

Elijah Chudnoff. *Intuition*. Oxford University Press 2013. 264 pp. \$50.00 USD (Hardcover ISBN 9780199683000).

Elijah Chudnoff's book *Intuition* sets out a positive account of what intuitions are and how they can give us justification and knowledge. I will point to a couple of places where I think that the view might usefully be revised and filled in, but overall the book is entirely worth reading for anyone interested in the nature and rational role of intuitions.

The book begins with a characterization of intuitions as "a form of intellectual perception," according to which "intuitions are experiences that purport to, and sometimes do, reveal how matters stand in abstract reality by making us intuitively aware of that reality" (1). The defining features of the view of intuition as intellectual perception are that "intuitions are experiences," i.e., that they are conscious states; "Intuitions immediately [noninferentially] justify beliefs;" "Intuitions...purport to, and sometimes do, put us in a position to gain knowledge by making us aware of their subject matter;" "The subject matter of intuition is not the subject matter of sensory perception;" and "Though intuition experiences can involve sensory experience, it is a distinctive experience and can also occur autonomously" (3).

On Chudnoff's account, intuitions are a *sui generis* type of experience, which are constituted by other experiences (imaginings, trains of thought, and so on), when those other experiences make a subject seem to be aware of a truth-maker for a proposition. Intuitions are intellectual seemings which possess presentational phenomenology, where "what it is for an intuition experience to have presentational phenomenology with respect to p is for it to both make it intuitively seem to you that p and make it seem to you as if this experience makes you intuitively aware of a truth-maker of p " (48). Of course Chudnoff doesn't think that an intuition experience must make a subject S aware of a complete truth-maker for p . S 's experience only needs to make it seem to S as though the experience itself makes S intuitively aware of an important part of what makes p true, in order for the experience to count as an intuition experience that p .

So that is Chudnoff's view of the nature of intuition. Regarding the way that intuitions give us justification for our beliefs, Chudnoff defends a version of phenomenal dogmatism, which consists of three claims:

(DIJ^R) If it basically intuitively seems to you that p , then you thereby have some prima facie justification for believing that p .

(Phenomenalism_I) If your intuition experience representing that p justifies you in believing that p it does so because it has a certain phenomenal character.

(Presentationalism_I) If your intuition experience representing that p justifies you in believing that p , then it does so because it has presentational phenomenology with respect to p (94).

In the rest of this review, I will focus on two points: (1) Chudnoff's response to the *absent intuition* challenge, and (2) his response to skepticism about intuitive justification.

(1) The main alternative to Chudnoff's view of intuitions is *doxasticism*, the view that intuitions are noninferential beliefs, or dispositions to have such beliefs. The most important argument for the doxastic view of intuitions is that doxasticists "claim not to find any *sui generis* intuition experiences when they peek into their streams of consciousness" (53). Doxasticists claim not to be aware of having any distinct experiences of the sort that Chudnoff describes: they claim not to be aware of having distinct experiences which make it seem that *p* by way of making them aware of partial truth-makers for *p*. This is the absent intuition challenge to phenomenalism about intuition.

Chudnoff's response to this challenge is to say that doxasticists really do have intuition experiences, but that they don't recognize them as such. Intuition experiences, according to Chudnoff, are themselves constituted by other experiences—thoughts, imaginings, and so on – but they are not identical with these other experiences (53-54). Just as a lump of clay can constitute a statue without being identical with the statue, so too can imaginations and other experiences constitute intuition experiences, without being identical with them. The reason why doxasticists don't recognize intuition experiences for what they are, Chudnoff thinks, is that it is easy to confuse an intuition experience with the experiences which constitute it.

Importantly, for Chudnoff, because intuition experiences are constituted by other experiences, but they are not identical with or reducible to the experiences which constitute them, intuition experiences can instantiate a range of epistemological and metaphysical properties which their underlying experiences do not (57). For example, intuition experiences immediately justify beliefs, whereas imaginings do not.

