

ARE INTUITIONS QUASI-PERCEPTUAL “PRESENTATIONS”?

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Abstract: John Bengson has offered a detailed theory of the nature and epistemology of intuition according to which intuitions are quasi-perceptual conscious experiences that “present” their contents as true. The paper offered here argues that Bengson’s terminology of “presentations” is difficult to interpret. Bengson does not provide a clear meaning for “presentation” or “presentational state,” and this makes it impossible to evaluate his proposal that intuitions are presentations. This paper argues, furthermore, that intuitions are not phenomenal mental states and therefore have no perception-like phenomenology or epistemology. It concludes that Bengson’s theory fails to metaphysically, epistemologically, or methodologically legitimize intuitions.

Keywords: epistemology, intuition, perception, phenomenology.

John Bengson has offered a detailed theory of the nature and epistemology of intuition according to which intuitions are quasi-perceptual conscious experiences that “present” their contents as true. In so doing, Bengson claims to have dispelled some of the mystery surrounding intuition. He has, he says, explained *what intuitions are* and *how they justify belief in their contents*. Although he does not much emphasize this in his paper “The Intellectual Given” (2015a), successfully explaining these things would be highly relevant to metaphilosophical disputes over the role of intuitions in philosophical practice. For example, Bengson’s explanations, if successful, would seem to support the view that philosophers *ought* to appeal to intuitions in support of their views, or at least that there is no obvious general reason not to. Furthermore, Bengson’s explanations, if successful, would seem to suggest that philosophers very likely do, *in fact*, appeal to intuitions in support of philosophical conclusions. Thus, Bengson’s theory has the potential to *legitimize* intuitions—metaphysically, epistemologically, and methodologically.

I argue here, however, that Bengson’s theory does not live up to this potential. I argue, first, that Bengson’s claim that intuitions “present” their contents as true is difficult to assess, so difficult to assess that it is unclear even what Bengson *means* by “presents” and related terminology. Second, I argue that, to the extent that it is possible to get a reasonable grip on Bengson’s terminology, there is no reason to withhold it from states that

Bengson does not regard as “presentational states.” Third, I argue that intuition and perceptual experience are utterly *phenomenologically* different, and that this spells doom for any quasi-perceptual theory of, in particular, the epistemology of intuition.¹ Last, I briefly comment on the upshot of these criticisms of Bengson’s theory of intuition for the ongoing debate over the role of intuitions in philosophical practice.

1. “Presentationality”

Key to Bengson’s theory of intuition is the idea that intuitions are similar to perceptual experiences in being “presentational” mental states. According to Bengson, intuitions do not simply *represent* that this or that is the case, they do something more: they *present* their contents as true. He takes the Gettier intuition as an example: “In having the Gettier intuition . . . it is *presented* [not simply represented] to one as being the case that Smith does not know” (2015a, 719; Bengson’s emphasis). And he compares the Gettier intuition to a visual experience of a red apple on a table: like the Gettier intuition, this experience *presents* its content (*that there is a red apple on a table*) as true, it does not merely *represent* it as true. Perceptual experiences and intuitions are contrasted with states like *belief* and *judgment*: beliefs and judgments, Bengson says, are *merely* representational; they do not *present* their contents as true.

To understand Bengson’s theory of intuition, we first need to understand this key distinction between states of mind that present their contents as true versus those that merely represent their contents as true. The problem is that Bengson offers very little help in this regard. He gives examples of mental states that are, *according to him*, merely representational. And he gives examples of different states that are, *according to him*, presentational. But for those of us seeking to understand what Bengson *means* by “presents” or “presentational state” these examples are of little use.

Suppose I invent a term, “bengsontational,” which I tell you applies to fruit, and which I go on to explain is partly a matter of a fruit’s juiciness. Then I give examples: apples are *bengsontational*, whereas oranges are *merely juicy*, I tell you. Perhaps I give a few more: pears are bengsontational; kiwi fruit are merely juicy, and so on. Now you have the term, and you have a few examples, but you are in no position, I take it, to know what I mean by “bengsontational,” nor to understand my distinction between bengsontational fruits and those that are merely juicy. Bengson’s use of “presentational” strikes me as no clearer than my use of

¹ I concentrate on Bengson’s quasi-perceptualist theory in particular, but there are others who are quasi-perceptualists about intuition, including Elijah Chudnoff (2013) and Ole Koksvik (2017). This third criticism, concerning the radical phenomenological difference between intuition and perception, applies to these other quasi-perceptualist theories as well.

“bengsonational,” and Bengson’s examples of “presentational states” no more helpful than my examples of “bengsonational fruit.”

Lest I mislead readers, it’s not that Bengson has little to say about his notion of presentationality. In fact, he has quite a lot to say about it. For one thing, as already mentioned, he gives examples of allegedly presentational states, contrasting these with allegedly merely representational states. For another, he offers a relatively detailed *account* of presentationality, which takes the form of six supposedly important general features of presentational states. As I have argued, however, the examples do not help with understanding the basic distinction between presentational and merely representational states. Do the general features help with this?

