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KNOWLEDGE ESSENTIALLY BASED UPON FALSE BELIEF

Avram HILLER

ABSTRACT: Richard Feldman and William Lycan have defended a view according to which a necessary condition for a doxastic agent to have knowledge is that the agent's belief is not essentially based on any false assumptions. I call this the *no-essential-false-assumption* account, or *NEFA*. Peter Klein considers examples of what he calls "useful false beliefs" and alters his own account of knowledge in a way which can be seen as a refinement of NEFA. This paper shows that NEFA, even given Klein's refinement, is subject to counterexample: a doxastic agent may possess knowledge despite having an essential false assumption. Advocates of NEFA could simply reject the intuition that the example is a case of knowledge. However, if the example is interpreted as not being a case of knowledge, then it can be used as a potential counterexample against both safety and sensitivity views of knowledge. I also provide a further case which, I claim, is problematic for all of the accounts just mentioned. I then propose, briefly, an alternative account of knowledge which handles all these cases appropriately.

KEYWORDS: knowledge, Edmund Gettier, safety, Peter Klein, William Lycan, Richard Feldman

I. Introduction: NEFA

Richard Feldman[1] and William Lycan[2] have defended a view according to which a necessary condition for a doxastic agent to have knowledge is that the agent's belief is not essentially based on any false assumptions.[3] I shall call this the *no-essential-false-assumption* account, or *NEFA*. Peter Klein[4] considers examples of what he calls "useful false beliefs" and alters his own account of knowledge in a way which can be seen as a refinement of NEFA. This paper shows that NEFA, even given Klein's refinement, is subject to counterexample: a doxastic agent may possess knowledge despite having an essential false assumption. Advocates of NEFA could simply reject the intuition that the example is a case of knowledge. However, if the example is interpreted, contrary to my own supposition, as not

[1] Richard Feldman, *Epistemology* (Upper Saddle River: Pearson, 2002), 36-37.

[2] William Lycan, "On the Gettier Problem Problem," in *Epistemology Futures*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 156-157 and 166.

[3] Also see Gilbert Harman, *Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 47.

[4] Peter Klein, "Useful False Beliefs," in *Epistemology: New Essays*, ed. Quentin Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 25-61.

being a case of knowledge, then it can be used as a potential counterexample against both safety and sensitivity views of knowledge. I also provide a further case which, I claim, is problematic for all of the accounts just mentioned. Since these types of views are among the most popular analyses of knowledge, this result is significant. I then propose, briefly, an alternative account of knowledge which handles all these cases appropriately.

Although neither Feldman nor Lycan spells out NEFA in great detail, we can stipulate that NEFA is the view that *a doxastic agent possesses knowledge only if there are no assumptions which are essential to the agent's belief which are false*. It is easy to see how NEFA is motivated. Standard Gettier-style cases involve situations where a doxastic agent's belief essentially rests on a false assumption. For instance, in the example from Chisholm[5] where a doxastic agent's belief that there is a sheep in a field is justified on the basis of the sight of a realistic sheep statue, the agent does not know that there is a sheep in the field even if there is a real sheep hiding behind some trees, because the agent's belief is essentially based on the assumption that the statue is a sheep. This fact does seem to explain why the agent lacks knowledge in that case (and in many other Gettier-type cases). If, on the other hand, the sheep statue co-exists with a flock of genuine and clearly visible sheep, then the fact that the doxastic agent bases her belief that there are sheep in the field in part on the fake sheep does not entail that she lacks knowledge, because the agent's belief that that particular thing is a sheep is not an *essential* feature of her justification. Both Feldman and Lycan, in reviewing the post-Gettier literature, consider no-false-lemma and defeasibility accounts of knowledge and show why those accounts fail. The NEFA account is similar, but arguably avoids the problems that they both claim that no-false lemma and defeasibility accounts face; in particular, those accounts count certain cases as non-knowledge when there is an assumption used by the doxastic agent which is false but which is not *essential* to the agent's justification.

II. Klein's refinement of NEFA

Klein discusses several examples of "useful falsehoods." Although Klein does not quite put it this way, these are cases where the doxastic agent's belief is not essentially based on the falsehood even if the agent's reasoning does in fact pass through the falsehood. Here is one of Klein's examples, the *Appointment Case*:

[5] Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge,* 3rd Edition (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1989), 93.

> On the basis of my apparent memory, I believe that my secretary told me on Friday that I have an appointment on Monday with a student. From that belief, I infer that I have an appointment on Monday. Suppose, further, that I do have an appointment on Monday, and that my secretary told me so. But she told me that on Thursday, not on Friday. I know that I have such an appointment even though I inferred my belief from the false proposition that my secretary told me on Friday that I have an appointment on Monday.[6]

According to Klein, this is a case where a false belief is essential in the causal production of a belief which counts as knowledge: the belief that the appointment is on Monday. Klein then claims that the reason why the agent has knowledge despite the causal role that the falsehood plays is that there is *another* proposition – the proposition that the secretary said that the appointment is on Monday – which meets three conditions: (1) it is also justified by the apparent memory that the secretary said that the appointment is on Monday, (2) it is true, and (3) it justifies the belief that the appointment is on Monday. Because there is available to the doxastic agent a second proposition that meets these conditions – even if the agent doesn't explicitly believe the proposition – the fact that the doxastic agent's reasoning passes through the false belief does not undermine the agent's possession of knowledge.

Although Klein does not see himself as advocating NEFA, his discussion can easily be seen as a clarification of NEFA.[7] An advocate of NEFA can hold, in light of Klein's examples, that there is a difference between an assumption being essential in the causal production of a belief and the assumption being essential to the justification of the belief – assumptions may satisfy the former but not the latter. The belief that the secretary said on Friday that the appointment is on Monday turns out not to be epistemically essential to the belief; what is essential is just that the secretary said that the appointment is on Monday, and that proposition meets the three conditions above. In general terms, *when a doxastic agent's evidence for a false belief is such that it propositionally justifies a true proposition which on its own propositionally justifies the agent's belief, the false belief itself is not essential to the agent's belief*. Understood this way, Klein is making a clarification of NEFA.

Perhaps inessentiality could also be measured by considering what the agent would believe if the agent were informed that the secretary did not say on

[6] Klein, "Useful False Beliefs," 36.

[7] I focus on NEFA in this paper because it is simpler than Klein's own account, though the example I give in Section III of this paper which I claim is a problem for NEFA is also a problem for Klein's account. Thus complexities of Klein's view aside from ones discussed here are not relevant for my purposes.

Friday that the appointment is on Monday. If the agent were then to suppose or discover that it is not the case that the secretary made the statement on Friday, then the agent would still believe that the appointment was on Monday because the agent would believe not that the secretary never made the claim at all, but that the secretary made the claim on a different day. Because the belief that the appointment is on Monday would withstand a supposition that the false belief *is* false, the false belief is not really essential to the belief that the appointment is on Monday. If, on the other hand, the agent knows that for some reason, for instance, what the secretary says on days other than Friday is typically unreliable, then the agent would not know that the appointment is on Monday, even if it is still true. If the agent were to suppose or learn that it is false that the secretary said on Friday that the appointment is on Monday, the agent would abandon his belief that the appointment is on Monday. This is another way of demonstrating whether a belief is essential or not.

III. A counterexample to the refined NEFA

However, there are examples similar to ones considered by Klein which cannot be handled by Klein's refinement. Consider the *Spy Case*:

> Natasha is a spy in the field. Messages to her from Headquarters often are detected by enemy intelligence, and Headquarters is aware of that fact. Today, Headquarters needs to communicate to Natasha that her contact will be at the train station at 4:00 pm, but Headquarters cannot directly tell her so. However, Headquarters knows that Natasha happens to have a justified false belief that the train from Milan is arriving at 4:00 pm. (It really arrives at 8:00 pm; also, there are no signs posted at the station indicating at what time it will arrive, and thus it is very unlikely that Natasha will find out the truth about the train's arrival time.) Headquarters knows that the enemy does not know that she has this false belief. So Headquarters sends a communiqué to Natasha stating that her contact is on the train from Milan. Natasha goes to the station at 4:00 pm and meets her contact there.

My claim is that Natasha did know that P, the proposition that *the contact will be at the station at 4:00 pm*, even though her belief is essentially based on two false assumptions, the assumption that the contact is on the train and the assumption that the train arrives at 4:00 pm.

Before further analysis of this case, I should note that both sensitivity and safety accounts of knowledge handle this case quite nicely. According to a sensitivity view, it is a necessary condition on knowledge that in the nearest worlds in which the proposition is false, the agent does not believe the proposition

(using the same method).[8] According to a safety view, it is a necessary condition on knowledge that in the nearest worlds in which the believer has the belief, the belief is true.[9] We can assume that Natasha does properly track the truth of when the contact would be at the station: if the contact were arriving at 5:00 pm, she would not have formed the belief that P since Headquarters would not have given her the same information. In all the nearest worlds in which she forms the belief that P, the belief is true (assuming that the contact is highly dependable in arriving on time). There are thus no nearby worlds in which Natasha believes that P but P is false. Thus Natasha's belief that P is both sensitive and safe.

Now, is this really a case where Natasha's belief that P depends *essentially* on a false assumption in light of Klein's refinements of NEFA? One might thus wonder whether there is *another* true proposition which is justified by Natasha's evidence and which itself justifies the proposition that P. In particular, Headquarters has attempted to convey to Natasha that the contact will be at the train station at 4:00 pm, and perhaps that proposition on its own is justified by Natasha's evidence and itself justifies P, and thus renders the falsehoods in Natasha's justification inessential.

To support that interpretation, consider the following details added to the case. (Call the case with these added details the *Backup Justification Case*, and I shall refer to the doxastic agent in this case as Natasha$_B$)

> (A) Natasha$_B$ knows that Headquarters knows that she believes that the Milan train is coming at 4:00 pm.
> (B) Natasha$_B$ knows that Headquarters knows that it is unlikely that that she would get any evidence to the contrary.
> (C) Natasha$_B$ has had experiences with Headquarters in the past where they have given her false information which together with other beliefs they knew she had led her to infer the truth of some important proposition.

(A), (B), and (C), together with the fact that Headquarters has told Natasha$_B$ that the contact is on the Milan train, would be an epistemically adequate basis for Natasha$_B$ to believe that P. We can further add a modal stipulation: if somehow Natasha$_B$ were to stumble upon the fact that the train does not arrive until 8:00 pm, in light of the considerations just given, Natasha$_B$ would still believe that P. Her belief that P is thus modally robust. This indicates that the content of the two false beliefs is not essential to Natasha$_B$'s justification even though her having the false beliefs plays the causal role in her *actually* coming to believe that P. Her

[8] See Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 167-196.

[9] See for instance Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemic Luck* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

evidence justifies the proposition that Headquarters has attempted to convey to her that the contact will be at the station at 4:00 pm, and this proposition, given the background information Natasha$_B$ possesses, propositionally justifies the proposition that P for Natasha even if Natasha does not consciously entertain that line of reasoning.[10]

But what if Natasha lacks those other pieces of information? Let's assume that (A), (B), and (C) do not in fact obtain, and thus there is no indirect backup justification that P for Natasha. Thus in the Spy Case I wish to consider, Natasha does not know that Headquarters knows that she believes that the train is arriving at the station at 4:00 pm and she also has not had numerous past experiences where they have conveyed messages to her in the past using false information. However, my own sense is (quite strongly) that this main Spy Case is still a case of Natasha knowing that P. Natasha has a true belief that P and is justified in forming her belief that P. Even if Natasha and Natasha$_B$ differ dispositionally, their actual belief processes are the same; they both consciously form the belief that the contact will be at the station at 4:00 pm on the same basis – that the contact is on the 4:00 pm train. Importantly, as above, Natasha, like Natasha$_B$, tracks the truth that P. In all the nearest worlds in which Natasha believes that P, P is true, and in all the nearest worlds in which P is true and Natasha forms a belief about P using the same method, Natasha believes that P. Typical instances of safety and sensitivity are ones in which the agent herself is primarily epistemically responsible for tracking the truth. This case differs in that it is the epistemically-friendly Headquarters which manages the epistemic environment so that Natasha tracks the truth. But this should not be seen as a reason not to attribute knowledge that P to Natasha – she has knowledge even if it is not her own but someone else's epistemic efforts which ensure the safety/sensitivity of her belief. Although sensitivity and safety accounts have been subject to counterexamples, the intuitions which they employ are still quite strong, and I do not see a reason why this case should be considered to be a counterexample case. My own intuitions thus coincide with safety and sensitivity intuitions in the main Spy Case.[11]

I take it that this is a case of knowledge even if, in the far-off possible world in which Natasha somehow stumbles upon the information that the train is

[10] The analysis in this paragraph is analogous to Klein's analysis of his Santa Claus case ("Useful False Beliefs," 57), which I discuss below in Section VII.

[11] I am no friend of safety accounts of knowledge; see below and also Avram Hiller and Ram Neta, "Safety and Epistemic Luck," *Synthese* 158 (2007): 303-313.

arriving at 8:00 pm,[12] she would come to doubt that the contact would be arriving at the station at 4:00 pm. She might speculate that Headquarters *may* have known that she had a false belief that the train arrives at 4:00 pm and that that is why they told her that the contact is on the train, but that would not be enough to adequately justify her continuing to maintain a high level of credence that P. Natasha's belief really is essentially based upon the two false assumptions that the contact is on the train and that the train arrives at 4:00 pm. Still, Natasha knows that P given the way things have worked in the actual world.

I grant that intuitions may differ; perhaps advocates of NEFA would insist that Natasha does not know that P. I cannot prove that this is incorrect. At the very least, I expect that a neutral reader will still feel some amount of pull in the direction that Natasha knows that P. However, if this case is indeed taken as a definite case of non-knowledge, then it immediately becomes a serious problem for safety and sensitivity views. As above, there are no nearby worlds in which Natasha has a false belief that P. There are, however, some far-off worlds in which Natasha discovers that the train from Milan arrives at 8:00 pm, not at 4:00 pm, but since these are, as stipulated, far-off worlds, they do not undermine Natasha's knowledge that P. Furthermore, they are worlds in which Natasha forms a belief about P using a different method than the one she uses in the actual world. Natasha's belief that P is thus safe and sensitive. In all the nearest worlds in which Natasha forms a belief about P using the same method that she actually uses, P is true, and in all the nearest worlds in which P is true and Natasha uses the same method of forming a belief about P that she actually uses, Natasha truly believes that P.