Chudnoff's reply here unfortunately leaves us at a stalemate: although it is possible that our imaginings and our trains of thought might constitute other distinct experiences, doxasticists can simply insist that they are not aware of any distinct intuition experiences constituted by their imaginings and trains of thought, of the sort which Chudnoff describes. If intuitions are a kind of experience, constituted by but distinct from other underlying experiences, it should be possible to introspect, find some intuitions, and see that they are constituted by but distinct from their underlying experiences. (Compare: if at first I only see a lump of clay, and then you tell me that it's a statue, I should normally then be able to see that it's a statue, not just a lump of clay.) Doxasticists can plausibly push their absent intuition challenge by claiming that they are aware of no distinct experiences which are constituted by their thoughts and imaginings.

An option for Chudnoff at this point would be to adopt an alternative view of the nature of intuitions, according to which intuitions really are identical with the experiences (imaginings, trains of thought, and so on) that constitute them. That is, intuitions are just a particular *kind* of imagining or conscious train of thought: when an imagination experience makes it seem to S that *p*, by way of making S seem to be aware of a partial truth-maker for *p*, that's just *what it is* for S to have an intuition experience representing that *p*.

This alternative does not leave room for the doxasticist to press the absent intuition challenge. We all sometimes have experiences of imagining something about an abstract matter, and sometimes

our imagination experience makes it seem to us as though some proposition is true, because the imagination experience seems to make us aware of some important part of a truth-maker for that proposition. This is a very familiar kind of experience.

This account permits us to retain Chudnoff's explanation of why doxasticists fail to see that they have intuition experiences: doxasticists haven't recognized that they have intuition experiences, because they have been looking for distinct experiences over and above their imaginings or other experiences. Once we see intuition experiences as identical with other underlying experiences, when those other experiences make it seem that p by way of making us aware of a truth-maker for p , it is no longer possible to press the claim that we can't find any such experiences by introspection. We all have experiences of this kind, and we all know it.

This view of intuitions is incompatible with the letter of Chudnoff's view, given that he wants to hold that intuition experiences are *sui generis*. But this view is very much in the same spirit as Chudnoff's: it allows intuitions to play the rational roles he thinks that they play; it allows intuition experiences to be co-located with other experiences; it allows intuitions to have presentational phenomenology; and it remains distinct from the doxastic view of intuitions, because it holds that imaginings and other experiences (rather than beliefs or dispositions to have beliefs) are what play the rational role of immediately justifying beliefs and actions.

(2) Skepticism about intuitive justification is the view that intuitions do not by themselves justify beliefs. The kind of skepticism Chudnoff worries about is the view that although intuitions provide *prima facie* justification for beliefs, that justification is always defeated.

One way to argue for skepticism about intuitive justification is by appeal to studies done by experimental philosophers. These studies, it is claimed, show that intuitions are unreliable, because that they are influenced by factors which do not track the truth. For example, people from Western countries typically respond to Gettier cases by saying that the subjects in question don't have knowledge, whereas East Asians typically respond that the subjects do have knowledge. Presumably, then, the intuitions that generate judgments about knowledge in Gettier cases aren't grounded in truth-tracking features of people's cognitive make-up. If that is correct, then that is a reason to hold that the *prima facie* justification which intuitions confer on beliefs is always defeated.

Chudnoff gives an interesting reply to this line of argument, which is that the studies which purportedly show that intuitions fail to be truth-tracking do not in fact elicit genuine intuitions from their subjects: "Having an intuition experience with presentational phenomenology with respect to a proposition about a thought experiment requires having an experience that makes the subject matter of that proposition present to mind. Such an experience is unlikely to occur if you are in a state of mind in which you just take your immediate, unreflective responses to questions as satisfactory" (113). One way to put people in the right frame of mind for eliciting intuitions is by first administering certain kinds of tests designed to make us aware of how fallible we are. And, as it turns out, when we do administer tests of this sort before having people fill out questionnaires to elicit their intuitions, people's responses become much better at tracking the truth.

This reply is interesting and worth exploring further. The reply unfortunately leaves it unexplained just why immediate, unreflective responses, which subjects give in response to scenarios, normally aren't the result of real intuitions, i.e., why they are not the result of real experiences which have presentational phenomenology, which make subjects seem to be aware of truth-makers for propositions. Without an explanation of why that would be, one might reasonably continue to think that immediate, unreflective responses normally do result from genuine intuitions. But with such an explanation in hand, this would become a plausible response to x-phi-based skepticism about intuitive justification.

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