This depends on how these general features are related to the *meaning* of “presentational state.” After all, I can list some general features of bengsonational fruits: bengsonational fruits are (1) vitamin rich, (2) available in Japan, (3) sold for under \$500, and (4) help with digestion. These features, plus my earlier examples, give you *some* idea of what is and isn’t in extension of “bengsonational fruit,” as I use the term. But unless I say more about these features (for example, “it is part of the meaning of “bengsonational fruit” that bengsonational fruits are vitamin rich”), you are, I take it, as much in the dark as ever as to what I am using “bengsonational” to mean. Interestingly, Bengson is careful to claim that his six features of presentational states do not constitute an “armchair analysis” of presentationality. They are just “a few general features of presentational states,” he says (2015a, 720). But then, just as my four features of bengsonational fruit do not give you much help in understanding what I mean by describing a fruit as “bengsonational,” Bengson’s six features of presentational states do very little to convey what Bengson means by describing a mental state as “presentational.”

There is not space enough here in the main text to rehearse all six of Bengson’s general features of presentational states.² But listing just one will suffice to reinforce the point I am making here. Bengson claims that presentational mental states are “baseless, in the sense that they are not consciously formed, by a subject, on the basis of any other mental state(s)” (2015a, 720). Does this help us understand what Bengson means by “presentational state”? Not much. We know that he takes “presentational state” to refer to mental states that are baseless, and we know that he thinks that some baseless states represent that this or that is the case, since he tells us that presentation is partly a matter of representation. We also know that the Gettier intuition, as well as a visual experience of a red

² Bengson says that presentational states are: (i) *baseless* (see the main text for discussion), (ii) *gradable*, (iii) *fundamentally nonvoluntary*, (iv) *compelling*, (v) *rationalizing* (of assent), and (vi) *potentially inexplicit* (see Bengson 2015a, 721–30, for elaborations of what Bengson takes these features to be). I don’t deny that perceptual experiences and intuitions share these six features. Rather, I deny that they are of much use in helping us understand the further feature of presentationality.

apple on a table, are supposed, by Bengson, to be examples of presentational, so baseless, states. Yet none of this puts us much closer to understanding what he means by “presentational state.”

Compare Bengson’s claims about presentationality and baselessness to my claims about bengsontationality and being available in Japan: from my claims about the latter, you know that I use “bengsontational fruit” to refer to fruits available in Japan, and you know that I take some fruits available in Japan to be juicy, since, as I have explained, bengsontationality is partly a matter of juiciness. You also know that I take apples and pears to be examples of bengsontational fruits and hence that I take these to be fruits available in Japan. And yet you still do not know what I *mean* by “bengsontational fruit.” If this is not immediately obvious, consider these hypotheses concerning what I mean by my invented term: by “bengsontational fruit,” I mean fruits that are (a) juicy and currently in my fruit bowl, or else (b) juicy and larger than apricots, or else (c) juicy and such that they need not be peeled to be eaten. All of hypotheses (a)–(c), as well as countless others, are consistent with what you know about my use of “bengsontational fruit.” Hence, you do not know what I mean by the term. The same goes, then, for Bengson’s examples and his general-features account of presentationality: none of this gives us any clear idea of what Bengson means by “presentational state.”

What is missing, in both cases, is some *pretheoretical* understanding of the relevant term—some *account-neutral* way to get a handle on presentationality or bengsontationality and how these differ from mere representationality, in the one case, and mere juiciness in the other. And the problem, in both cases, is the neologistic character of the terminology. There is no ordinary understanding or use of “bengsontational fruit” that you can rely on in seeking a grasp of what I use the term to describe. Likewise, there is no ordinary understanding or use of “presentational state” that we can rely on in interpreting what Bengson means by *his* neologism.

It is routine in philosophy to ascribe representational content to mental states, and this practice has its correlate in folk psychology, in which states of mind are “about” things, “true” or “false,” and so forth. So there is no similar difficulty understanding Bengson when he claims that intuitions and perceptual experiences represent that this or that is the case. It is this additional thing, *presentation*, that is a mystery.³ Certainly, there is little precedent, in either philosophy or folk psychology, for describing mental states as “not merely representing” but also “presenting” their contents as

³ I take this complaint to apply to other theorists of intuitions to the extent that these others appeal to a notion meant to be the same as, or similar to, Bengson’s “presentationality,” and to the extent that they attempt to introduce the notion in the way Bengson attempts to introduce his, namely, by casting it as partly a matter of representationality and by enumerating examples. William Tolhurst’s (1998) “felt veridicality” might be susceptible, as might Michael Huemer’s (2001) “forcefulness.”

true.⁴ Such talk is Bengson’s invention, and my complaint is that Bengson has not explained it clearly enough for the rest of us to be in a position even to *understand* the claim that “intuitions are presentational states,” let alone to agree or disagree. Similarly, although you all know what it means to describe a fruit as “juicy,” you have no way to assess my claim that, say, “plums are bengsontational fruit.”

2. Presentation and Belief

Of course, one difference between my neologism and Bengson’s is that “presents” is an ordinary English verb, and it may be that Bengson intends us to apply our understanding of this ordinary English term in thinking about his examples and his general features of presentational states. But it is not clear *how* to apply this understanding, since, according to it, it is *people* (“he presented us with three options”) or *situations* (“getting back to the main trail presented a difficult problem”) that present things, *not* mental states. Presentation is not something a mental state, all on its own, gets up to.