This would then be a case of safe non-knowledge. Now, advocates of safety merely suggest that safety is a necessary condition on knowledge, and do not suggest that safety is sufficient. The example is thus not a direct counterexample to safety accounts. However, it is unclear how *else* an advocate of safety could show that this is a case of non-knowledge. Moreover, in other examples given by advocates of safety accounts where a doxastic agent has a justified true belief but not knowledge, it is the violation of the safety condition which typically does the work in showing why the belief is not knowledge. Thus this example, if it is interpreted as being a case of non-knowledge, would be seriously problematic for advocates of a safety condition.

This is also a case of sensitive non-knowledge. Interestingly, Nozick provides a further condition on knowledge that if P were true, and S were to form

[12] I am assuming that her stumbling on that information is a very unlikely and modally distant possibility but not an impossibility.

a belief about P using the same method, S would still believe that P. This condition comes close to not being met in the Spy Case – but not close enough. Again, firstly, the worlds in which P is true but Natasha does not believe that P are far off. Second, in those worlds, Natasha forms a belief about P using a different method – she deduces the information about the contact's arrival time from a different source than in the actual world. Thus if the Spy Case is viewed as a case of non-knowledge, it is a counterexample to Nozick's account.

IV. A problem case for safety and sensitivity

As I have said, I do view the Spy Case as a case of knowledge, and thus I do not regard it as a problem for safety or sensitivity. However, there is a somewhat similar case which I believe is a genuine case of non-knowledge and which appears to be a more serious problem for safety and sensitivity views. Imagine a case which differs only slightly from the Spy Case. In what I will call the *Cognitive Defect Case*, Natasha$_C$ has a cognitive defect: whenever she hears about a train, she believes that the train arrives at its destination at 4:00 pm. She has had plenty of evidence that trains arrive at other times, but she always forms an unjustified belief that any future train will arrive at 4:00 pm. Headquarters is aware of this defect, but the enemy is not. In this example, Natasha$_C$ does not have any prior belief that the train from Milan is arriving at 4:00 pm – she is, perhaps, unaware that there even is a train from Milan – but Headquarters tells her simply that the contact is on the train from Milan. She then infers the unjustified but true belief that the contact will be at the station at 4:00 pm.

The Cognitive Defect Case involves beliefs which are just as safe and sensitive to the truth as in the Spy Case, because Headquarters would not have given Natasha$_C$ the false information if it didn't know that she would make an inference to the true belief. There are no nearby possible worlds in which Natasha believes that P and P is false. Nevertheless, this case appears to be a case of non-knowledge – Natasha$_C$'s belief in P is unjustified. Thus the Spy Case is a case of knowledge and the Cognitive Defect Case is not, but in the two cases, the two Natashas' beliefs are equally safe and equally sensitive. Even if the reader does not share these clear intuitions, as long as the reader feels more of a pull for the Spy Case to be a case of knowledge than the Cognitive Defect Case, then safety/sensitivity views are cast into doubt. Advocates of safety and sensitivity could add a justification condition as another necessary condition on knowledge. However, the spirit of safety and sensitivity views is that they avoid the need to add a justification condition on knowledge; and furthermore, such a resulting theory would be theoretically inelegant since many cases of unjustified belief are

also cases of unsafe/unsensitive belief; the two conditions would do overlapping work.

V. Another problematic case for the refined NEFA account

NEFA does get the Cognitive Defect Case right – there is an essential false assumption that the train arrives at 4:00 pm – and it is not a case of knowledge. But if it is indeed a case of non-knowledge, it is not the falsehood of the assumption which makes it non-knowledge; it is the fact that the false assumption was acquired in an unjustified manner. Thus this case should not be helpful for an advocate of the refined NEFA account even though NEFA does deliver the correct answer to it.

This fact can be brought to light further by considering a final case, the *Backup Justification Cognitive Defect Case*. In it, Natasha$_D$ has the same cognitive defect as Natasha$_C$ has. However, Natasha$_D$ also has the kind of backup information that Natasha$_B$ has – (A), (B), and (C) above hold for Natasha$_D$. Thus on a refined NEFA view, even though Natasha$_D$'s own belief process passes through a false belief, she still has at her disposal a backup justification which meets the condition stated in Section II – her evidence is such that it propositionally justifies a true proposition which itself is an adequate basis for Natasha$_D$ to believe that P. Thus this case would be deemed by the refined NEFA view as a case of knowledge even though it is not.

Of course if NEFA is explicitly stated[13] as a view that a doxastic agent has knowledge if and only if the doxastic agent has a *justified* belief which is not essentially based on a false assumption, then the Backup Justification Cognitive Defect Case isn't a counterexample to it since Natasha$_D$ is unjustified and does not have knowledge. But the cases considered above together bring out something odd about such a refined NEFA view – why does the agent need to be justified at all when the agent can have knowledge merely on the basis of the existence of a potential justificatory structure which she does not actually employ? If Natasha$_B$ knows that P because her evidence is such that it justifies a chain of reasoning that she does not employ (the assumptions that Headquarters has attempted to convey to her the message that the contact will be at the station at 4:00 pm and that Headquarters is usually correct when they convey the message) and not because of her actual conscious justification (that the contact is on the train and that the train arrives at 4:00 pm), then why is actual justification needed for an agent to have knowledge?

[13] As Feldman does in *Epistemology*, 37.

VI. An alternative to both NEFA and safety/sensitivity

Since these cases are fairly complex and intuitions may differ, one might wonder whether they may be instances of "to the winner go the spoils." In other words, if either NEFA or safety/sensitivity were shown to be mostly successful accounts of knowledge on the basis of independent argumentation, then we should then simply adopt the intuitions that the otherwise correct view tells us we should have in these cases. What I'd like to suggest is that the intuitive responses I report can be systematized in another way; this provides evidence that we should not adopt a 'spoils' attitude in the cases considered above.

On an account of knowledge I develop elsewhere,[14] knowledge involves (internalistically) justified belief which is formed in an epistemic environment which is conducive to (internalistically) justified believers forming true beliefs relevantly similar to the belief in question. Although a complete elaboration of that view is well outside the scope of this paper, I should note that the cases considered above fit this view of knowledge quite well. The Spy Case and the Backup Justification Case are both cases of justified true beliefs, and furthermore, they are both cases where, thanks to helpful oversight of Headquarters, Natasha is in a good epistemic environment to form true beliefs about the whereabouts of her contact. These cases trade on a peculiar feature of testimonial evidence. Typically, one acquires knowledge via testimony when a cooperative testifier states truths. These two cases maintain the spirit of knowledge via testimony – the testifier, Headquarters, is being epistemically cooperative in conveying a true target proposition to a doxastic agent, albeit using some unusual means. Headquarters sees to it that the epistemic environment is a good one for Natasha to form beliefs about the arrival time of her contact.

In the Cognitive Defect Cases as well, Headquarters is also overseeing the epistemic environment in a cooperative way. However, because Natasha is unjustified in using the internal processes that she does, she does not count as having knowledge despite being in a good epistemic environment. To possess knowledge, one must not only be in a good epistemic environment, but one must process information in a justified manner. Thus these cases taken together support the idea that there are two necessary conditions – the agent's having a justified belief and the agent's being in a proper epistemic environment – on knowledge. The fact that NEFA needs to appeal to a possible alternate route of justification of a belief in order to show that certain cases of "useful falsehoods" are still knowledge appears to undermine the inclusion of a justification condition on

[14] Avram Hiller, "Knowledge as Justified Stable Belief," manuscript.

knowledge. But on a view which in letter and spirit is quite different from NEFA, the inclusion of a distinct justification condition is not undermined by such cases.

This of course is a very brief suggestion, and I do not introduce the cases in this paper to prove my own account. Rather, I mention this view to show that there is a plausible alternative to both the NEFA and safety/sensitivity views which handles all these cases successfully. At the very least, one should not jump to a "winner gets the spoils" response without considering other potential ways of accounting for all the cases.

VII. Klein's Santa Claus case

Klein himself considers a case similar to the Spy Case, the Santa Claus Case:

> Mom and Dad tell young Virginia that Santa will put some presents under the tree on Christmas Eve. Believing what her parents told her, she infers that there will be presents under the tree on Christmas morning. She knows that.[15]

One might view this case as fully analogous to the original Spy Case, and if it is, then my own discussion would not be original. Klein himself analyzes the case in a way analogous not to the original Spy Case but to the Backup Justification Case. Klein claims that the facts that Virginia's parents told her that Santa would put presents under the tree and that her parents are normally reliable truth-tellers justify for her the proposition that someone will put presents under the tree.[16] For Klein, Virginia's evidence gives her an adequate basis to believe that there will be presents under the tree even if her own actual belief process is causally based upon a falsehood. If this is the proper analysis of the case, then it is simply a different case than the Spy Case since in the Spy Case there is no backup justification available to the doxastic agent.

I myself am unsure whether to say that Virginia has knowledge. Perhaps Virginia's belief may be justified on the basis of memories of past years' Christmas gifts. Even if she were to discover that there is no Santa, she knows that someone has been putting presents under the tree in years past. This would be another backup justification for Virginia. On the other hand, if Virginia is so young that this is the first Christmas where she is capable of understanding what her parents tell her, then arguably she doesn't know that there are presents under the tree because it is essentially based on her false beliefs and not on her parents' reliability, which she is perhaps too inexperienced to grasp. Furthermore, if Virginia believes in the highly far-fetched belief that a fat elf in a red suit flies

[15] Klein, "Useful False Beliefs," 37.

[16] Klein, "Useful False Beliefs," 57.

from the North Pole into every good Christian child's chimney to place presents under the tree on Christmas Eve, she may count as being in the same category as Natashac – not rational enough to count as having knowledge in the arena in question. Thus even if we accept that Virginia's parents have created a good epistemic environment for her to form beliefs about whether there will be presents under the tree, we need not grant that Virginia knows that there will be presents under the tree.

Another complication is that it may also be that Santa *does exist*; in particular, Santa is Virginia's parents, if 'Santa' in Virginia's idiolect can be analyzed as being an abbreviation for the definite description "whoever places presents under the tree." As evidence for this, some kids might say, upon finding out that no one sneaks into chimneys on Christmas Eve, "Mom and Dad are Santa!" Of course, some aspects of the typical description of Santa will not be true of Virginia's parents, such as the fact that Virginia's parents do not live on the North Pole, but perhaps the core part of the description – the only part which determines the referent in Virginia idiolect – is that Santa is whoever it is who places presents under the tree. Thus Virginia's belief would not be false, since even though her parents don't intend the word 'Santa' to be a definite description, it may function that way in Virginia's idiolect. In that case we would have a case of knowledge which is not based in any way on a falsehood.

I am unsure which of these considerations do and do not apply to the Virginia case. I bring up these considerations to explain why our intuitions may be pulled in one way or another by that case. One who accepts that Virginia does have knowledge need not accept my (or a refined NEFA) view of knowledge, and one who does not accept that Virginia has knowledge need not reject my own view. The reason I focus on the Spy Cases is that they clearly distinguish between several possibilities which may be at play in the Santa Case.

VIII. Conclusion

In sum, I have discussed several cases which show that either NEFA or safety (or both) is an inadequate account of knowledge. Since my methodology involves the use of thought experiments about which intuitions may differ, I cannot claim that the examples provide a definitive refutation of both of those views. However, they do undermine at least one of the views, since intuitions about the cases which are friendly to one will be unfriendly to the other. At the very least, advocates of each of these views need to account for why there is *some* intuitive pull in the direction opposite to the intuitive responses given by the views in these cases. My brief suggestion in Section VI is that we should not try to make minor tweaks of one or

the other of these accounts, since there is a plausible alternative account of knowledge which handles the cases appropriately and which thus demands further examination.[17]

[17] I'd like to thank Ram Neta and an audience at the Reed College Philosophy Department for discussion of these issues.

THE COUNTERPART ARGUMENT FOR MODAL SCEPTICISM

Jimmy Alfonso LICON

ABSTRACT: Surely, it is possible that you believe falsely about this-or-that modal matter. In light of the various ways the world could be arranged, it is plausible that there is a nearby possible world, which would be *almost* identical to the actual world, *if it were actualized*, where you and your modal counterpart disagree over modal belief p. You might be tempted to think that your modal belief is true, while hers is not. It is not clear why this is so; after all, you would each have the same evidence, cognitive abilities etc., *if you were both actualized*. This point generalizes to all of your modal beliefs, this seems to strongly imply that the probability that you have true modal beliefs appears inscrutable. Thus, you have *some reason* to withhold belief, on modal matters.

KEYWORDS: modality, modal scepticism, counterparts, inscrutability

Introduction

In this paper, I argue that you are probably already sympathetic to modal scepticism. This is because the modal scepticism I defend, in this paper, can be motivated with very simple modal and epistemic claims: you and your modal counterparts are equally skilled at evaluating modal matters, but you disagree; it seems an inscrutable matter as to which of you is right. Thus, you should withhold assent on modal matters. Call this the **Counterpart Argument**.[1] This argument can be motivated by rudimentary epistemic and modal beliefs; indeed, that is a big part of its appeal. Throughout this paper, **modal scepticism** is the position that there is *some reason* to withhold assent on modal claims for lack of evidence, i.e. you have *some reason* to think that you may not know that p is possible or necessary, such that the probability you are right, on any particular modal claim, is inscrutable. I argue that you are already committed to a species of modal scepticism, *to some degree*, in light of what you already believe; or, at least, what you are already inclined to bring on board doxastically.

[1] I am using the term 'counterpart' in a way that is consistent with a variety of modal metaphysical views, e.g. modal realism, ersatz modal realism, etc. We need not endorse any particular metaphysics of modality to feel the pull of counterpart argument, especially since there are other, related, ways to get to the species of modal scepticism I have in mind – an exception to this might be modal fictionalism.

§ 1

Surely, you accept that it is at least *possible* that your modal beliefs could be false. For instance, it may be that your belief that p is necessarily true is false; that is, it may be that p is only contingently true. We might put the matter like this: there is a nearby possible world which would be *nearly* identical to the actual world, *if actualized*, where you have a modal counterpart. The only difference between the actual world, and the possible world I am talking about, is this: you disagree over the modal claim that p in the sense that she affirms that p, while you deny it – and all that this difference entails. So, for instance, although you believe that for any arbitrary p throughout modal space, it is necessarily such that p is identical to q, your nearby modal counterpart disagrees. Simply put: it is possible that I have false modal beliefs. Call this claim **Diverge.**

There are several *good* reasons to accept Diverge.

First, it seems that Diverge is *possible*. There is a possible world, very similar to the actual world, in which your modal counterpart has a different modal belief than they actually do. Put differently, I can imagine a situation which I take to verify the following: there is someone, incredibly similar to me, in a world *almost identical* to the actual world, who disagrees as to the truth of my modal belief that p. Perhaps, we have diverging intuitions on the matter *for whatever reason*. The imaginability of this scenario should provide *some* evidence that there is nothing to prevent the world from having been arranged that way; the rule I have in mind is this: if I can imagine scenario p, then probably p is possible.[2] Surely, this is *some reason* to think that Diverge is possible.

