mobilize it in defense of their own version of rationalism, which they oppose to "experiential rationalism" as typified by BonJour and Bealer. And, without delving into details, one aspect is certainly crucial: Ichikawa and Jarvis' rationalism concerns propositional rather than doxastic justification. When we consider, however, examples motivating both philosophers and mathematicians (Descartes and Brouwer come to mind), what matters is that we are able to *apprehend* necessary truths in conscious thought. No mere propositional justification is going to meet that demand. Only consciously appraised justification does justice to our being *struck* by truths we can't conceive to be otherwise. That is why doxastic justification is envisaged throughout this text.

[32] Before moving to what I take to be the problems and counterintuitive verdicts that rationalism delivers, let me briefly distinguish my approach from Timothy Williamson's "Knowledge of Metaphysical Modality," in *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 165-169. His main targets are *modal* beliefs and their justification; whereas I discuss the role of cognitive phenomenology in justification *tout court*. He considers roles experiences might play, in general, in justifying beliefs; I focus on cognitive experiences. He contemplates the possibility of experiences which might be more than enablers, yet less than constitutive to justification; I don't. On the contrary, I think the distinction itself – while useful on other grounds – need not

the new rationalist has to say that intellectual experiences enable, rather than justify, the beliefs they give rise to. But I have been unable to locate *an argument* for why such experiences should be thought to play the limited role of enablers.[33]

5. Theoretical Problems and Counterintuitive Verdicts

I'll now briefly raise two theoretical problems which a rationalist view would have to face if it provided that cognitive experiences were mere enablers for *a priori* justified beliefs. I then go on to sketch two commonplace cases where the same brand of rationalism would deliver counter-intuitive verdicts. The joint effect of the theoretical problems and counter-intuitive verdicts is, I submit, that a rationalism relegating intuitions to the status of mere justificatory enablers is deeply implausible.

First problem: If intuitions are only justificatory middlemen who never generate justification on their own, why invoke them *at all*? When following deductive proofs, for instance, justification may rely on automatic "blind reasoning"[34] rather than be enabled by conscious insights. And, when you seek to justify your belief that a surface cannot be both red and green all over, it might be *enough* for your long-term, dispositional conceptions of redness, greenness, and surface to jointly *entail* this.[35] Few would be willing to accept that *a priori* justification is a matter of "blind reasoning;" and few would base justification on dispositions alone.[36] This should suggest that intuitions are more than mere enablers of justification.

Second problem: To say intuitions enable justification seems to imply that they are prerequisite for justifying beliefs. This, in turn, seems to imply that

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be invoked to see the point I make about cognitive experiences and *a priori* justification.

[33] One may, of course, insist, in hindsight, that the resulting beliefs must be *a priori*, hence experiences cannot justify them. Such hindsight simply begs the question; why else think that the resulting beliefs are *a priori*?

[34] Paul Boghossian, "Blind Reasoning," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society, Supplementary Volume* 77 (2003): 225–248.

[35] According to this latter suggestion, no cognitive activity need *occur* at all. Mere possession of the requisite concepts, and their associate conceptions, suffices to justify the belief. Both what justifies and what is justified are *dispositional* entities. One is the disposition to use one's concepts (red, green, surface) in the right circumstances. The other is the disposition to occurrently think that a surface cannot be both red and green all over.

[36] BonJour, for one, would not. He thinks intuitions are needed for the following reason: "If one never in fact grasps any necessary connections between anything, it is difficult to see what reasoning could possibly amount to" ("A Moderate Rationalism," 110).

particular intellectual seemings are necessary for justification. To avoid the implication, BonJour includes the parenthetical:

> a proposition whose necessity is apprehended in this way (or, sometimes, whose necessity is *capable* of being apprehended in this way) may be correlatively characterized as *rationally self-evident*.[37]

BonJour demurs from saying that an individual intellectual intuition – as it phenomenally is – is necessary to justify one's belief. Rather, *the capacity* to have such intuitions, *with the right conceptual content*, is said to be necessary, no matter how intuitions realizing that capacity are presented in conscious experience ("it hits," "it dawns," "it slowly emerges" etc.). But BonJour's capacity line is unconvincing. He states that intellectual seemings give "internal clarity and firmness" to one's rational believing.[38] And no mere capacity can give that – only individual experiences can.

I now move to why the rationalist relegation of intuitions to the status of enablers of justification doesn't do justice to our everyday experiences. Here are two cases.