To the extent that I can extend my use of the ordinary English verb “presents” to include mental states as presenters of propositions, I have no urge to withhold it from mental states that Bengson denies are presentational states. Bengson, remember, claims that *beliefs* and *judgments* are merely representational, not presentational, mental states. But I have no compunction about describing my beliefs and judgments as presenting their contents as true, especially not when I remind myself that I am simply extending the ordinary meaning of “presentation” to include such things as mental states as “presenters” of propositions. My belief that I am more than twenty-five years old, for example, presents it as true that I am more than twenty-five years old. At any rate, it does not seem *false* to say so, just a little odd, but this oddness can be chalked up to the fact that the way in which my belief that I am more than twenty-five years old presents its content as true is rather different from the way in which the game show host presents the contestant with her prize or low tax rates present economic incentives. Bengson might complain that this fails to take his general-features account of presentationality into account: presentational

⁴ I say there is *little* precedent in philosophy for this, and Bengson himself cites no historical antecedent. Chudnoff (2013), however, another quasi-perceptualist who also uses “presents” and “presentational” in describing intuitions, traces the terminology to Husserl (2001) and also mentions several contemporary philosophers who use it in connection with perception, including John Foster (2000) and John McDowell (1994). It seems, however, that Bengson’s intended meaning for these terms (whatever it is) differs from Chudnoff’s. (See Bengson 2015b, a review of Chudnoff 2013, for evidence of this.) I am not fit to judge how close Chudnoff’s use is to Husserl’s. That there is little precedent, even if there is some, suffices for the point I make in the main text.

states are baseless, for example, while my belief that I am more than twenty-five years old is not. But, to repeat my earlier point, the account and the examples do not give us a way to interpret Bengson's uses of "presentational state," and so they give us no way to interpret the claim that "presentational states are baseless" in particular. Perhaps an extension of the ordinary meaning of "presents" does give us a way to interpret Bengson's claims about the presentationality of certain sorts of mental states, but then it is simply not at all obvious that, according to this extension, beliefs and judgments fail to present their contents as true, or that "presentations" are characteristically baseless.

Evidence that Bengson does *not* mean us simply to extend the ordinary meaning of "presents," however, comes from his discussion of "having the impression" that some or another proposition is true. (This discussion starts at p. 716 and runs through p. 719 of Bengson 2015a.) To have *p* presented to one as true is the same, Bengson says, as one's having the *impression* that *p* is true. I take this to be a stipulation concerning the meaning of "presents," as Bengson uses it. That is, I take him to be relying on our ordinary understanding of "one's having the impression that *p* is true" and stipulating that "having it presented to one that *p* is true" is to be understood as a synonym.

There is nothing wrong with Bengson stipulating a meaning for "presents." In fact, something such as this—some way of getting a pretheoretical handle on what Bengson uses "presents" to mean—is precisely what I was complaining was missing in Bengson's examples-plus-general-features account of presentationality that I was describing earlier. We are some distance now from the ordinary sense of "presents"; low tax rates presenting economic incentives has little to do with who has which impressions, conceived of as mental states of a familiar kind. But that's O.K. Bengson is free to define his term as he pleases. The problem, once again, is that it is not at all obvious that beliefs and judgments do not fit the bill. "I have the impression that I am more than twenty-five years old" is a rather arch way to describe a belief of mine, but it's not a *misd*escription, as it would be if Bengson were right about impressions and the non-presentationality of belief.

I want to be clear that I am not denying that there are interesting differences between beliefs, on the one hand, and perceptual experiences or intuitions, on the other. My complaint is rather that, on some understandings of "presents," no such difference is marked by describing perceptual experiences and intuitions as "presentations." For example, there is a dramatic *phenomenal* difference between perception and belief: what it is like for me to have the *visual experience* that I am more than twenty-five years old, as when I look in the mirror, is phenomenologically *very* different from simply having the *belief* that I am more than twenty-five years old, which, sadly, accompanies me wherever I go, even when I am away from mirrors. Indeed, the phenomenal difference is so dramatic that it is

arguable that beliefs are not conscious experiences, in the sense of possessing phenomenal character, at all (more on this in the next section). But this difference between the visual experience and the belief is mischaracterized, if we say that only the former is a presentation, while taking “presentation” to mean the same thing as “impression.” Both the belief and the visual experience are accurately describable as ways of “having the impression” that I am more than twenty-five years old, or so it seems to me.⁵

Suppose we drop the issue of interpreting Bengson’s use of “presents” and simply focus on the question of whether there is some property, shared by perceptual experience and intuition, but not by belief, that might plausibly undergird the quasi-perceptual theory of intuition Bengson seeks. We can search for such a property without employing the fraught terminology of “presentations,” after all.⁶ If, however, there is such a property, it is natural to think that it must be a *phenomenal* property, since it is plausible to suppose that the important metaphysical and epistemic features of perceptual experience are explained, at least in part, by its phenomenology. For example, an important epistemic difference between visual experience and belief is this: one’s simply *having* the belief that *p* does not seem to contribute in any way to one’s justification for believing *p*, while, on the other hand, one’s simply having the *visual experience* that *p*, *does* seem, all on its own, to contribute to one’s justification for believing *p*. A perceptual experience is a “content-justifying” mental state, as I will put it, while mere belief is not.⁷ Now is not the time to attempt a full explanation of the content-justifying nature of perceptual experience. I mention it here only to note that any such explanation will likely appeal to perceptual experience’s phenomenology and, hence, that any quasi-perceptual theory of intuition will likely appeal to phenomenal similarities between intuition and perceptual experience.