Second, there is less obvious reason to accept Diverge: we already accept that we are fallible about so many other doxastic matters, e.g. perceptual and mathematical beliefs. It would odd to suppose that when it comes to our modal beliefs, it is not *even possible* that they could be wrong. The doxastic fallibility of other kinds of beliefs provides *defeasible* reason to suppose that for just about any kind of belief, it is possible that those beliefs *could be* wrong. So, for instance, I accept that it is at least *possible* that my external world beliefs are false, e.g. it might only seem that there is a pine tree in front yard, even though this is not so. Or, to take another example, it is at least *possible* that my mathematical beliefs are false. In other words, there are possible worlds, *if not the actual world*, in which I have false perceptual and mathematical beliefs. Unless modal beliefs are of a

[2] Consult: David Chalmers, "Does Conceivability Entail Possibility?", in *Conceivability and Possibility*, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 145–200; and Stephen Yablo, "Is conceivability a guide to possibility?", *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 53, 1 (1993): 1-42.

different epistemic kind altogether, and I see no reason to think that is so, we have *some* reason to think it is *possible* that I have false modal beliefs; that is, there are no doubt instances, somewhere in nearby modal space, if not the actual world, where I suffer from modal-doxastic fallibility.

There is a final reason: *the breath and fine-grained nature of modal space*. This is because modal space is supposed to *exhaustively* represent each and every way the world *could be* arranged. Thinking about possibility and necessity in spatial terms often does a lot to clarify the issues. Indeed, here is a simple heuristic for thinking about how modal space is populated: if it is possible that the world could have been arranged p-wise, then there is a possible world, somewhere in modal space, arranged p-wise. Thus, if it is possible that p, there is a possible world in which p holds, somewhere in modal space. Further, modal space represents the similarities and dissimilarities between *some* possible world and the actual world. These differences are captured, in part, by placing possible worlds, with greater similarity to the actual world, closer to the actual world in modal space and possible worlds with greater dissimilarities, farther from the actual world, in modal space.

Within nearby sectors of modal space, there are people who would be nearly identical to you and I, *if they were actualized*, except for a few minor details like whether they suppose that modal-claim-p is true or false. Now, if you think that *you* have the ability to evaluate the truth values of various modal claims, by stipulation, so would this subset of modal counterparts, *if they were actualized*, just in virtue of being nearly identical to you. So, for example, counterpart-Jimmy, who resides in nearby modal space, is only a bit different from me. If we were *both* actualized, we would have the same intellect, abilities, and methods at our disposal, for evaluating modal claims, even though the differences between the actual world, and the nearby possible world, are that we disagree over the necessity-of-p, and all that this entails; for the sake of the example, suppose that I think that p is necessarily so, but counterpart-Jimmy disagrees. There may be those who think that if Counterpart-Jimmy and I have the identical ability to conceive of such-and-such, it is hard to see how we come out with different, conflicting beliefs. There is a simple solution to this challenge: it need only be that although the possible world features epistemic agents, namely counterpart-Jimmy and I, with comparable epistemic abilities, it might be that one of us has a screwy way of forming modal beliefs. Without an epistemic tie-breaker, it would be arrogant of me to suppose that I am right about the necessity-status-of-p, but my counterpart in nearby modal space would be wrong, *if he were actualized*; indeed, this appears to be a kind of metaphysical chauvinism in that it

grants greater epistemic weight to agents that are concrete, rather than *merely* modal. If we have the same epistemic abilities and evidence, then he deserves his share of the epistemic benefit of the doubt; this is because he is as likely to be right as I. This generalizes to all of our modal beliefs.

We might approach this point somewhat differently. Think about the possible truth and falsity of my modal beliefs for instance, as if they were placed along a spectrum. On one end of the spectrum, I have all false modal beliefs, while on the other end I have all true modal beliefs. If we move, one unit in either direction, along the spectrum, I either trade a true modal belief for a false one, or vice versa. At the dead center of the spectrum, I have half true and half false, modal beliefs. If we average out my true and false modal beliefs, across the spectrum, the average is half true, and half false, modal beliefs. Since, as I have already argued, we cannot know where we are located on the spectrum, we should conclude that it is equally likely, as not, that any arbitrarily chosen belief we have is true. This problem generalizes to *your* modal beliefs. Call this **the placement problem.**

It might help clarify if we might think about the matter like so: suppose that there are two possible worlds, Alpha and Beta, placed next to each other in modal space. There are only a few relevant differences between, namely: in Alpha, the residents have true modal beliefs, while in Beta, the residents have false modal beliefs – and all that those differences entail. Other than that, Alpha and Beta would be nearly identical to each other, if they were actualized. As a result, residents of these respective worlds would have access to all of the same evidence, methods for evaluation, and such – assuming that Alpha and Beta are actualized. If you know nothing else, as to your location, then it seems you have about a fifty percent chance of deciding whether you are a resident of Alpha or Beta. Surely, this is precisely the situation where you find yourself. Although the situation is not as simple as the thought experiment makes it out to be, my point is made.

Consider the following challenge to my project: there is an assumption which informs the placement problem. Namely, it says that we should treat each of the many ways, the world could have been arranged in a way that involves me believing this-or-that, with respect to modal matters, as equally likely to be actualized. But this is ridiculous. We have good reason to suppose that *probably* we are right we respect to many of our modal beliefs – we have evidence for our modal beliefs; the *mere* possibility that we could be wrong about them is *not* good reason to suppose that each possible world, in nearby modal space, is equally likely to also be the *actual* world. Call this challenge **Possible.**

The worry with Possible is that it treats different possible worlds differently, vis-à-vis their likelihood of capturing how the actual world hangs together, on the basis of the conviction that we largely have true modal beliefs. Unfortunately, in the absence of good reason, this serious resembles special pleading. This is because Possible violates a *defeasible* heuristic for dealing with members of the same kind: if there is no good reason to treat token F differently than G, it seems arbitrarily to treat F differently than G. For example, it would be arbitrary to treat job applicants differently, if all I knew about them was their job-applicant status. Think about it like this: if I assume that my having largely true modal beliefs, rather than my counterpart, in nearby modal space, this is just like claiming that I am in a better epistemic position, than my nearly identical counterpart, when it has already been stipulated this is not so. It is not clear how I would be in any better epistemic position, than my modal counterpart, as there are plenty of them who would be nearly identical to me, *if they were actualized*, when it comes to their epistemic resources for evaluating the truth and falsity of modal claims, e.g. they would be as intelligent, with the same epistemic tools for investigating modal space, and evaluating modal claims. If we are identical, in these capacities, it is not clear *how* I could *rightfully* claim to have any kind of an evidential edge, over some of my counterparts in nearby modal space. Indeed, Possible looks like a hand waving dismissal. Unfortunately, hand-waving dismissals of scepticism are too common in philosophy.

For instance, Jessica Wilson writes:

> Nor have recent answers to the Cartesian skeptic been much better. Moore … maintains that we may rest with what we naturally believe, or presuppositions thereof; but in context, this seems to beg the question, or at least not properly engage the skeptical concern, and similarly for views on which we need not rule out every conceivable defeater of our ordinary beliefs. Russell … maintains that we may infer to the existence of the external world, as the best explanation of the pattern of our sense experience; but what qualifies the usual explanation as 'best'? Comprehensive skeptical scenarios also explain this pattern, and some on arguably simpler grounds. Relatedly, attempts … to dismiss these scenarios as 'irrelevant' presuppose that we have some independent handle on what is actually the case; *but this presupposition is exactly what the skeptic's cases aim to undermine*.[3]

Expressed a bit differently, if the nature of nearby *merely* modal space were not epistemically relevant to the actual world, scepticism, in its many guises,

[3] Jessica Wilson, "The regress argument against Cartesian skepticism," *Analysis* 72, 4 (2012): 668 – emphasis mine.

would lack philosophical punch.[4] After all, many sceptical scenarios (e.g. the evil demon hypothesis) merely posit alternative explanations for our experiences, and thus try to place the burden on us to explain our preference for the conventional explanation rather than its scepticism-inducing competitors. However, it seems that scepticism generally does *not* lack philosophical punch, even if we are not sceptics *per se*. Thus, merely modal possibilities are, *at least sometimes*, epistemically relevant to the actual world.

I've established that there is *some* reason to suppose we have a placement problem, i.e. a problem about where we are located in modal space, vis-à-vis the truth and falsity of our modal beliefs, which is something more than a *mere* possibility. In the next section, I want to explain why, in light of the placement problem, we should think the probability of our having true modal beliefs is inscrutable, and why, that is good reason to think we are inclined toward a species of modal scepticism.

§ 2

So far, I've argued for the following conclusion: we have *some reason*, on the basis of what we already accept, to think there is a placement problem. If you recall, the placement problem says that we have few epistemic resources for placing ourselves, in modal space, when it comes to the truth or falsity of our modal beliefs. However, this might not seem like enough to motivate modal scepticism. As such, in this section, I want to make two moves that I think will explain why the placement problem, provides good reason to think that modal scepticism *of some kind* is motivated.

The placement problem gives us *some* reason to think that the likelihood of our having true modal beliefs is inscrutable, i.e. things could fall out either way, according to the evidence; for one thing, it is hard to know exactly how probability maps onto the relevant parts of modal space – e.g. it might turn out that the actual world was far more likely to be than its possible world neighbors; if had a clear picture of probability space, and how it relates to modal space, this would be a whole different story. It might be that there are extra-good reasons to suppose that our having true modal beliefs are a good deal more likely, than our having false ones, however I do not know what they would be; indeed, I wouldn't even begin to speculate. Or, at least, it is not clear that we have all that much to go on in terms of knowing how modal space and probability relate to one another. This is a good reason to think that the probability of our having truth or false

[4] Cf. Fred I. Dretske, "Epistemic Operators," *Journal of Philosophy* 67, 24 (1970):1015-6.

modal beliefs, or a reliable cognitive process by which we produce modal beliefs, is inscrutable at least where our evidence is concerned. Put differently, the probability that we have largely true modal beliefs is inscrutable in this sense: it seems as though the epistemic facts of the matter could fall out either way, even while consistent with our evidence, e.g. conceivability, thought experiments, intuitions, and such. This suggests that there is no good evidence that justifies us making this, rather than that, estimate of the probability that we have true modal beliefs.

Consider what Plantinga says:

> Suppose I believe that I have been created by an evil Cartesian demon who takes delight in fashioning creatures who have mainly false beliefs (but think of themselves as paradigms of cognitive excellence): then I have a defeater for my natural belief that my faculties are reliable … *It suffices for me to have such a defeater if I have considered those scenarios, and the probability that one of those scenarios is true, is inscrutable for me – if I can't make any estimate of it, do not have an opinion as to what that probability is.* It suffices if I have considered those scenarios, and for all I know or believe one of them is true.[5]

There is an intuition that inscrutability is an obstacle to knowledge. The intuition is this:

> You cannot know that x, if x is as likely to be true as false, on the basis of the totality of your evidence, whether this evidence is consciously accessible or not. Call this intuition *Withhold*.

Consider the following example:

> Suppose that Jones is about to bet a good deal of money on a game of dice. If he picks even, for instance, and the dealer rolls an odd number, then he loses his money; if, on the other hand, his pick matches what the dealer rolls, he doubles his money. During the night, it is clear to Jones that there is no discernible pattern as to what the dealer will roll, i.e. the dealer is just as likely to roll an even, as she is to roll an odd – or so Jones' evidence suggests.

Surely, it is implausible for Jones to suppose that he knows that the next roll will be even, or odd; if anything, he has good evidence that he cannot know such thing. This example supports Withhold in the following sense:

> If x is as likely to be true as false, as far as your evidence is concerned, or there is no way to tell, you should withhold ascent that p.[6]

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[5] Alvin Plantinga, "Naturalism Defeated," 1994, http://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/articles/plantinga_alvin/naturalism_defeated.pdf, 12 – emphasis mine.

[6] Consider the following argument for this claim:

The inscrutable probability that x is true or false, falls under the purview of Withhold. Thus, we have *some* reason to withhold assent to any claim where its truth or falsity are inscrutable. But withholding assent that such-and-such, for lack of evidence, is a form of scepticism, if anything is. After all, withholding belief for lack of evidence is roughly what the Cartesian sceptic thinks I should do in light of the competing explanations for my external world seemings. Although, what I've been discussing may not be a robust form of scepticism, like the evil demon hypothesis, it appears to be scepticism enough.

Now, we are in a position to flesh out the **Counterpart Argument.** Crudely sketched, the argument amounts to this: *first*, I have any number of counterparts, in nearby modal space, who would be just as skilled as I am, in evaluating modal claims, if they were actualized. *Second*, there are a number of equally qualified modal counterparts, who either agree or disagree with me, on such-and-such modal claim. *Third*, in light of these claims, it seems arbitrary to suppose that I am right, on any particular modal matter, while my equally qualified counterparts who disagree with me, are wrong – at best, it seems that the probability that I am right in my modal beliefs is inscrutable; indeed, the nature of modal space guarantees that there will be counterparts who disagree with me on such-and-such modal claim. *Fourth*, if the probability that I am right about this or that modal claim is inscrutable, then I should withhold belief that such-and-such modal claim; this response to the inscrutable probability of my modal beliefs being true, seems like a species of scepticism. Thus, *fifth*, I have *some* reason to accept a species of modal scepticism.

As I've already spent much of the paper defending the premises of the Counterpart Argument, I will conclude this section with the following: it seems that much of what I have argued, in preparation for laying out the Counterpart Argument, should be readily accepted by most of my readers; it seems much of the philosophical background for this argument, follows from basic modal and epistemic beliefs, e.g. if the probability that claim p is inscrutable, there is *some* reason not to take p doxastically on board. Surely, this is good reason to distrust our seemings to have true modal beliefs. Even if seemings confer *defeasible* justification, and it seems that this-or-that modal claim is true, there is good

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If you think you can take on beliefs that could be as likely true as false, then you should have a far greater number of beliefs than you do. But you don't, obviously, i.e. you refrain from believing any number of propositions because you lack good evidence for this, e.g. the belief that there is a little man, in every black hole, who is impervious to gravity, trying to find a light switch. So, you do not think you should take on beliefs, as part of your doxastic inventory, if they are as likely to be true as they are false.

reason in the background to be suspicious of our seemings; at least, there is *some* reason to think their likelihood-of-being-true is inscrutable. If anything is a defeater for taking the claim that p doxastically on board, this kind of inscrutability qualifies.