Suppose that, as good high school students tend to, you routinely apply mathematical induction over finite domains. And then you take an introductory course in logic, and it *strikes you* that you can do the same over infinitely denumerable domains (like the domain of natural numbers). "Aha!" you might think to yourself, maybe there is something to extending finite techniques to apply to infinities too. The rationalist would have to insist that what *doesn't* constitute your justification for believing this (i.e., that you can extend mathematical induction from finite to infinitely denumerable domains) is *precisely* what drove you to think it in the first place, namely, your conscious insight that it might work. That has the ring of implausibility.[39]

Or return to colors. You believe no surface can be both red and green all over. How do you go about justifying it? You try to imagine what it might be for a surface to be both red and green all over. You consider cooked-up lighting conditions. You consider intermediary nuances and what effect they might have on your (imagined) *experience.* You consider if, spelling out your conceptions of what red and green are like, *as far as* your experiences and the testimony of others go, would lead you to think no such surface can exist. And so on. A vivid imagination comes in handy when seeking to apply your concepts in thought.

[37] BonJour, "A Moderate Rationalism," 101.

[38] BonJour, "A Moderate Rationalism," 120.

[39] True, when you explain induction to *me,* mentioning *your* experiences won't help – but that is only because I need to undergo experiences of understanding of my own.

Rationalists would have to insist that all that fancying is, strictly speaking, a gateway to something entirely foreign to it, namely, a conceptual knowledge disrobed of any phenomenal quality.

To tailor reports of rich cognitive experiences only to fit the Procrustean bed of intuitions-enabled a priori justification seems too high a price to pay: it saves the letter of rationalism at the cost of its plausibility. If the distinction between enabling and constituting doesn't make (1) irrelevant to (3) and (4), and if (1) is true, then (4) is true – and that undermines the rationalism of intuitions.

6. Conclusion

What to make of all this? It might, perhaps, be tempting to conclude that the discussion is merely terminological. Use "experience" to refer to sensory experiences *alone*, and the traditional definition of *a priori* justification as justification independent of experience can remain unchanged. Or: define "*a priori*" so as to refer to justifications independent of sensory experiences *alone*, and propositions traditionally deemed to be justified *a priori* preserve their status. Or: insist that intellectual seemings play *exclusively* an enabling role, and justifications thereby enabled still qualify as *a priori*.

I take none of these routes. I let "experience" refer to sensory and cognitive experiences alike. And I find no *motivated* distinction between enabling and justifying that can rescue the *a priori* character of beliefs formed on the basis of intellectual seemings, or intuitions. I conclude that one road to rationalism is closed: thinking that beliefs can be *a priori* justified by appeal to intellectual intuitions.

There is an upside: Once we divorce it from the tradition of *a priori* justification, we can start a *fresh* assessment of the epistemic standing with which conscious experiences of thinking may endow the thoughts experienced therein.[40] And, once we divorce *a priori* justification from the epistemic standing of intellectual intuitions, we may seek for *purer a priori* standards, with *no* hindsight to which of our beliefs should qualify as such.

Oddly enough, Peacocke anticipates much of the argument I just proposed, when writing that:

[40] For instance, Earl Conee, "Seeming Evidence," in *Seemings and Justification: New Essays on Dogmatism and Phenomenal Conservatism, ed.* Chris Tucker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 52-69, explores the sense in which intuitive experiences may provide justification for the beliefs formed or entertained on their basis. I remain neutral about how to further articulate the justificatory import of cognitive intuitive conscious experiences, beyond the point that the resulting justification, if it obtains, has to be *a posteriori*.

> Faculties conceived by analogy with perception, far from helping to explain the possibility of rational intuition and *a priori* knowledge, are actually incompatible with the *a priori* status of the beliefs they deliver.[41]

Peacocke is right: if we conceive of intuitions as being akin to perception, the resulting justification will be *a posteriori*. But what makes intuition be like perception is not its being sourced in a special and mysterious faculty, akin to the senses. What makes intuition resemble perception, when each occur, is that they are both conscious experiences. We *grasp* the contents of such experiences, they are presented to us in experience. And experiences of grasp are experiences *no matter* if they manifest a special (extra-)sensory faculty *or* if they manifest our mastery of a general-purpose conceptual repertoire. It is hard to see what *else* grasping might be, if not a kind of conscious experience.[42] So it begins to look as though Peacocke's view falls prey to his own objection. Peacocke framed his objection as one against faculty-based views of intellectual intuitions; he might better have framed it against intuition-based[43] views of *a priori* justification.[44]

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[41] Peacocke, "Explaining the *A Priori*," 263.

[42] See David Bourget, "The Role of Consciousness in Grasping and Understanding," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 95 (2017): 285-318, for a development of the view that graspings are conscious experiences of understanding.

[43] An even earlier forerunner for inferring (4) from (1) is Moritz Schlick, "Is there a Factual *a priori*?" in *Readings in Philosophical Analysis, eds.* Herbert Fiegl and Wilfrid Sellars (Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1949), 277-285. In this 1932 paper, Schlick objected to the overly permissive use of the phrase "*a priori*" by Scheler and his school, a use that Schlick thought departed from Kantian orthodoxy because it covered actual conscious experiences of concrete individuals solving concrete cognitive tasks.

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