Once we note this, however, a clear difficulty emerges: *phenomenologically*, intuition is much more similar to *belief* than it is to perceptual

⁵ Bengson emphasizes an alleged difference between “*having* the impression that *p*” and “*being under* the impression that *p*” (2015a, 717). The former is supposed to be a way of reporting the intuition or other “presentation” that *p*, whereas the latter reports on belief, not intuition or perceptual experience. Maybe I have a tin ear in this instance, but this strikes me as a hair that is too fine to split.

⁶ Though I lack the space to fully argue for it here, Bengson’s six general features of presentational states (listed in my footnote 2) do not, on their own, suffice for a quasi-perceptual theory of intuition. Bengson would agree with this point; he intends the six features to help explain presentationality (and fails in this, as I’ve argued). But he doesn’t regard them as explaining the epistemology of perception or intuition.

⁷ I intend the notion of a content-justifying mental state to be related to Bengson’s notion of a mental state that “non-alethically” justifies belief in its content (2015a, 736). Roughly, this latter notion is that of a mental state that justifies belief in its content but *not* only by virtue of there being a reliable connection between instantiations of the state and the truth of the contents of these instances. I express this by saying that some mental states are such that *merely having them* or *merely being in them* justifies belief in their contents.

experience. Indeed, I am inclined to hold that intuitions, like beliefs, are not phenomenal states at all.⁸ In having the Gettier intuition, for example, one does not undergo any experience, specific to the intuition, that has a Nagelian phenomenal character. There is *nothing* “it is like” to have the Gettier intuition, and the same seems true of every philosophical intuition I can think of. I return to the issue of the (lack of) phenomenology of intuition in section 3. First, I want to comment on Bengson’s discussion of an interesting property that really is, I think, had by belief but not had by either perceptual experience or intuition, namely, the property of being a “cognitive endorsement” (2015a, 717).

Bengson claims that beliefs and judgments differ from perceptual experiences and intuitions in that beliefs and judgments “are, at bottom, cognitive endorsements,” while perceptual experiences and intuitions are not (2015a, 717). On this point, Bengson and I agree.⁹ In fact, it strikes me as a conceptual truth that one can’t believe *p* while failing to endorse *p*. And it seems perfectly possible for one to perceptually experience or intuit *p* without endorsing *p*: perceptual or intuitive *illusions* that are *believed* or *known*, by the experiencing or intuiting subject, to be illusions are perfectly possible (and actual), that is.

The fact that perceptual experiences and intuitions differ from beliefs in failing to be cognitive endorsements shows, as several authors have noted (see, e.g., George Bealer 1992, Michael Huemer 2001, and Elijah Chudnoff 2013), that perceptual experience and intuition are not *varieties* of belief. Intuition might, however, be similar to perceptual experience, by failing to *be* a variety of belief, while nevertheless being belief-*like*, by, for example, failing to possess Nagelian phenomenal character. Intuitions would thus be perception-like in some respects (by failing to be cognitive endorsements) while belief-like in others (by lacking phenomenal character). The question would then be: Do the similarities between intuitions and perceptual experiences suffice to undergird a quasi-perceptual account of intuition? Or do the similarities between intuition and belief instead *undermine* any quasi-perceptual account of intuition by, for example, revealing intuitions

⁸ I realize that there are some philosophers who insist that conscious beliefs and other conscious propositional attitudes are phenomenal mental states. But I doubt this is the consensus view, and, in any case, I think introspection reveals that this belief in “cognitive phenomenology” is false. Even if there were such a thing as cognitive phenomenology, it would presumably be quite different from the phenomenology of perceptual experience. It would not have the epistemological significance of perceptual phenomenology, for example.

⁹ Actually, Bengson discusses cognitive endorsements in an attempt to contrast them with “presentations” and thus give us a better sense of what he uses his invented terminology to mean. Relative to this aim, Bengson, I think, fails once again. Suppose I tell you that some *non-bengsonational* fruits (*non-presentational* mental states) share the property of *being among my mother’s favorite fruits* (*being a cognitive endorsement*), while no bengsonational fruits (presentational mental states) have this property. I doubt you are very much closer to understanding what I use “bengsonational fruits” to mean.

to be such that, like beliefs, they are not content-justifying? In my view, it is the latter, as I explain in section 3. In any case, the property of *failing to be a cognitive endorsement* seems insufficient for explaining the important epistemic features of perceptual experience. Even putting aside things that are obviously not in the business of justifying belief (my left earlobe, for example), there are plenty of representational mental states that are not cognitive endorsements but are also not content-justifying (such as my wondering whether *p*).