§ 3

Before closing, I want to address the following worry: it appears that my modal scepticism presupposes the very modal knowledge that I deny others. Thus, it may appear that my argument is self-defeating. I have a simple response: I only need those in my audience to have beliefs about the nature of modal space, and such, which are conducive to my sceptical strategy. Or, I could assume what I need to make my argument, like a *reductio ad absurdum*, without committing to it, simply to illustrate how such commitments lend *some* support to a species of withholding-style modal scepticism.

Consider what Hume has to say:

> Reason first appears in possession of the throne, prescribing laws, and imposing maxims, with an absolute sway and authority. Her enemy, therefore, is obliged to take shelter under her protection, and by making use of rational arguments to prove the fallaciousness and imbecility of reason, produces, in a manner, a patent under her band and seal.[7]

If you accept my starting points, you have *some* reason to accept a kind of modal scepticism.

[7] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896), 186.

LOGIQUE ET GRAMMAIRE DANS LA DÉFINITION DU VERBE COPULATIF*

Dinu MOSCAL

ABSTRACT: Our objective in this paper is to clearly highlight the linguistic status of the copulative verb, especially with regard to the copula verb *to be*, with an eye on tracing the influences of Logic on its approach as a syntactic entity and also on emphasizing the details that led to an eclectic definition. This epistemological approach aims at placing an emphasis on the subject of the diachronic and interdisciplinary copulative verb, in order to observe the way in which the conclusions from the level of the logical approach were transferred to the one of the linguistic approach and also to avoid the misuse of a series of concepts that were established either in a different domain or in the same domain, but at a different level. The main emphasis falls on defining the linguistic predicate through the grammatical tense.

KEYWORDS: verb, predicate, copulative verb, grammatical tense

1. Introduction

Les observations critiques concernant les concepts utilisés en linguistique n'ont pas manqué à travers l'histoire de ce domaine. Les linguistes les plus importants ont toujours cherché à éclaircir certains concepts linguistiques hérités des domaines connexes à l'étude de la langue. Saussure remet en question la validité des concepts linguistiques utilisés par la grammaire, en discutant le cas des parties du discours. Il affirme que

> la linguistique travaille sans cesse sur des concepts forgés par les grammairiens, et dont on ne sait s'ils correspondent réellement à des facteurs constitutifs du système de la langue. Mais comment le savoir? Et si ce sont des fantômes, quelles réalités leurs opposer?[1]

L'ascendant de l'analyse de la langue dans la logique aristotélique et le maintien, sans modifications essentielles, des concepts transférés au niveau de l'étude de la langue sont des faits indiscutables. Louis Hjelmslev présente de manière directe et succincte cet état de l'étude de la langue:

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[1] Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale* (Paris: Payot & C[ie], 1922), 153.

> Die Griechen und Römer des Altertums und die Scholastiker des Mittelalters interessierten sich besonders für die Sprache vom Gesichtpunkt der Logik her und begründeten in enger Anknüpfung an die Aristotelische Logik eine grammatische Tradition, die in unserer Schulgrammatik noch immer lebt und ebenfalls, mehr oder weniger unverändert, in den meisten unserer wissenschaftlichen Grammatiken in ihren klassischen Formen.[2]

Le verbe copulatif est une unité linguistique qui reflète d'une façon très évidente l'influence de la logique sur la grammaire, jusqu'au parallélisme. Le syntagme terminologique utilisé dans les grammaires pour cette unité syntaxique – "verbe copulatif" ou simplement "copule" – nous indique une perception logico-linguistique, car le terme "copule" désigne une réalité logique, et non pas une réalité linguistique. La problématique de l'état du verbe copulatif en tant qu'entité linguistique suppose non seulement la distinction annoncée dans le titre (entre le plan logique et le plan linguistique), mais aussi celle qu'on peut opérer à l'intérieur du plan linguistique, entre information lexicale et information grammaticale (syntaxique). Sous l'influence du rapport substance – contenu, établi dans la logique, la définition du verbe copulatif en tant qu'unité syntaxique vise principalement le contenu sémantique lexical, ignorant le contenu sémantique grammatical. La présentation de ces distinctions préliminaires avant d'examiner la problématique proprement dite de l'état du verbe copulatif délimitera plus exactement l'objet de recherche et le cadre théorique de l'analyse proposée.

2. Distinctions préliminaires

L'histoire de l'étude de la langue montre un lien étroit avec la logique, le sommet de cette cohabitation étant enregistré dans la période scholastique, époque à laquelle le concept d'équité scientifique était assimilé complètement à la logique. Toute science se doit de respecter les principes généraux de la logique concernant la recherche de l'objet, mais sans qu'un transfert s'opère à partir de la méthode vers l'objet de recherche. La constatation de Hjelmslev, cité ci-dessus, révèle précisément cette inadéquation de l'intellect à l'objet de recherche, principe formulé par le même philosophe, dont la théorie du prédicat logique a été transférée au niveau du prédicat linguistique. Le prédicat linguistique doit surmonter au moins deux difficultés majeures afin de respecter ce principe. La première dérive de l'histoire de la grammaire, qui a été établie sur la base de la logique classique, ce qui rend compte du fait que la grammaire préserve une perception logique dans l'analyse du prédicat. La seconde résulte de la correspondance entre le niveau linguistique et le niveau logique dans le cas des

[2] Louis Hjelmslev, *Die Sprache* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), 8.

énoncés logiques. La première étape nécessaire dans la détermination de l'état linguistique du verbe copulatif et, implicitement, des catégories linguistiques immédiatement supérieures vers le plus général, c'est-à-dire les catégories du prédicat et du verbe, est la distinction entre le niveau logique et le niveau linguistique des énoncés logiques (les propositions). La deuxième étape consiste à déceler les traits linguistiques du prédicat et à opérer la distinction entre ce qui est essentiel et ce qui est général mais non spécifique ou seulement quasi-général. La troisième étape réside dans l'analyse de l'influence de ces délimitations au niveau de la syntaxe en tant que science. Dans la présente étude je n'examinerai que l'aspect syntaxique des phrases copulatives.

Pour ce qui du rapport entre la science de la langue – la grammaire, en l'occurrence – et la logique, la grammaire doit être adéquate à la réalité étudiée, c'est-à-dire à la réalité linguistique, qu'on ne saurait assimiler à la réalité logique. Cette dernière n'est que le substrat de seule une partie des énoncés linguistiques.

En ce qui concerne le niveau linguistique, il est nécessaire de garder comme réalités distinctes la fonction qu'on cherche à définir (le prédicat linguistique) et les éléments individualisés qui remplissent cette fonction, c'est-à-dire la valeur syntaxique et la valeur lexicale (lexico-sémantique). Ainsi, la langue doit être considérée sous deux aspects, auxquels correspondent deux réalités distinctes : la langue en tant que système de signes (unités significatives)[3] et la langue en tant que fonctionnement de ce système de signes, qui développe un système de contenus instrumentaux. Le correspondant scientifique du premier aspect est la science du mot dans un sens général ou, plus précisément, une science du contenu lexical, tandis que le correspondant scientifique du second est la science du fonctionnement du mot ou, plus précisément, une science du contenu grammatical (morpho-syntaxique).[4] L'analyse du verbe copulatif suppose l'analyse du syntagme prédicatif (verbe copulatif + attribut du sujet), qu i sera conduite dans le cadre de la distinction précisée.

[3] La distinction entre 'signifier' et 'désigner' ne sera pas discutée ici. La recherche consacrée à cette problématique est très riche, mais je ne ferai qu'une seule mention: Wolfgang Raible, "Zur Einleitung," in *Zur Semantik des Französischen* (*Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für französische Sprache und Literatur*, Band 9), ed. Helmut Stimm et Wolfgang Raible (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1983), 1-24.

[4] Il est évident que le fonctionnement du système de signes, à savoir les relations syntaxiques, reflète aussi un certain aperçu de la réalité, concernant le rapport entre les réalités désignées.

3. Logique et grammaire dans la définition du verbe copulatif

La congruence entre langue et logique chez les philosophes de l'Antiquité aboutit à une grammaire basée sur une perception qui a imposé une série de concepts, préservés, pour l'essentiel, jusqu'aujourd'hui. Évidemment, la langue reflète des réalités logiques, comme elle reflète d'autres types de réalités. Même s'il s'agit là de la zone de la langue où la logique est décisive, c'est-à-dire le niveau sémiologique, la langue ne saurait être assimilée à la logique, car la langue conceptualise une connaissance qui peut résider dans un accident, et pas seulement dans l'essence.[5] L'état du verbe copulatif est directement lié à la façon dont on saisit le concept de prédicat, qui, à son tour, est en accord avec la partie du discours correspondante, à savoir le verbe.[6] Avant d'aborder la problématique qui vise directement le verbe copulatif, il convient d'aborder brièvement les concepts de 'verbe' et de 'prédicat.'

3.1. La catégorie grammaticale du verbe

Les définitions du verbe envisagent deux composantes spécifiques aux catégories lexico-grammaticales, en s'axant sur le niveau sémantique de la composante lexicale (le lexème) et en ajoutant l'information sur la variation de la composante grammaticale (le morphème). Ainsi, la définition du verbe comprend, en principe, deux types d'information: 1) le verbe "exprime (nomme/indique) actions ou états" et 2) le verbe "se conjugue." La première information présente une inadéquation à l'objet défini et une ambigüité, tandis que la seconde présente l'effet de ce qui devrait être défini, à savoir la cause de la spécificité de cette variation (la conjugaison).

La non-adéquation à l'objet défini consiste premièrement dans la perception des catégories des parties du discours en tant que classes lexicales[7] et non comme une catégorie du discours. Si on parle d'une catégorie du discours, alors on doit considérer comme décisives dans la définition de certaines entités leurs valeurs qui émergent dans le discours, et non pas se baser sur une analyse de ces unités isolées.[8] Les définitions du verbe reposent sur le contenu lexical, mais "l'action" ou

[5] Voir Donatella Di Cesare, „Il problema logico-funzionale del linguaggio in Aristotele," in *Logos semantikos I* (Berlin – Madrid: De Gruyter – Gredos, 1981), 21-29.

[6] Une telle affirmation peut donner l'impression qu'on postule une équivalence entre les fonctions syntaxiques et les parties du discours, ce qui n'est pas possible. Pourtant, pour le cas des langues flexionnelles, il existe une certaine correspondance entre la fonction de prédicat et la catégorie du verbe (avec une valeur verbale dans le discours).

[7] Définies comme classes de mots dans bien des dictionnaires et grammaires.

[8] Pour des détails, voir Eugenio Coseriu „Über die Wortkategorien («partes orationis»)," in *Formen und Funktionen. Studien zur Grammatik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987), 24-44.

„l'état" sont des contenus qui peuvent être exprimés par d'autres parties du discours que par celle du verbe. Beaucoup de grammaires et d'autres ouvrages similaires ont imposé le terme de *procès*, sous l'influence de la définition proposée par Meillet, qui affirme que "le verbe indique les 'procès,' qu'il s'agit d'actions, d'états ou de passages d'un état à l'autre: *il marche*, *il dort*, *il brille*, *il bleuit* sont également des verbes" et que le verbe se distingue du substantif par certains "procédés grammaticaux."[9] Pourtant, cet exploit n'a pas affecté la perception de la partie du discours du verbe en tant que classe et n'a pas conféré le trait distinctif nécessaire pour la différencier des autres parties du discours lexico-grammaticales. Il est facile de remarquer[10] l'insuffisance d'une définition basée sur le contenu lexical, comme l'a démontré très simplement Marc Wilmet: "inutile d'objecter que les noms seraient tout aussi capables de traduire un procès : *le g a l o p du cheval* comme *le cheval g a l o p e* (action), *l'i n c l i n a i s o n de l'arbre* comme *l'arbre p e n c h e* (état)," qui souligne que la définition suffisante doit spécifier que le verbe se conjugue, et reprend la définition d'André Goosse (*Le bon usage*, 1986): "un mot d'extension [désigne l'ensemble des objets du monde …] médiate, pourvu des marques spécifiques de la *conjugaison*."[11] Par conséquent, une telle définition ne découle pas de la perception générale des parties du discours en tant que classes, même si l'auteur observe que l'essentiel de la définition du verbe est la conjugaison.[12] Il est évident que les parties du discours lexico-grammaticales ne peuvent pas être définies par la composante lexicale, car un certain contenu lexical peut apparaître dans chaque partie de discours lexico-grammaticale. Naturellement, tout lexème (défini par opposition à "morphème") d'une langue se retrouve obligatoirement dans la catégorie du substantif,[13] car le substantif est la partie du discours par laquelle la langue (le sujet parlant) *objectualise* toute réalité devenue accessible à la connaissance, sans exception, et qui a un correspondant

[9] A. Meillet, *Linguistique historique et linguistique générale* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1965), 175.

[10] La facilité du contre-argument semble être un indice que l'affirmation de Meillet ne correspond pas formellement à l'idée qu'il a voulu exprimer.

[11] Marc Wilmet, *Grammaire critique du français* (Louvain-la-Neuve: Hachette-Duculot, 1997), 282. Pour la critique venue d'un autre niveau d'analyse de ce type de définition, voir Antoine Arnauld, *La logique ou l'art de penser* (Paris: E. F. Savoye, 1763), 105-106.

[12] La définition par la conjugaison limite le domaine de référence aux langues flexionnelles, mais la présente étude, consacrée au verbe copulatif, ne dépasse pas ce cadre.

[13] Tout lexème peut être substantif et, par conséquent, peut fonctionner comme sujet, comme l'affirme Eugenio Coseriu aussi: "In der tat können nämlich alle Wörter als Subjekt fungieren, eben weil alle substantivische Wert annehmen können" ("Über die Wortkategorien," 32). Aristote parle lui aussi de la valeur unitaire des propositions, mais au niveau logique, où il parle de la possibilité que la substance soit exprimée par une proposition.

lexical dans la langue, quelle que soit la nature de cette réalité.[14] La définition d'une certaine catégorie lexico-grammaticale (le substantif, le verbe, l'adjectif et l'adverbe) par le contenu lexical ne peut donc pas offrir un élément d'identité. La définition d'une partie du discours par le contenu lexical serait possible, que si chaque lexème appartenait à une seule partie du discours. On ne saurait envisager une telle définition que dans une langue imaginaire. Cette constatation indique clairement que la définition des parties du discours lexico-grammaticales doit être formulée en fonction de leur contenu grammatical, plus précisément en fonction de son trait spécifique. Certes, l'identité du verbe est donnée par rapport à la conjugaison, mais une telle identité reste confuse.[15] La conjugaison n'est que le nom de la flexion du verbe, comme la déclinaison est le nom de la flexion du substantif. Ceci vaut évidemment pour les langues flexionnelles. En d'autres termes, transformer les mots en argument scientifique est loin d'être une méthode appropriée.[16] Définir le verbe par la conjugaison, c'est comme dire que le verbe est le mot qui présente un comportement de verbe, tandis qu'une définition devrait présenter les causes de ce comportement spécifique. La flexion verbale contient des informations grammaticales relatives à la cohérence de l'énoncé (comme celles présentes aussi dans le cas du nom et du pronom, à savoir la personne et le nombre, ce qui prouve seulement un accord) et une information spécifique: le *temps*. La catégorie grammaticale '*temps*' est l'élément d'identité pour le verbe. Définir le verbe par l'information grammaticale "temps" signifie dépasser les frontières des langues flexionnelles et inclut dans la catégorie du verbe tout mot portant la marque de la temporalité discursive, même s'il s'agit d'un "morphème zéro." Une définition claire du verbe en tant que partie du discours nécessite une connaissance claire des distinctions opérées à propos du temps. Il y a deux façons

[14] À une certaine réalité conceptualisée ne correspond pas toujours un lexème. L'étude de la langue ne doit pas ignorer cette distinction, dont parlent très clairement Bernard Pottier dans *Sémantique générale* (Paris: PUF, 1992), 203: "Ce qui est remarquable c'est qu'une langue arrive à dire ce qu'elle désire, quel que soit le coût de l'expression," et Leonard Bloomfield dans *Language* (New Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2005), 278: „What one language expresses by a single morpheme will in another language require perhaps a long phrase; what one language says in a word may appear in another language as a phrase or as an affix." Dans la présente étude je ne discuterai pas les unités des phrases complexes, mais seulement l'état des unités lexicales.

[15] Avec le sens de chez Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz: "Une idée confuse est celle qu'on ne peut pas suffisamment distinguer d'avec une autre, de qui elle doit être différente," *Essai sur l'entendement humain*, in *Œuvres de Locke et Leibniz* (Paris: Typographie de Firmin Didot Frères, 1839), 214.

[16] *Cf.* Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 31: "c'est une mauvaise méthode que de partir des mots pour définir les choses."

possibles d'encodage du temps dans la langue: le temps intérieur d'un événement ou d'un état (l'aspect), qui correspond à ce qu'on nomme aspect lexical, et le temps dans lequel l'événement ou l'état s'insère en conclusion de son rapport au moment du discours (le temps discursif), exprimé par le temps grammatical. Le temps événementiel (l'aspect) acquiert aussi une identité dans le plan de l'expression de certaines langues (le russe, le chinois). Le temps grammatical est défini comme le rapport entre la temporalité de l'acte verbal (le moment de l'acte de parole) et la temporalité de l'action ou de l'état du verbe. L'aspect est défini comme la façon dont le sujet parlant conçoit la temporalité de l'action du verbe. Les définitions montrent que l'élément commun de ces deux catégories est la temporalité de l'action ou de l'état du verbe. La simple observation des définitions montre que seule la catégorie de l'aspect se définit directement par la temporalité de l'action ou de l'état du verbe. Ceci donne peut-être l'impression que l'aspect est une catégorie plus concrète que celle du temps (verbal), comme le dit Meillet,[17] qui, à partir de l'histoire connue des langues indo-européennes, estime qu'il existe une prééminence de la catégorie de l'aspect dans ce cas. Cependant, quelle qu'ait été l'évolution des langues indo-européennes avant leur histoire connue, il est indubitable que ces deux catégories temporelles peuvent coexister dans le système verbal d'une langue (comme, par exemple, le latin ou le russe), mais aussi qu'un système verbal peut se baser sur une seule de ces deux catégories, soit le temps grammatical (le sanscrit, les langues romanes), soit l'aspect (le chinois).

La catégorie grammaticale de l'aspect ne peut pas être assimilée à l'aspect lexical verbal, qui est considéré comme une caractéristique de l'action[18] exprimée par le lexème. La confusion entre la catégorie grammaticale et l'information lexicale a déterminé une extension inadéquate de la catégorie grammaticale. Tout d'abord, il s'agit de la perception de l'action désignée par le verbe, qui serait de la même catégorie que l'aspect verbal. Comme on le voit ci-dessus, l'action désignée

[17] Meillet, *Linguistique historique*, 185.

[18] Affirmer qu'une certaine caractéristique temporelle appartiendrait au verbe, à savoir à l'action désignée par le verbe, est inadéquat, car le temps est une notion purement subjective, une réalité interne du sujet parlant. Une tel aperçu "élargit" la catégorie du temps au moins à la catégorie du substantif. Un aperçu du temps en tant que représentation psychique ou comme un "nommer," et non pas comme une présence exprimée linguistiquement par le morphème verbal, se trouve chez André Martinet: "rien n'empêche d'envisager un concept comme 'mon père' sous l'angle du passé […]. Nous parlons d'un ex-président, du temps jadis, d'une période écoulée, d'un cheval qu'il a fallu faire abattre. En d'autres termes, nous faisons usage, pour exprimer le 'passé' des noms, de procédés lexicaux et syntaxiques" ("Le problème de l'opposition verbo-nominale," in *Journal de psychologie* 43 (1950): 103, *apud* Christian Touratier, "Définition du verbe (indonésien et malgache)," in *Cercle Linguistique d'Aix-en-Provence, Travaux 1* (1983), 184.

par le verbe peut être exprimée par un substantif, ce qui conduit à l'interprétation qu'il y a aussi un aspect du substantif. Deuxièmement, il n'existe pas de distinction entre les unités significatives primaires (le niveau lexématique, qui comporte aussi une fonction désignative) et les unités significatives secondaires (le niveau morphématique, qui présente seulement une fonction significative), par lesquelles les unités significatives comportent une fonction au niveau discursif. Les classes de verbes, qualifiées conformément à leur aspect (duratif, semelfactif, etc.) ne peuvent pas être rangées au même niveau que l'information grammaticale. Ces verbes sont nommés verbes aspectuels, car il s'agit aussi d'une certaine caractéristique de l'action ou de l'état, caractéristique considérée comme aspect. La qualité d'une action – comme, par exemple, le début, la continuation ou l'arrêt – désignée par un verbe (mais qui peut être aussi désignée par un substantif) est nommée "aspect," mais il ne s'agit pas d'une catégorie temporelle.[19]

En réalité, la catégorie grammaticale de l'aspect temporel est réduite à l'opposition perfectif : imperfectif. Cette catégorie est elle aussi le résultat d'un rapport, à savoir le rapport entre le présent du sujet parlant, la perspective du sujet parlant et la temporalité de l'action. Les grammaires n'envisagent que le présent du sujet parlant et la temporalité de l'action. Ce qu'on nomme "aspect verbal" n'est que l'adjonction du troisième repère temporel, à savoir la perspective du sujet parlant, qui peut être concomitante au moment de l'action désignée par le verbe ou non. La perspective concomitante au temps de l'action ou à la perspective du sujet parlant est exprimée par l'aspect imperfectif. C'est le même cas pour une action vue dans le futur. La perspective postérieure au moment de l'action est exprimée par l'aspect perfectif. Les systèmes verbaux plus simples présentent seulement cette opposition temporelle de l'aspect, les autres informations temporelles étant transmises par des adverbes et l'ordre des mots dans la phrase (le chinois).

Ayant comme point de départ ces observations, on peut affirmer que le temps grammatical est la caractéristique essentielle du verbe. Toute autre information grammaticale exprimée[20] par leur flexion n'est pas spécifique, elle représente seulement les marques de la cohésion syntaxique. Même la définition donnée par Aristote au concept de ῥῆμα (qui comprend à la fois le niveau logique

[19] Le débat sur cette question ne fait pas l'objet de cette étude, mais le simple fait qu'une action peut être désignée par un substantif offre la possibilité d'une structure SEMI-AUXILIAIRE D'ASPECT + VERBE D'ACTION (PERSONNEL / NON-PERSONNEL), ce qui oblige qu'on donne la même interprétation du semi-auxiliaire dans les deux structures. Par exemple, on peut dire *Il commence à neiger*, mais aussi *La neige commence*.

[20] Il faut toujours considérer que le contenu est exprimé par l'expression et jamais que l'expression a un contenu.

et le niveau linguistique et où on ne fait pas la différence entre partie du discours et fonction syntaxique) par rapport au concept de ὄνομα est basée uniquement sur l'information "temps." Aristote affirme que ῥῆμα sans temps n'est que ὄνομα, quelque chose qui signifie seulement.[21] Par conséquent, l'importance de la catégorie 'temps' n'a été nullement ignorée dans les premières approches du niveau discursif de la langue. Cette information a donné une identité claire à un concept qui inclut le concept actuel de 'verbe.'

Pourtant, les grammairiens ont établi l'état des parties du discours (donc du verbe aussi), ayant comme base les catégories d'Aristote, donc une perspective logico-sémantique, et même pas une perspective logico-fonctionnelle. Néanmoins une définition dénominative des parties du discours notionnelles est inadéquate pour une catégorie, car une catégorie doit relever le *comment* des mots, et non pas leur *quoi*. Le modèle des catégories aristotéliques n'est pas fondé sur la langue, à savoir comment la langue reflète une certaine réalité, mais sur la réalité ontique elle-même, en tant qu'objet de la pensée. Aristote ne dissocie pas clairement entre logique, ontologique et linguistique. Il mélange des arguments et des observations spécifiques à ces trois niveaux mentionnés, car pour lui la substance et la qualité du niveau ontologique ont comme correspondent le ὄνομα et le ῥῆμα du niveau linguistique (dans le logos apophantique) et que la langue n'est que l'expression de la pensée, la langue étant considerée secondaire. La langue elle-même n'a jamais été décisive chez Aristote, mais le penser (le même pour tous[22]) sur les choses (πράγματα) représenté par la langue. Ceci ne saurait étonner, car la langue n'a constitué jamais l'objet d'étude chez Aristote. Elle est conçue comme une expression parallèle aux rapports logiques en tant que reflet de la réalité. Ceci est clairement indiqué dans la *Métaphysique* 1051b, où la vérité et le faux ne sont définis que par rapport à la réalité.[23]

L'idée d'une perception unique pour tout individu et, par conséquent, l'idée d'une représentation unique, se trouve chez Descartes aussi, qui affirme : "la raison, ou le sens […] je veux croire qu'elle est tout entière en un chacun,"[24] idée qui n'est pas restée sans résonance pendant son époque et même plus tard.

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[21] Aristotle, *On interpretation* (Translated by E. M. Edghill, eBooks@Adelaide, The University of Adelaide), 3, 16b: "A verb is that which, in addition to its proper meaning, carries with it the notion of time."

[22] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 1, 16a: "the mental experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images."

[23] La correspondance entre la phrase énonciative (apophantique) et la réalité désignée, afin de distinguer entre vérité et faux apparaît déjà chez Platon (voir *Le Sophiste* 263a-b).

[24] René Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode* (Paris: Hachette et C^{ie}, 1856), 4.

3.2. Le prédicat

Le prédicat est un concept établi au niveau d'une analyse logique du logos apophantique, mais utilisé pour la langue tout entière ("logos sémantique" chez Aristote) par la généralisation opérée dans les grammaires médiévales, où la validité d'une science était assimilée à sa correspondance à la logique. La distinction aristotélique présentée au début de l'opuscule *De l'interprétation* entre le logos apophantique (la phrase énonciative) et le logos sémantique (la phrase en général) n'était pas considérée par les grammairiens médiévaux, ce qui est devenu un aperçu traditionnel dans les grammaires jusqu'à nos jours. La langue a, en effet, une capacité *spécifique* de *représenter* toute réalité accessible à la connaissance humaine, donc la réalité logique aussi, mais il ne faut pas la réduire à un parallélisme avec l'une de ces réalités.

Une théorie linguistique ou une définition d'une réalité linguistique doit atteindre une forme qui ne soit pas tributaire des théories et des distinctions qui appartiennent à un autre domaine ou à un autre niveau de langue et, en même temps, doit refléter la liberté qui caractérise la langue. La définition du prédicat comme relation entre sujet et prédicat, qui représente un transfert de la relation entre une substance et une qualité du niveau logique au niveau de la grammaire, repose sur la généralisation mentionnée ci-dessus. La définition de la prédication comme fonction linguistique doit se baser sur l'acte linguistique lui-même, et non sur les relations logico-sémantiques entre les éléments constitutifs du logos apophantique. L'analyse de ce phénomène linguistique en termes de logique conduit à des résultats réels et corrects, mais hybrides, car on combine des réalités du niveau de la langue avec des réalités du niveau de la pensée associée à la langue. La logique analyse des énoncés, et non pas les énoncés eux-mêmes, mais seulement leur substrat logique, comme l'affirme Coseriu dans un de ses travaux consacrés à la problématique causée par l'interférence entre la logique et la grammaire: "Zu bemerken bleibt gleichwohl, dass es der Logik geht nicht um die Rede als sprachliches Phänomen, sondern vielmehr um den darin ausgedrückten Gedanken und höchstens um das Verhältnis von Gedanken und sprachlichen Ausdruck."[25] La fonction logique des éléments du logos apophantique (des phrases énonciatives) se superpose à la fonction linguistique, mais la définition ne peut pas avoir le même fondement, car le prédicat linguistique doit être défini par rapport au logos sémantique (la phrase en général). La définition du prédicat linguistique comme

[25] Eugenio Coseriu, "Logik der Sprache und Logik der Grammatik," in *Formen und Funktionen. Studien zur Grammatik* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1987), 2.

"ce qui est affirmé sur le sujet" est certainement plus générale que la définition du prédicat logique, qui se limite à la qualité de la substance, identité ou subsomption.