So, yes, independently of what Bengson means by “presentation” and “presentational state,” we can identify properties that unite perceptual experiences and intuitions and distinguish these states from belief. *Failing to be a cognitive endorsement* is one such property, as Bengson rightly points out. But not just any such property will do, since a condition on any quasi-perceptual account of intuition deserving of the name is that it must identify a property that is potentially explanatory of a perceptual experience’s important epistemic features, something that merely failing to be a cognitive endorsement is not.¹⁰

3. The (Non-)Phenomenology of Intuition

I claimed in the previous section that intuitions, like beliefs, lack phenomenal character and that this poses a problem for any quasi-perceptual account of intuition, Bengson’s included. The problem is that perceptual experiences are paradigmatically phenomenal states, and it is natural to suppose that their phenomenology is essential to explaining their other important properties, including, crucially, their epistemic properties. For example, if we take perceptual experiences to be content-justifying, then it seems that this can be explained, at least in part, by the phenomenology of perceptual experience: perceptual experiences are content-justifying *because* they have the phenomenal characters they do. Hence, if, as I claim, intuitions are not phenomenal states at all, then they clearly are not content-justifying *because* of their phenomenology. Furthermore, the similarity of intuition to belief in this respect—that is, that they are both non-phenomenal mental kinds—suggests that intuitions are not content-justifying, *period*. It is not just that they are not content-justifying *in virtue of their phenomenology*. It is rather that *there is nothing* in virtue

¹⁰ To prevent misunderstanding: Bengson does not claim that failing to be a cognitive endorsement is a property that *is* explanatory of a perceptual experience’s important epistemic features. He discusses cognitive endorsements early on in his paper, in an attempt to make the terminology of “presentations” clearer (and fails in this, I think; see my footnote 9). The point of my discussion of cognitive endorsements is to examine whether, independently of the clarity of the terminology of “presentations,” there is some property, shared by perceptual experience and intuition, but not by belief, that might plausibly be taken to be explanatory in the requisite way.

of which they are content-justifying. *Believing p* does not, all by itself, give one any justification for believing *p*. Perhaps the non-phenomenal nature of intuitions reveals that, likewise, *intuiting p* does not, all by itself, give one any justification for believing *p*.

On what grounds do I claim that intuitions have no phenomenology? On introspective grounds: when I introspect my intuitions, I do not find that there is something it is like to have them. On the contrary, I find that there is nothing it is like to have the intuitions I have. I have already noted this with respect to (my having of) the Gettier intuition, one of several of Bengson's examples of intuitions. Others include the intuition that: (i) "philosophical zombies" are possible (2015a, 712), (ii) the law of non-contradiction is true (719), (iii) the naïve comprehension schema is true of mathematical sets (715), and (iv) "it is morally permissible for a bystander to pull a switch and thereby save five innocent lives by killing one innocent person" (716). I have all but one of these intuitions.¹¹ And in each case I can sincerely and confidently report that there is nothing that it is like for me to have them.¹²

The contrast between intuition and perceptual experience could not be more pronounced. My perceptual experiences are rich with phenomenal detail and are phenomenally structured as well, by which I mean that there are phenomenal aspects of my perceptual experiences that are both keyed to sensory mode—visual experiences differ in what they are like from auditory experiences, for example—and keyed to representational content—a visual experience that there is a bee buzzing around a *yellow* flower is phenomenally different from a visual experience that there is a bee buzzing around a *red* flower, for example. There simply is no phenomenal detail or structure to intuitions. What might correspond to perceptual phenomenology keyed to sensory mode in having the Gettier intuition, for example?

¹¹ I don't have the intuition that the naïve comprehension schema is true and have always been suspicious of this example, which made its way into the literature on intuitions via Bealer (1992). My suspicion is that, like me, *no one* has, or had, the intuition that the naïve comprehension schema is true, including Gottlob Frege and early set theorists. Rather, before Bertrand Russell's discovery that naïve comprehension leads to paradox, it had seemed (and so was, I will here assume, intuitive) that naïve comprehension is *not paradoxical*. But that is different, of course, from it having seemed *true*.

¹² "Phenomenal character" is a technical term from the philosophy of mind, and "experience," "feel/feeling," "what it is like," "consciousness," and similar vocabulary all have semi-technical uses there as well. I will not try to positively characterize "phenomenal character" or these other terms and phrases in this note, except to say that the vocabulary has its roots in classic papers by Thomas Nagel (1974) and Frank Jackson (1982) (and arguably much earlier in, for example, C. S. Peirce's (1982 [1866]) work discussing "qualia"), and I will simply assume that most readers have a decent grasp of how it has come to be understood in philosophy. An important negative characterization, however, is that not every mental kind is automatically a phenomenal mental kind. Nor is every difference between mental states a difference in the way a subject *experiences* the world, on the semi-technical, philosophical use of "experience."

Nothing—as ought to be introspectively obvious. What about perceptual phenomenology keyed to content? Again, nothing corresponds in intuition. Intuitions differ in their contents, of course, but these differences are not tracked by phenomenal differences. Having the Gettier intuition *feels* no different from having any other intuition because *there is no* particular way it feels to have the Gettier intuition, or any other.