Une analyse globale de l'état du prédicat au niveau logique et au niveau linguistique montre des différences qu'il ne faut pas négliger. L'existence d'un prédicat logique n'implique pas l'existence d'un énoncé ou d'une phrase. Un syntagme formé d'un substantif et d'un adjectif, comme, par exemple, *fleur blanche*, comporte un prédicat logique, mais non un prédicat linguistique. En anticipant la discussion sur l'état linguistique du verbe copulatif, l'état d'un tel syntagme au niveau logique indique clairement pourquoi Aristote n'a donné aucune importance à la copule du point de vue logique. Un syntagme tel que fleur blanche ne comporte pas de prédicat linguistique.[26] Par conséquent, la définition du prédicat linguistique doit se situer au-delà de ce niveau, en d'autres termes, elle ne doit pas circonscrire le niveau syntagmatique proprement dit, mais seul le niveau discursif (la phrase, l'énoncé). Autrement dit, le prédicat linguistique est une fonction qui appartient au niveau discursif et sa définition doit montrer quel est le fait qui fait qu'une phrase est une phrase, et pas seulement un simple syntagme. Du point de vue linguistique, le prédicat ne peut pas être réduit à la qualité du sujet – question éliminée déjà par la définition généralisée "*ce qui* s'affirme à propos du sujet," qui dépasse le niveau logique et se circonscrit au niveau syntaxique –, mais, de plus, il ne peut pas être défini par rapport au sujet, car il existe des énoncés qui n'affirment pas quelque chose à propos du sujet, tels les énoncés interrogatifs ou impératifs. Cette remarque n'est pas du tout un fait nouveau, Aristote délimitant à l'intérieur du logos sémantique le logos apophatique juste pour cette raison.[27] De plus, il y a des énoncés sans sujet, où on

[26] Dans des langues comme le hongrois ou l'hébreu, une telle structure, mais où le déterminé a un article défini, suppose le temps présent et se constitue en énoncé. Pour des détails, voir Éva Agnel, *Phrase nominale et phrase avec "être" en hongrois* (Aix-en-Provence: Université de Provence – Service des Publications, 1999), 114-116 et Konrad Ehlich, "Phrase averbale, phrase nominale? La constellation sémitique", in *Syntaxe & sémantique. 6. Aux marges de la prédication* (Caen Cedex: Presses universitaires de Caen, 2005), 111-119. Ce type de structure qui, accidentellement et en diverses variantes, apparaît probablement dans toute langue (par exemple, dans les langues romanes apparaît la structure inversée de la phrase copulative comme ATTRIBUT DU SUJET + SUJET, comme par exemple les énoncées: *Belle voiture!* ou *Belle, ta voiture!*), mais avec la participation des éléments suprasegmentaux; dans les exemples cités, l'accent et l'intonation, mais aussi la pause pour le second exemple. L'analyse de ce type de phrases n'implique pas la valeur du verbe copulatif, donc elles ne seront pas prises en considération ici, mais on ne peut pas éviter ce sujet dans une étude consacrée à la prédication en général.

[27] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 4, 17a: "Let us therefore dismiss all other types of sentence but the proposition, for this last concerns our present inquiry, whereas the investigation of the others belongs rather to the study of rhetoric or of poetry."

identifie un prédicat linguistique (*Il neige*, *Il fait beau*).[28] Cette constatation nous montre que le prédicat linguistique peut être indépendant dans un énoncé et qu'il ne faut pas le définir par rapport au sujet, sauf si on veut indiquer un fait quasi-général.

Les grammaires définissent la prédication linguistique d'un point de vue circonscrit dans la tradition imposée par la *Grammaire générale et raisonnée de Port-Royal*. Mais si on lit la définition entière du prédicat ("le verbe"), on constate que cette définition est plus exacte que bien des définitions contemporaines, où on trouve plutôt les spécifications ajoutées à la définition: "Ainsi le verbe, selon ce qui lui est essentiel, est un mot qui signifie l'affirmation. Mais si l'on veut joindre, dans la définition du verbe, ses principaux accidents, on le pourra définir ainsi: *Vox significans affirmationem, cum designatione personae, numeri et temporis*: *Un mot qui signifie l'affirmation, avec désignation de la personne, du nombre et du temps*; ce qui convient proprement au verbe substantif."[29] En principe, les grammaires modernes ne prennent pas en compte ce qui est présenté comme essentiel, mais plutôt les accidents. Les auteurs de cette grammaire considèrent que la caractéristique essentielle est "ce qui signifie l'affirmation." Dans les grammaires modernes on trouve aussi une définition par rapport à l'affirmation, mais rapportée au sujet. Compte tenu des observations à propos des énoncés sans sujet, seule la définition du prédicat comme "affirmation de quelque chose" seulement la rend plus générale.[30] Par conséquent, du point de vue linguistique, le prédicat serait défini comme "*affirmation* de quelque chose" (à propos d'autre chose, en général), et non pas "*ce qui est affirmé* à propos d'autre chose." De cette façon, l'accent est mis sur son information spécifique, à savoir l'information grammaticale "temps." Les formulations "l'affirmation de quelque chose" et "ce qui est affirmé à propos d'autre chose" ne représentent pas une simple inversion de termes, car dans le premier cas il s'agit de l'acte lui-même, tandis que dans le second cas il s'agit de ce qui est soumis à l'acte. Une définition qui vise c e q u i est affirmé vise directement l'information lexicale, qui n'est pas une information spécifique du verbe ou du prédicat. Autrement dit, on ne peut pas définir le prédicat linguistique par l'information lexicale. Si on garde le point de vue de la

[28] Le *il* de ces énoncés n'est qu'une partie du morphème verbal.

[29] A. Arnauld, C. Lancelot, *Grammaire générale et raisonnée de Port-Royal* (Paris: Bossange et Masson, 1810), 332.

[30] Bien entendu, la définition n'implique pas des énoncés qui prouvent une syntaxe mixte, comme, par exemple, *La voiture!* (= 'Faites attention à la voiture!'), où il faut parler de l'implication des unités suprasegmentales, qui participent à l'acte de communication, ou de type *Le livre!* (= 'Prenez le livre' / 'J'ai trouvé le livre'), où le geste accompagne l'énoncé et le rend complète. Les énoncés nominaux seront pris en compte dans l'analyse du verbe copulatif.

logique et qu'on se limite au logos apophantique, le prédicat est la qualité liée (analytique ou synthétique) au sujet (qui représente la substance). Mais la définition du prédicat doit pointer sur le trait spécifique qui rend possible l'acte de l'affirmation. La perception commune nous dit que, pour le cas des langues flexionnelles, l'affirmation se réalise par un verbe. C'est le verbe qui rend possible l'*actualisation* d'un contenu sémantique, par son entrée dans les coordonnées du temps. Sans temps il n'y a pas de phrase, car il n'y a pas de prédicat. Sans temps il n'y a pas que syntagme. Aristote affirme la même chose, sans temps il n'y a pas d'affirmation: ἄνευ δὲ ῥήματος οὐδεμία κατάφασις.[31] L'information "temps" est l'élément principal dans la réalisation de la prédication linguistique. Le prédicat réalise l'affirmation comme la mise en présence du sens global et, en même temps, cohérent (c'est-à-dire pas nécessairement logique et pas toujours apte à s'inscrire dans la logique formelle) de la phrase. L'affirmation n'est possible que par l'entrée dans les coordonnées du temps, qui se réalise par l'information morphologique spécifique au verbe: le temps grammatical.

Si on se limite aux langues flexionnelles, le prédicat linguistique peut être défini comme suit: le mot qui rend possible l'affirmation de la signification constituée d'une manière raisonnable dans un énoncé, par son introduction dans les coordonnées du temps.[32] Cette définition s'appuie sur les mêmes ouvragesque ceux sur lesquels se fondent les grammaires contemporaines, à savoir l'opuscule *De l'interprétation* et *Grammaire générale et raisonnée de Port-Royal*. Le premier fait partie de l'introduction aux études logiques qui forment l'*Organon* d'Aristote. La second est une grammaire logique. Ainsi, la réponse aux critiques et aux objections faites par les linguistes se trouve même dans l'espace originaire de la théorie critiquée. Cela pourrait être considéré un point faible pour une définition d'une réalité linguistique. Les arguments en faveur de la validité de ces observations sont, dans le premier cas, le fait qu'elles ne se rapportent pas à une partie de la langue (le logos apophantique), comme c'est le cas pour *On interpretation*, mais à la langue comme acte de parler en général (logos sémantique) et, pour le second cas, le fait que la logique de la *Grammaire de Port-Royal* est une logique générale, et non pas une logique bornée aux principes d'une logique strictement rationnelle. Comme l'affirme Coseriu aussi, la logique d'une science – et la grammaire en tant

[31] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 5, 17a "Every proposition must contain a verb or the tense of a verb. The phrase which defines the species 'man,' if no verb in present, past, or future time be added, is not a proposition."

[32] Pour les autres types de langues on doit accepter la thèse de Louis Hjelmslev, "Le verbe et la phrase nominale," in *Essais linguistiques* (Paris: Minuit, 1971) 174-200, qui affirme que le temps appartient à la phrase.

que discipline qui étudie et décrit la structure d'une langue est la science d'une langue – consiste dans son adéquation à son objet d'étude. La langue est une réalité qui correspond à une logique générale, ce qui veut dire que tout acte linguistique, y compris l'acte poétique,[33] s'organise comme une structure sémantique cohérente, basée sur les principes d'une logique générale. Donc, si l'objet d'étude, la langue en l'occurence, correspond à une logique générale, la structure décrite doit refléter cette réalité. Si la grammaire adoptait les principes de la logique rationnelle, elle serait inadéquate à son objet d'étude, et, par conséquent, "illogique."[34]

Le manque d'une argumentation bien organisée pour une analyse appropriée au niveau discursif de la langue en général a conduit à une généralisation des arguments conformes à une part de la langue.[35] La définition du prédicat linguistique peut être interprétée comme une simple réduction de la définition généralement acceptée (située déjà à un premier niveau de généralisation par rapport à la définition logique). En nous rapportant à la réalité soumise à l'analyse (l'acte de parler en général, qui inclut le logos apophantique), cette réduction semble être le résultat normal dans cette approche. La transition d'une position fixée dans le plan de la sémantique lexicale à une position fixée dans le plan de la sémantique grammaticale-discursive est pourtant nécessaire, car seul le prédicat linguistique rend possible le passage au niveau discursif.

En fait, cette réalité n'est pas ignorée par la logique. Aristote soutient clairement la même chose: sans temps il n'y a pas de prédicat, à savoir ῥῆμα, et sans prédicat il n'y a pas affirmation.[36] Aristote à placé cette réalité en arrière-plan dans l'analyse logique du logos apophantique,[37] car son but a été l'analyse de son

[33] Ces structures sont prises en considération par Aristote dans le syntagme "logos poétique." Il faut pourtant mentionner qu'il y a des structures atemporelles aussi, c'est-à-dire des structures nominales pures, qui n'ont pas un temps proprement dit implicitement. La poésie avant-gardiste passe même à des structures anti-grammaticales. Dans les deux cas il s'agit de constructions qui entrent dans la normalité de la création artistique.

[34] Coseriu "Logik der Sprache und Logik der Grammatik," 4.

[35] Sergiu Al-George, *Limbă şi gândire în cultura indiană* (Bucureşti: Editura Ştiinţifică, 1976), 5-11, nous montre que, pour ce qui est de l'espace occidental, il y a une évolution de la science de la langue du particulier vers le général, en commençant avec l'étude des énoncés du logos apophantique, puis la langue en général au niveau discursif et finalement, la sémiologie, qui est la plus générale. Voir aussi l'encadrement de la linguistique dans la science virtuelle de la sémiologie chez Ferdinand de Saussure, *Cours de linguistique générale*, 33.

[36] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 5, 17a: "Every proposition must contain a verb or the tense of a verb."

[37] Voir Ernst Vollrath, "Der Bezug von Logos und Zeit bei Aristoteles," in *Das Problem der Sprache*, Hrsg. Hans-Georg Gadamer (München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1967), 149-158 et Ernst Tugendhat, "Die sprachliche Kritik der Ontologie," in *Das Problem der Sprache*, 483-493.

substrat, c'est-à-dire la véridicité[38] de la relation entre les éléments qui composent l'affirmation par rapport à la réalité, et non pas (la modalité de) la réalisation de l'affirmation. Ceci est en totale conformité avec sa théorie. Le temps implique obligatoirement le sujet parlant, mais celui-ci n'a aucun rôle dans la prédication pour le cadre du logos apophantique, car le philosophe de Stagire réduit l'activité du sujet parlant à une simple découverte (avec le sens du grec ανακαλύπτω) de la réalité, réalité qui se préserve intacte devant le sujet connaissant et parlant. Le sujet parlant lui-même n'affirme rien, il ne fait que mettre en acte une relation préexistante. La linguistique moderne ne peut pas s'en tenir à la même perspective et à la même analyse, car la langue reflète des contenus de pensée subjectifs – ce qui construit une réalité pensée ou imaginée, non pas la réalité ontique, et qui peuvent être strictement individuels (psychiques) – contenus de pensée résultant de l'assimilation de la réalité connue par le sujet connaissant, et non pas de l'assimilation du sujet connaissant par la réalité connue. L'analyse de la phrase nominale rend très claire la dualité de cette perspective. C'est probablement pour cette raison que l'influence de la logique sur la grammaire n'a jamais été aussi évidente que dans l'analyse du prédicat nominal.

3.3. Le prédicat nominal. Le verbe copulatif

La présentation, dans les grammaires, du prédicat nominal et, surtout, du verbe copulatif est solidaire de la présentation des niveaux immédiatement supérieurs, à savoir du prédicat et du verbe. L'analyse de l'une de ces réalités linguistiques subsumées implique nécessairement celle des deux autres. Compte tenu de cette interdépendance hiérarchique (verbe – prédicat – verbe copulatif), le positionnement sur une certaine direction au niveau de l'une de ces trois réalités engendre nécessairement une approche similaire dans le cas des autres. Comme on a pu le constater dans les paragraphes traitant du verbe et du prédicat, les grammaires n'ont pas eu en vue la définition d'une catégorie en tant que partie du discours, ni la définition d'une fonction linguistique dans le cas du prédicat. Le verbe est défini comme classe par le recours à la sémantique lexicale. Le prédicat est défini en partant de la nécessité d'une relation entre deux entités, bien qu'il y ait des prédicats indépendants. Ces deux constatations montrent qu'il s'agit d'une adaptation au niveau linguistique d'une série de concepts établis au niveau logique. Le prédicat nominal ne peut pas être défini en dehors du cadre déjà établi aux autres niveaux. Ainsi, la phrase copulative est constituée du sujet (correspondant à

[38] En réalité, Aristote ne quitte pas totalement le problème de la "vérité des noms," il le transfère au niveau des énoncés. Voir Eugenio Coseriu, *Geschichte der Sprachphilosophie* (Tübingen und Basel: A. Francke, 2003), 65-108.

la substance), du prédicat (ce qu'on dit sur le sujet, correspondant à la qualité de la substance) et d'un élément de liaison, désigné par le syntagme hybride "verbe copulatif" : "verbe" selon la perception au niveau de la langue, "copulatif" selon la perception au niveau de la logique. Il y a une différence très importante entre le cas du verbe copulatif (ou de la phrase copulative), le cas du verbe et le cas du prédicat, quand on parle des niveaux logique et linguistique. Dans le cas du verbe et du prédicat il n'y a pas de juxtaposition parfaite entre l'objet de la logique et l'objet de la linguistique. Les formes linguistiques par lesquelles s'exprime la catégorie du discours 'verbe' ne correspondent pas entièrement à une catégorie logique, c'est-à-dire à "l'action" ("le procès"), telle qu'on la considère généralement, quand on cherche à définir le verbe comme catégorie logico-linguistique. Le prédicat linguistique circonscrit une aire plus vaste (le logos sémantique) que celle du prédicat logique (le logos apophantique). L'aire de l'objet-expression du verbe copulatif (entité linguistique) est identique à celle de la copule (entité logique); de même pour le syntagme entier du prédicat nominal. Autrement dit, tout verbe copulatif est copule et vice-versa. On ne peut pas dire la même chose par rapport au prédicat linguistique, qui n'est pas toujours prédicat logique, ni par rapport à la catégorie de discours du verbe. La conséquence en est une configuration, au niveau du prédicat nominal, d'une série de notions logico-linguistiques, à savoir des notions se définissant par la même fonction tant au niveau logique qu'au niveau linguistique: le prédicat proprement dit est la qualité du sujet ("attribut du sujet"), tandis que le verbe n'est qu'un élément de liaison ("verbe copulatif" ou, simplement, "copule").

Le statut logique de simple copule (élément de liaison) du verbe copulatif est en toute conformité avec la perspective adoptée pour analyser une phrase copulative. La manière dont Aristote s'exprime vis-à-vis du verbe copulatif ne pouvait pas être autre: le verbe copulatif n'indique pas quelque chose, mais implique une liaison, dont on ne peut pas se faire une idée avant que cette liaison ne se précise.[39] Mais ce qui est suffisant au niveau logique ne l'est pas toujours au niveau linguistique. Ici on n'a pas la liberté d'une formulation comme celle-ci: "When the verb 'is' is used as a third element in the sentence, there can be positive and negative propositions of two sorts. Thus in the sentence 'man is just' the verb 'is' is used as a third element, *call it verb or noun*, which you will" (c'est

[39] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 3, 16b: "We call those propositions single which indicate a single fact, or the conjunction of the parts of which results in unity: those propositions, on the other hand, are separate and many in number, which indicate many facts, or whose parts have no conjunction."

moi qui souligne).[40] Du point de vue logique, l'important est la possibilité de la relation entre le sujet et la qualité attribuée au sujet. C'est pourquoi la variation du temps de la copule – passé, présent ou futur – n'est pas prise en compte.[41] D'ailleurs, le remplacement du verbe *être* par *devenir*, par exemple (*Il est professeur* / *Il devient professeur*), n'a aucun impact au niveau syntaxique de l'énonciation non plus. Les verbes *être* et *devenir* remplissent la même fonction. Mais on ne peut pas affirmer qu'ils sont lexicalement asémantiques.

À la différence des verbes auxiliaires, complètement garammaticalisés, ou des semiauxiliaires de modalité, partiellement grammaticalisés, dans le cas du verbe copulatif il ne s'agit point de grammaticalisation. La langue nous montre qu'il n'y a pas d'agencement libre entre un verbe copulatif et quelquonque attribut du sujet.[42] En réalité, l'idée de l'asémantisme du verbe copulatif est toujours une extension de la perception du verbe copulatif *être*. Son noyau sémantique lexical le plus réduit ('existence' et 'présence,' en général, mais aussi 'identité' et 'subsomption') – c'est-à-dire l'extension maximale possible – constitue l'argument capital pour l'adaptation à la grammaire de la perception propre à l'analyse logique. Les grammaires considèrent qu'*être* ne serait qu'un porteur d'information grammaticale et qu'il serait différent des autres verbes copulatifs, dont l'information sémantique lexicale est réduite (*devenir, paraître*). La perspective logico-sémantique, qui est fondée sur l'information lexicale et qui est également présente aux deux autres niveaux immédiatement supérieurs, conduit naturellement à l'interprétation bien connue dans la logique aussi: le verbe copulatif est un instrument auxiliaire, et le prédicat est exprimé par l'attribut du sujet. Pourtant, comme je l'ai déjà fait remarquer, l'information lexicale ne peut pas fournir par elle-même une fonction syntaxique, mais c'est l'information grammaticale rattachée qui lui confère la fonction. Les grammaires gardent la hierarchie établie dans la logique à cet égard, en situant au premier plan l'information lexicale, c'est-à-dire l'expression du substrat logique (une correspondance possible uniquement dans le cas du logos apophantique), à laquelle s'ajoute l'information grammaticale, en tant qu'information secondaire. Même si on suppose que la perspective logico-linguistique est générale, la situation du prédicat nominal reste confuse du point de vue de la grammaire.

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[40] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 10, 19b.

[41] Aristotle, *On interpretation*, 3, 17a.

[42] Voir Brenda Laca, "Auxiliarisation et copularisation dans les langues romanes," in *Revue de linguistique romane* 64 (2000): 427-444; Béatrice Lamiroy et Ludo Melis, "Les copules ressemblent-elles aux auxiliaires?" in *Les périphrases verbales*, ed. Hava Bat-Zeev Shyldkrot et Nicole Le Querler (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2005), 145-170.

Si l'on considère que le verbe copulatif n'est qu'un morphème et l'attribut du sujet rien qu'un lexème, on peut affirmer que la combinaison VERBE COPULATIF + ATTRIBUT DU SUJET suit la structure "déterminant" ("morphème") + "déterminé" ("lexème"), en considérant que le verbe copulatif n'est qu'un morphème et l'attribut du sujet rien qu'un lexème. Si l'on considère que le verbe copulatif est asémantique (en principe, une telle affirmation ne s'applique qu'à *être*), alors il est un élément purement morphologique. Or, un élément morphologique n'est pas indépendant, il est attaché à un lexème. Les grammaires considèrent que cet élément morphologique s'attache au lexème "attribut du sujet," mais ce dernier contient sa propre information morphologique, qui ne peut jamais être combinée avec celle du verbe copulatif pour former un morphème discontinu, étant donné que l'information morphologique de l'attribut du sujet n'est jamais verbale. D'ailleurs, le statut de l'attribut du sujet n'est pas moins ambigu. Celui-ci contient déjà l'information de type morphologique, qui lui confère le statut de partie du discours, mais jamais celui de verbe. Par conséquent, le fait d'attacher l'information grammaticale "verbe copulatif" aurait comme résultat une partie du discours "double," ce qui est tout à fait impossible.

G. Guillaume propose une manière d'analyser le verbe copulatif *être* notamment dans cette perspective générale. Il considère qu'il y a une opération au niveau mental, appelée "subduction," qui s'explique par le fait que "*être* [...] préexiste dans la filiation idéelle de [...] tous les verbes spécifiant un procès agi ou subi" et que ce verbe – plus que tout autre de cette catégorie (*pouvoir, faire*) – perd son sens propre d''exister' et se comporte comme un auxiliaire ou comme un verbe copulatif: "La valeur du verbe *être*, sous ce traitement, est celle d'un auxiliaire (*être sorti*) ou d'une copule (*être riche*)."[43] L'identité langue-pensée sur laquelle se fondent les considérations de Guillaume, ainsi que le parallélisme chronologique à la base de cette interprétation ne feront pas l'objet du présent débat. En revanche, il faut remarquer qu'entre auxiliaire et verbe copulatif il y a des différences qui ne sauraient être effacées. Tout d'abord, le verbe copulatif réalise par lui seul la catégorie grammaticale "temps," ce qui n'est pas valable dans le cas de l'auxiliaire. En employant les exemples de Guillaume – *être sorti* et *être riche* – dans deux propositions simples comme *Il est sorti* et *Il est riche*, on peut facilement remarquer cet aspect: dans le premier exemple il s'agit du temps passé, tandis que dans le second, du temps présent. En fait, il s'agit de deux parties du discours différentes, chacune portant une information grammaticale propre et indépendante. Dans le premier cas l'auxiliaire se joint à l'information temporelle

[43] Gustave Guillaume, "Théorie des auxiliaires et examen de faits connexes," in *Langage et science du langage* (Québec: Université de Laval, 1994), 73, 75.

du participe passé et forme un temps passé,[44] tandis que dans le cas du verbe copulatif l'information temporelle (ainsi que toutes les autres informations grammaticales caractéristiques du verbe) est complète, l'attribut du sujet ne contribuant à la constitution de cette information en aucune langue.

Si le prédicat se définit du point de vue linguistique par l'information spécifique du verbe, et plus précisément celle du temps grammatical, alors le verbe copulatif doit être considéré comme l'élément principal du prédicat nominal. L'affirmation comme acte discursif est réalisée par seul le verbe copulatif. L'attribut du sujet est une spécification de l'information lexicale réduite du verbe copulatif, à savoir des verbes tels *être, devenir, paraître* etc. Par conséquent, du point de vue logique, le verbe copulatif est secondaire par rapport à l'attribut du sujet, vu que la logique s'intéresse à la relation entre sujet et prédicat et son substrat logique, qui correspond à la réalité désignée. Mais du point de vue linguistique le verbe copulatif est l'élément prédicatif proprement dit, tandis que l'attribut du sujet est le déterminant du verbe copulatif.

L'importance de la copule est évidente dans les *Analytiques* d'Aristote, car la négation et l'affirmation se réalisent par la négation et l'affirmation de la copule, non pas du prédicat (de la qualité). La même discussion apparaît d'ailleurs explicitement chez Antoine Arnauld, bien que l'argumentation ne concerne pas le statut linguistique de la copule .[45]

4. Conclusions

Sans nier la valeur du verbe copulatif résultant d'une perspective fondée sur la logique sémantique, l'analyse du verbe copulatif d'un point de vue strictement linguistique conduit à des résultats différents de ceux relevant du domaine de la logique. Cela implique des modifications non seulement dans la définition et de la détermination adéquate de la fonction syntaxique du verbe copulatif, mais aussi

[44] La structure VERBE AUXILIAIRE ind. prés. + VERBE part. passé a des valeurs différentes dans le système verbal des diverses langues. C'est un temps présent dans le néogrec, mais un temps passé dans toutes les langues romanes. En "Hochdeutsch" sa valeur est liée au présent et elle est concurrencée par la forme du Präteritum pour la valeur sans effet dans le présent, valeur neutralisée en "Verkehrsdeutsch." Indépendamment de cet aspect, la valeur du temps grammatical se constitue de l'information grammaticale „temps" des deux verbes.

[45] Antoine Arnauld, *La logique ou l'art de penser* (Paris: E. F. Savoye, 1763), 103, 109: "on peut dire que le Verbe de lui même ne devroit point avoir d'autre usage que de marquer la liaison que nous faisons dans notre esprit des deux termes d'une proposition […]. Et il ne suffit pas de concevoir ces deux termes; mais il faut que l'esprit les lie et les sépare; et cette action de notre esprit est marquée dans le discours par le Verbe *est*, ou seul, quand nous affirmons, ou avec une particule négative quand nous nions."

aux niveaux connexes à la syntaxe, à savoir celui des parties du discours (le verbe) et celui de la théorie de la syntaxe (la prédication). La dissociation par rapport à la direction empruntée à la logique dans les premières grammaires de l'espace occidental et de la préservation de la perspective logique presque sans modifications dans les grammaires actuelles ne signifie pas une négation de la valeur logico-sémantique du verbe copulatif, mais c'est la seule possibilité de déterminer son rôle linguistique dans les phrases copulatives. L'idée centrale est que la définition de la prédication linguistique ne peut pas être la même que celle de la logique, c'est-à-dire que ce qui compte dans la langue, ce n'est pas la relation entre ce dont on affirme et ce qu'on affirme, mais la manière dont se constitue l'acte de l'affirmation lui-même. L'élément qui rend possible l'affirmation est le verbe, qui, à son tour, rend possible une phrase verbale sans sujet. Le trait spécifique du verbe, celui qui rend possible l'affirmation, ne se trouve pas dans sa composante lexicale, mais dans sa composante grammaticale, à savoir le temps grammatical. L'idée de définir le prédicat par le temps n'est pas nouvelle, mais ce temps n'a pas été identifié comme temps grammatical, c'est-à-dire qu'on n'a pas pris en considération de manière stricte le temps au niveau discursif de la langue. La définition du prédicat par le temps grammatical écarte la perspective logico-linguistique, fondée sur la sémantique lexicale du prédicat, et inclut dans le domaine de référence tant les phrases à sujet que celles où le sujet fait défaut. Le verbe copulatif comporte l'information "temps grammatical" tout entière, et n'est pas du tout seul un participant à la formation de celle-ci, comme dans le cas des verbes auxiliaires, où le temps grammatical se constitue du temps de l'auxiliaire et de l'aspect du verbe auxilié. L'information complète du temps grammatical indique le fait que, dans le cadre du soi-disant "prédicat nominal," l'élément principal est le verbe copulatif (appelé ainsi selon sa valeur logique), tandis que le soi-disant "attribut du sujet" (qui n'est pas toujours prédicatif du point de vue logique) est une spécification de la signification lexicale du verbe copulatif. Selon les dernières études dans le domaine, la sémantique lexicale du verbe copulatif n'est jamais "zéro," même pas dans le cas du verbe *être*. D'ailleurs, dans le système d'une langue (du moins dans le cas des langues flexionnelles) il n'est pas possible qu'une information morphologique (comme celle contenue par le verbe copulatif) double l'information morphologique attachée à un autre lexème, celle de l'attribut du sujet, en l'occurence, qui a toujours une information grammaticale différente et, par conséquent, incompatible avec celle du verbe copulatif. Du point de vue de la logique, le verbe copulatif est secondaire, vu que dans la logique ce qui importe c'est la relation entre la substance et la qualité, et non pas la manière dont cette relation se constitue au niveau linguistique. Du point de vue de la linguistique, le

prédicat nominal se définit par l'information "temps grammatical" du verbe copulatif. L'absence du temps suppose l'absence du prédicat au niveau linguistique. Un syntagme dépourvu de temps n'appartient au plan discursif de la langue, puisque ce n'est que par le temps que l'acte de la prédication a lieu dans la langue.

SUBJECTIVISM IS POINTLESS

Michael J. RAVEN

ABSTRACT: Epistemic objectivists and epistemic subjectivists might agree that inquiry pursues epistemic virtues (truth, knowledge, reason, or rationality) while disagreeing over their objectivity. Objectivists will evaluate this disagreement in terms of the epistemic virtues objectively construed, while subjectivists will not. This raises a rhetorical problem: objectivists will fault subjectivism for lacking some objective epistemic virtue, whereas subjectivists, by rejecting objectivity, won't see this as a fault. My goal is to end this impasse by offering a new solution to the rhetorical problem. My strategy is to identify a common-ground virtue valuable to objectivists and subjectivists but unavailable to subjectivism. The virtue is usefulness. Subjectivism can be useful only if it relies upon the very objective epistemic virtues it rejects; so it cannot be useful. Whether or not subjectivism has any objective epistemic virtues, it may be rejected as pointless.