This is not to say that one has no phenomenal experiences *when* having intuitions. Typically, plenty of phenomenal states *accompany* those that are not themselves phenomenal states. But if my elbow itches while I am considering whether to have ice cream or pie for dessert, this is no grounds for saying that my state of considering my dessert options is a phenomenal state. In some cases, there might even be fairly regular causal connections between certain non-phenomenal states and other, phenomenal ones. Perhaps this is true of some intuitions, as when one intuits that an action is morally *impermissible*. For example, I, like many others, have the intuition that it is impermissible to sacrifice one to save five in Judith Jarvis Thomson's (1985) famous “Transplant Surgeon” variation on the Trolley Problem thought experiment. I find that, when I think through the case, I imagine various things and I have certain low-intensity (since the case is hypothetical) emotional reactions of disgust and condemnation. The imaginings and the emotions are phenomenal states, but they and their phenomenology are distinct from the intuition and its features, and it seems perfectly possible to have the intuition while experiencing quite different phenomenal states, or none at all. The phenomenal character of a perceptual experience, on the other hand, is no mere causal accompaniment of the experience; it is rather part of what it is for the experience to be that very experience.

There are many hints in his paper concerning how Bengson might reply to the claims I have made so far in this section. First and foremost, it is fairly clear that he takes “presentationality” to label a *phenomenal* aspect of both perceptual experience and intuition. So he would reject my claim that intuitions are not phenomenal states and would insist that there is a strong phenomenal similarity between perceptual experiences and intuitions: they are both “presentations,” where the term is supposed to describe a shared phenomenal feature of the two kinds of mental state. Second, Bengson offers a reply to Timothy Williamson (2007) and Ernest Sosa (2007), both of whom have, as I have here, expressed skepticism that introspection reveals a quasi-perceptual phenomenology of intuition. Third, Bengson criticizes those who would “hastily” infer from intuition's lack of “a proprietary sensation or a robust phenomenology” to intuition's lack of any kind of quasi-perceptual phenomenology at all (2015a, 733 n. 30). Fourth, Bengson compares intuitions to states of *proprioceptive awareness*, claiming that such states are phenomenally more similar to intuitions than they are to other sorts of perceptual states, suggesting, thereby, that the fact that intuition and, say, visual experience are phenomenally *dissimilar*

is deceptive: other genuinely perceptual states—proprioceptive states—are, according to Bengson, phenomenologically very similar to intuitions. In the remainder of this section I respond to these points of Bengson's, working from this fourth point concerning proprioception, back to the first concerning the allegedly shared phenomenology of "presentations."

Bengson describes states of proprioceptive awareness (conscious awareness of the position of one's limbs, for example) as "without proprietary sensation [or] an especially rich phenomenology" (2015a, 718). This, he claims, groups such states together with intuitions, which also lack these features. It is not clear, however, what counts, for Bengson, as having or lacking a "proprietary sensation," and he sets no conditions on this in his paper. Proprioceptive experiences have phenomenal characters that distinguish particular types of proprioceptive states from other types, as well as from other perceptual states, as I assume Bengson would agree. Perhaps he would therefore agree that such states have *proprietary* phenomenology; it is just that this phenomenology is not that of *sensation*. But what could motivate the view that proprioceptions are not sensations? Bengson cites with approval G. E. M. Anscombe's (1957) view "that we are consciously aware of the position of our limbs, when we are, neither through observation nor through bodily sensation" (717 n. 12). But why regard this as an *insight*, as Bengson does, rather than as a strange mistake? Certainly, ordinary language ("I sense that my arms are at my sides") and *Webster's* (SENSATION, 1d: a state of consciousness due to internal bodily changes), as well as most philosophical characterizations of sensation, suggest it is a mistake.

Does proprioception lack an especially rich phenomenology? Perhaps it lacks an *especially* rich phenomenology, especially when proprioceptive states are compared with visual experiences with similar representational contents. A visual experience of my arms at my sides tends to represent more properties of my arms, and hence be correspondingly phenomenally richer, than the proprioception that my arms are at my sides. Yet proprioceptions are phenomenally rich *enough* to qualify as phenomenally detailed and structured in the way I was earlier describing the phenomenology of perceptual experience. For example, there is, in proprioceptions, phenomenology keyed to perceptual mode—proprioceptions are phenomenally different from other sorts of perceptual states—and phenomenology keyed to content—what it is like to be proprioceptively aware that one's arms are at one's sides is phenomenally different from what it is like to be proprioceptively aware that one is standing with one's legs apart, for example. Hence, it seems to me that proprioceptions are dramatically phenomenally different from intuitions. Indeed, as I have said, when I introspect my intuitions, I find no phenomenology at all, let alone any that is similar to the fairly rich, detailed, and structured phenomenology of proprioception.

This brings me to Bengson’s third point, concerning hastily drawn inferences from intuition’s lack of proprietary sensation and rich phenomenology. I think that *if* one accepted that intuitions are phenomenal states of some kind, then an inference from intuition’s lack of the same sort of phenomenology as perceptual experience to a lack of any sort of quasi-perceptual phenomenology of intuition at all, would, in some cases, be an unduly hasty inference. But, on my view, the issue is not that intuitions have phenomenal characters that are somewhat different from those had by perceptual experiences. It is rather that intuitions do not possess any phenomenal character whatsoever. So, for me, the relevant inference is from intuition’s complete lack of phenomenology to the conclusion that intuitions therefore lack quasi-perceptual phenomenology in particular. Bengson disagrees with my premise, but he can’t fairly accuse me of drawing *this* inference too hastily.

The premise of my inference is based, as I have admitted, on introspection, which brings me to Bengson’s second point, concerning the power of introspection to settle the question of the phenomenology of intuition. In his discussion of this issue, Bengson cites Williamson (2007) and Sosa (2007) as examples of philosophers who would, based on similar introspectively derived premises, object to his view. Unlike me, Williamson and Sosa seem prepared to accept that intuitions are phenomenal states of some kind, but, like me, they conclude that intuitions lack the quasi-perceptual phenomenology Bengson claims for them.¹³

Bengson says that a move open to him is simply to deny that Williamson, Sosa, and, now, I are accurately reporting our introspections. He says that this move would result in an “unsatisfying” stalemate, but he adds that the result would be “dialectically tolerable” for him (2015a, 732). No doubt there is something subjective about dialectical tolerability. But Bengson is presumably trying to *convince* readers of his view. A stalemate over what introspection reveals about the phenomenology of intuition seems like a disaster, given this dialectical aim, especially if, as it is widely supposed, introspection is the only route to knowledge of what it is like, if anything, to have intuitions.

Bengson does not, however, make the stalemate-inducing move, or so he claims. Rather, he questions whether the Williamson-Sosa-Deutsch objection *could* possibly refute his view. Since this part of his defense of his theory of intuitions is quite puzzling to me, I will quote him at some length:

¹³ Williamson says that the intuition that *p* is no more than the inclination to believe that *p*. Sosa says that it is (instead?) no more than the conscious entertaining of *p* combined with an attraction to assent to *p*. Suppose that Williamson and Sosa take these inclinations, entertainings, and attractions to be phenomenal states (which is not perfectly clear in either of their cases). Their view would then be that intuitions are phenomenal states but that this phenomenology, as revealed in introspection, is so *different* from the phenomenology of perception that no quasi-perceptual theory of intuition is plausible.

[T]he proponent [of Bengson's view] might observe that the [Williamson-Sosa-Deutsch] objection is meant to challenge a certain (non-minimalist) view or characterization of intuition, and in particular the discriminating quasi-perceptualist view that this characterization underwrites. This characterization was, however, offered as part of a *theory* of our target, a theory centered on a threefold distinction between, and subsequent explication of, types of contentful state (in Sect. 3); the target itself was identified in a theory-neutral way, using a series of more or less familiar examples (in Sect. 2). Perhaps the objector wishes to object to some aspect of that theory: for instance, when she introspects her Gettier intuition, she fails to find a mental state that has all of the relevant features (i.e. baselessness, gradability, fundamental non-voluntariness, compellingness, rationalizingness, and potential inexplicitness). But it is important to bear in mind that those features and their theoretical explication may not be always or fully accessible through a simple act of introspection. Consequently, introspection alone is unable to decide the matter: it cannot by itself refute the core quasi-perceptualist thesis. (2015a, 732–33)

Focus, first, on the final two sentences of this passage. The “features” to which Bengson refers in the first of these sentences are the six features composing his general-features account of presentationality, which I discussed in sections 1 and 2. Bengson is certainly correct to claim that these features “may not be always or fully” introspectable. Even more certain is that these features’ “explication”—that is, his description of what these features are or involve—is not introspectable. From these certainties, however, in the passage’s final sentence, Bengson concludes that “introspection cannot, by itself, refute the core quasi-perceptualist thesis.” But this simply does not follow, if, as I take him to agree, the “core quasi-perceptualist thesis” implies that intuitions are phenomenal states and that they are phenomenologically similar, in a crucial respect, to perceptual experiences.¹⁴ The truth or falsity of this implication *is* introspectable. At any rate, it does not *follow* from the non-introspectability of, say, the baselessness of the Gettier intuition that one cannot know, through “a simple act of introspection” what it is like, if anything, to have the Gettier intuition.

In the passage’s earlier sentences, Bengson emphasizes that his characterization of intuition is part of his *theory* of intuitions, a theory that takes intuitions to be “presentations” and to have the six general features of “presentational states” that he describes. He contrasts this with the way he *identifies*, theory-neutrally, “more or less familiar” *examples* of intuitions, such as the examples, (i)–(iv), that I mentioned above. I take it that,

¹⁴ Bengson’s official statement of “the core quasi-perceptualist thesis” is this: “Intuitions are like perceptual experiences in being presentations” (2015a, 725). He describes his approach as “broadly phenomenological.” (743). He also offers replies to objections to the core quasi-perceptualist thesis, such as those now under consideration in the main text, that are, in effect, objections to the view that perceptual experience and intuition are *phenomenally* similar. In addition, many of Bengson’s descriptions of “presentations” seem to be intended as descriptions of these states’ phenomenal aspects.

in drawing this contrast, he means to convey that the Williamson-Sosa-Deutsch objection cannot be plausibly regarded as an objection to the theory-neutral identification of examples of intuitions, and thus that it must instead be an objection to a component of his theory of intuitions. But, in that case, he appears to suggest, the objection fails: the theory, with its component characterization of intuition, is not open to refutation by introspection, as he then continues to argue in the final two sentences of the passage.

What is most puzzling about the reasoning Bengson gives here is the idea that the claims that constitute his *theory* of intuition are, *for that reason alone*, not introspectively verifiable. Surely, this is mistaken: whether one or another of his theoretical claims is introspectively verifiable depends on the specific content of the claim. *Being theoretical* does not magically inoculate *any* of his claims against challenges based on introspection. This is not to say that Bengson's theoretical claims are, one and all, and equally, open to challenges based on introspection. As I have already said, I agree with Bengson that whether intuitions possess the six general features of “presentational states” is not introspectable. But that intuitions have these features is only one component of his theory. More fundamentally, Bengson's theory says that intuitions possess a perception-like phenomenology. It is *this* claim, theoretical though it may be, that is challenged by those of us who sincerely report that, when we introspect our intuitions, we find no such phenomenology. Bengson could, I suppose, insist that not even this more fundamental theoretical claim is open to introspective check, but this would require some additional argument, additional argument that he does not provide. Furthermore, it is difficult to see how there could be a *convincing* additional argument here, since it is widely held that not only are claims about the phenomenal characters of mental states beholden to the introspective evidence, such evidence is the only evidence there *could* be for or against them: what it is like to be in a given mental state is knowable by introspection, and only by introspection, if anything is.

This brings me, finally, to Bengson's first point, concerning presentationality as the phenomenal feature shared between intuition and perceptual experience and explanatory of the important epistemic features of both. I argued in section 1 that Bengson does not give his terminology of “presentations” a clear meaning and this argument applies to his claim that presentationality is a shared phenomenal feature between intuitions and perceptual experiences: I do not understand this claim and can't see how any other reader of his paper, save, perhaps, Bengson himself, can understand it either. We can, however, once again, put aside the fraught terminology of “presentations” and simply ask: Is there a shared phenomenology between intuition and perceptual experience? My view is that introspection answers with a resounding no.

Hence, on my view, although it is plausible to suppose that the phenomenal character of perceptual experience explains why, for example, perceptual experience is content-justifying, the fact that intuition, too, is content-justifying, if it genuinely is, can't be similarly explained, because intuition is not a phenomenal kind. Indeed, intuition's complete lack of phenomenology strongly suggests that intuition, like belief, is *not* content-justifying. In other words, intuitions are not quasi-perceptual states in any sense that reveals them to have a perception-like epistemology.

4. Methodological Consequences?

Early on in his paper, Bengson quotes Paul Boghossian, who writes, “[T]he idea that we possess a quasi-perceptual faculty—going by the name of ‘rational intuition’— . . . has been historically influential. It would be fair to say, however, that no one has succeeded in saying what this faculty really is nor how it manages to yield the relevant knowledge. ‘Intuition’ seems like a name for the mystery we are addressing, rather than a solution to it” (Boghossian 2000, 231). Bengson says that his aim is to develop a theory of intuition that replies to criticism like Boghossian's and that, by the end of his paper, he has done so, by identifying intuitions as “presentations” and explaining how “presentationality” makes intuitions such that they justify belief in their contents. I have argued here, however, that Bengson's theory brings us no closer to understanding what intuitions are. In fact, the difficult-to-interpret terminology of “presentations” arguably makes this more obscure, not less. Furthermore, I have argued that the phenomenological evidence strongly suggests that there is no acceptable quasi-perceptual theory of the epistemology of intuition and thus that quasi-perceptualism leaves us with as much of mystery as ever concerning intuition's epistemic properties.

What bearing does this have on debates over the role of intuition in philosophical practice? If I am right about the inadequacies of Bengson's theory, then clearly there is no succor in it for philosophical methodologists who say that justificatory appeals to intuition are no worse, in the practice of philosophy, than justificatory appeals to perceptual experience in philosophy or ordinary life. In fact, if I am right that intuitions are not phenomenal states, then there is some reason for philosophers *not* to appeal to merely having the intuition that *p* in an attempt to justify the belief that *p*. Intuitions lack the feature that makes a similar appeal to a perceptual experience perfectly proper.

Beyond this issue of normative metaphilosophy, there is the descriptive question of whether philosophers do, *in fact*, engage in the practice of appealing to intuitions in order to justify belief. I said in the introduction that, if successful, Bengson's theory would make a positive answer to this question more likely. Since I think Bengson's theory is unsuccessful, I do

not think it moves the needle on this question at all. Having argued, on phenomenological grounds, however, that *any* quasi-perceptual theory is likely similarly flawed, I will conclude by suggesting, provocatively, I hope, that these reasons actually make a *negative* answer to the question of descriptive metaphilosophy more likely. Here is why: given that intuitions are *not* quasi-perceptual mental states, philosophers likely have no natural tendency, as they and everyone else *do* have in the case of perceptual experiences, to treat intuitions as justifiers of belief.¹⁵ At the very least, philosophers are likely cognizant of the fact that “just seeing” that the Gettier intuition is true is quite *unlike* just seeing that there is a red apple on a table, and so they likely behave accordingly, by not treating the former as sufficient reason for belief.

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¹⁵ Hence, I take my argument against Bengson’s version of quasi-perceptualism to count in favor of the kind of “no intuitions” descriptive metaphilosophy appearing in Deutsch 2015 and in Cappelen 2012.

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