KEYWORDS: subjectivism, objectivism, epistemic virtues, usefulness

Inquiry is often conceived as the pursuit of so-called *epistemic virtues*, such as *truth*, *knowledge*, *reason*, or *rationality*. Those accepting this conception can still dispute whether, or to what extent, these epistemic virtues are *objective*. I will present a new challenge for the global *subjectivist* view which fully dispenses with objectivity.

This might seem to be an easy target. After all, there have long been influential arguments purporting to show that global subjectivism is self-refuting or otherwise incoherent. But these arguments face a persistent rhetorical problem: the arguments usually claim that fully dispensing with objectivity violates some *objective* epistemic virtue, and so can merely preach to the choir.

My goal is to solve this rhetorical problem by offering a new challenge for subjectivism which avoids it. Subjectivism is often motivated by its promise to be especially useful for some valuable intellectual, philosophical, political, social, or ethical goal. As Boghossian[1] approvingly reports Hacking:[2, 3]

> According to Hacking, the interest [to expose social construction wherever it exists] derives from the following simple thought. If some fact belongs to a species of natural fact, then we are simply stuck with facts of that kind.

[1] Paul Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 18.

[2] Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999).

[3] To be fair, Boghossian qualifies his endorsement of Hacking. But the qualifications are, in the present context, irrelevant.

> However, if facts of the relevant kind are in fact social constructions, then they need not have obtained had we not wished them to obtain. Thus, exposure of social construction is potentially liberating: a kind of fact that had come to seem inevitable would have been unmasked (in Hacking's apt term) as a contingent social development.

But the new challenge is that subjectivism cannot deliver on its promised usefulness because it is useful only if it relies upon the very objective epistemic virtues it rejects. Even those unmoved by subjectivism's lack of objective epistemic virtue should reject it as pointless.

This paper proceeds as follows. I first clarify subjectivism and its dispute with objectivism (§1). Then I lay out the rhetorical problem, focusing on Kalderon's[4] application of it to Boghossian's[5] critiques of subjectivism (§2). Next, I outline my solution: I propose that subjectivism be evaluated in terms of its usefulness as a tool for advancing some purpose; but I show that subjectivism is pointless because it cannot achieve any such purpose (§3). I then apply this strategy to a case study (§4) and argue that no serious obstacle prevents generalizing it (§5). I conclude that subjectivism should be rejected as pointless (§6).

1. Subjectivism vs. objectivism

Recently, there has been great interest in whether subjectivity can or should be localized to specific domains. This usually takes the form of construing epistemic virtues, when localized to a specific domain, as somehow relative or socially constructed. A few examples of such applications include: *future contingents*[6]; *epistemic modality*[7]; *matters of taste* and *faultless disagreement*[8]; and *moral relativism*.[9, 10]

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[4] Mark Eli Kalderon, "Epistemic Relativism," *The Philosophical Review* 118, 2 (2009): 225-40.

[5] Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*.

[6] John MacFarlane, "Future Contingents and Relative Truth," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 53 (2003): 321-36 and "Truth in the Garden of Forking Paths," in *Relative Truth*, ed. Max Kölbel and Manuel García-Carpintero (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 81-102.

[7] John MacFarlane, "Epistemic Modals Are Assessment-Sensitive," in *Epistemic Modality*, ed. Brian Weatherson and Andy Egan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[8] Crispin Wright, *Truth and Objectivity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992) and Max Kölbel, "Faultless Disagreement," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104 (2003): 53-73.

[9] Gilbert Harman, *Explaining Value: And Other Essays in Moral Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000).

[10] The literature on relativism is voluminous: see Max Kölbel, *Truth Without Objectivity* (London: Routledge, 2002), John MacFarlane, "Making Sense of Relative Truth," *Proceedings of*

Local applications of relativism needn't entail *global* relativism. Indeed, almost none of the current discussion on relativism is focused on its global form. In any case, my focus will not be on these localized relativisms.

Nevertheless, there is a venerable tradition which appears to endorse global relativism. *Subjectivism*, as I'll call it, rejects the objectivity of any epistemic virtue. Thus, truth or knowledge is merely subjective: relative to a perspective or socially constructed to serve certain interests, with no perspective or set of interests objectively better than the rest. While subjectivism can be traced back to Protagoras, its recent forms owe more to either Nietzsche[11] and his intellectual descendants or pragmatists like Goodman,[12] Putnam,[13] and Rorty.[14]

Opposed to subjectivism is *objectivism*, which allows for the objectivity of some epistemic virtues. Thus, while objectivists might disagree over which truths or knowledge is objective, they agree that some are. Because such truth or knowledge is *objective*, its being epistemically virtuous is strictly independent of any perspective or set of interests. Objectivism appears to be the standard view within analytic philosophy and is even accepted by most of the localized relativists mentioned above.

The dispute over objectivism and subjectivism is not the same as the dispute over whether epistemic virtues are merely instrumental.[15] Thus, it may be supposed that subjectivists and objectivists alike agree that our interest in epistemic virtues is instrumental in that it depends on our having the goal of proportioning our beliefs to the evidence. But even then subjectivists and objectivists will still disagree, given such a goal, over whether the correct proportioning depends on *other* goals. On the one hand, subjectivism will assert that the proportioning always depends on other goals: even if you and I share the goal of proportioning our beliefs to the evidence, which way I ought to do it might differ from which way you ought to do it because of some difference in our perspectives or interests. On the other hand, objectivists will deny that the proportioning always depends on other goals: even if you and I share the goal of

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the Aristotelian Society 105 (2005): 321-39, and Crispin Wright, "Relativism about Truth Itself: Haphazard Thoughts about the Very Idea," in *Relative Truth*, ed. García-Carpintero and Kölbel, 157-186, as well as the papers in *Relative Truth*, ed. García-Carpintero and Kölbel and Steven D. Hales, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Relativism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2011).

[11] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (1873).

[12] Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1978).

[13] Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990).

[14] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope* (London: Penguin Books, 2000).

[15] Cf. Thomas Kelly, "Epistemic Rationality as Instrumental Rationality: A Critique," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 66, 3 (2003): 612-40.

proportioning our beliefs to the evidence, at least sometimes there will be a way both of us ought to do it regardless of any difference in our perspectives or interests.

Nor is the dispute between subjectivists and objectivists over whether *there are* epistemic virtues. Instead, it is a dispute over whether there are *objective* epistemic virtues. Fidelity to this suggests that unqualified epistemic virtue terms, such as 'truth' or 'knowledge,' are ambiguous between objective and subjective readings. Disambiguating explicitly would, however, bloat the prose. So I adopt the convention of using 'truth,' 'knowledge,' etc., to mean, respectively, *objective* truth, *objective* knowledge, etc. This might misleadingly suggest that the dispute between objectivism and subjectivism is over whether there are any epistemic virtues. So I hereby explicitly disavow this suggestion.

2. The rhetorical problem

The rhetorical problem emerges by considering how objectivists and subjectivists disagree about how to resolve their dispute. The problem is perhaps best illustrated by focusing on one of its particular manifestations.

Boghossian's *Fear of Knowledge* is a prominent sustained criticism of subjectivism and related views. Boghossian's criticisms are primarily concerned with showing subjectivism to be objectively false or irrational (if even intelligible). These criticisms tend to rely upon a distinction and an assumption. The distinction is between the *(causal) sources* of one's conviction in a view and the view's *status* as *true* or *false*, or *rational* or *irrational*. The assumption is that, however important the sources of one's conviction in a view might be, it is only in special cases that they bear on whether the view itself is true or false, or rational or irrational.[16]

Relying on the distinction and the assumption invites the rhetorical problem. Kalderon neatly captures how, in particular, it confronts objectivist criticisms of subjectivism (such as Boghossian's):

> … [T]he source of relativistic conviction is relevant to the rhetorical effectiveness of undermining the arguments advanced in its favor. If the source of relativistic conviction does not lie with the cogency of these arguments, then undermining them would leave relativistic conviction untouched.[17]

Kalderon goes on to speculate about this source:

[16] One example of such a case is the family of views which take the reliability of the (causal) *methods* by which a belief is formed to be relevant to whether that belief is knowledge.
[17] Kalderon, "Epistemic Relativism," 238.

> Let me dogmatically register my belief that a lot of relativist conviction is animated by the thought that the authority of reason, and its attendant rhetoric of objectivity, is a mask for the interests of power.[18]

To be clear, Kalderon's speculated source of subjectivist conviction is almost certainly not the source of recent interest in the localized relativisms mentioned earlier. But committed subjectivists often write as if they are motivated by Kalderon's speculated reasons.[19] As Kalderon suggests, insensitivity to the source of conviction in subjectivism partly explains why subjectivists are unlikely to be persuaded by objectivist critiques:

> Suppose, then, that relativism is a reaction to the thought that the authority of reason, and the attendant rhetoric of objectivity, is a mask for the interests of power. How might such a relativist react to *Fear of Knowledge*? Even if Boghossian's arguments succeeded perfectly on their own terms, the ambitions of *Fear of Knowledge* could not be met. A relativist motivated by the thought that the authority of reason is a mask for the interests of power will not be moved by the case put forward in *Fear of Knowledge – Fear of Knowledge* simply does not address that fear. Even if *Fear of Knowledge* did indeed address this relativist's arguments, since these arguments aren't the source of relativistic conviction but their expression, demonstrating their failure would fail to persuade. Indeed, in the grips of the hermeneutics of suspicion, rational counterargument could only seem like power's illicit attempt to resist its subversion by relativistic countermeasures.[20]

Here we have a particular instance of a general rhetorical problem:

Objectivists will evaluate the dispute in terms of epistemic virtues *objectively* construed. The dispute is resolved if one of the views is shown to have the right *objective* epistemic virtues. For example, objectivist's often argue that subjectivism cannot be rationally believed since it is self-refuting.[21]

While subjectivists needn't reject the appeal to epistemic virtue itself, they will reject the appeal to *objectivity*. For them, the dispute is resolved if one of the

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[18] Kalderon, "Epistemic Relativism," 238.

[19] Ample first- and second-hand anecdotal evidence supports Kalderon's claim. Subjectivists often say things like "Objectivity and reason are used to subjugate the disenfranchised!" Also, they often point out that deductively valid arguments can be given for conclusions which either might explicitly disenfranchise some group (e.g. by stating their moral inferiority) or else might somehow be used as a license to subjugate others.

[20] Kalderon, "Epistemic Relativism," 238-39.

[21] There are many versions of this self-refutation objection, including Nagel's and Boghossian's (Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*). Despite its infamy, its efficacy has been challenged: c.f. Max Kölbel, "Global Relativism and Self-Refutation," in *The Blackwell Companion to Relativism*, 11-30.

views is shown to have the right *subjective* virtues. For example, they might argue that subjectivism has the right epistemic virtues *relative to* some perspective or interests, or that it is *useful* for furthering some special goal.

This raises the general rhetorical problem. Objectivists and subjectivists do not merely disagree over objectivity; they disagree over how to resolve their disagreement. So even if a disputant might resolve the dispute to her own satisfaction, she will be unable to persuade her opponent.

In particular, this renders objectivist critiques ineffective because they invoke objectivity which subjectivists reject. These critiques, far from exposing problems with subjectivism, only reinforce subjectivist suspicions of objectivity.

One might pessimistically conclude that the rhetorical problem shows that the debate between subjectivists and objectivists ends in impasse. For how could there be a sensible debate, if one side rejects what the other side regards as the only possible terms in which such a debate can be carried out?

3. A new solution

Some might be willing to live with this impasse. After all, some claim that even if we cannot refute the external world skeptic to her satisfaction, we can refute her to our own satisfaction. Even if an analogous strategy applies here, it is merely a way to cope with impasse, not to avoid it.

But the impasse is avoidable by challenging subjectivism in a way immune to the rhetorical problem. The new challenge I will present is that subjectivism itself lacks a virtue valuable to subjectivists and objectivists alike: it lacks *usefulness*. Subjectivism is *pointless* because it can be useful only if it relies upon the very objective epistemic virtues it rejects.

This can be construed as arguing directly that subjectivism lacks some objective epistemic virtue: from the premises that subjectivism is pointless and that pointless views lack some objective epistemic virtue, infer that subjectivism itself lacks that same virtue. On this construal, my criticism is perhaps a new twist on the old self-refutation objection.

While I have no complaints with this construal *per se*, it is not the only construal possible, nor is it the construal I wish to emphasize here. This construal, after all, succumbs to the rhetorical problem.

The novel construal I wish to emphasize avoids the rhetorical problem. On it, the challenge for subjectivism is to vindicate its promised virtue of usefulness without relying on the objective epistemic virtues it rejects. This, I claim, cannot be done. The criticism, then, is *not* that subjectivism lacks the objective epistemic virtues it rejects, but that it is pointless. That solves the rhetorical problem I set

out to solve, as long as objectivists and subjectivists alike can agree that pointlessness is a vice.

The new challenge assumes that usefulness, or *utility*, is a virtue *both* subjectivists and objectivists alike might use to evaluate subjectivism. But 'utility' is a loaded term with many connotations. I do not assume any view about what utility is (e.g. I do not assume, with the hedonist, that utility is pleasure). Nor do I suggest that there is one notion of utility common to many or all people or purposes. Instead, utility is best understood by analogy with *tools*.[22] For a tool is precisely the sort of thing that can have a use, and so can be evaluated in terms of how well it achieves that use, whatever it might be.

Tools are often *designed* to achieve some use. Hammers are designed to hammer nails into wood. But something designed for another purpose can serve the same use: a screwdriver's handle can hammer nails. Even something (presumably) not designed at all can hammer nails: I once used a rock to do so.

Tools can be more or less *effective* for achieving their use. A hammer's effectiveness can depend upon how well it is made or maintained: a broken hammer is useless for hammering. But also a hammer's effectiveness can depend upon the skill of its wielder: a well-made, well-maintained hammer is useless in the hands of the unskilled. And it can matter who evaluates its effectiveness: a master carpenter has stricter standards than others.

Tools can also be *abused* or *misused*. One might abuse a hammer by using it violently to assault someone. This abuse can, but needn't, be a misuse: the assault might be to hammer a nail into a person. One might also misuse a hammer without abusing it: the novice might hammer a nail by holding the head of the hammer and hammering the nail with the handle.

Ideas, beliefs, or entire belief systems can also be tools. For example, some terminally ill patients use ideas or beliefs as tools to help them cope with their mortality. Or, one might be persuaded to shoot the one to save the ten, if one becomes convinced that it is a consequence of her implicit utilitarian ideals. And ideas and beliefs, like hammers, can be abused or misused: followers of one religion might (ab- or mis-)use their beliefs to justify harming followers of another.

A tool's usefulness is proportional to how well or poorly it advances its purpose. Subjectivists should agree that a chair can be useful for sitting (even if they doubt the chair objectively exists) and that the concept *addition* is useful for paying rent (even if they doubt that mathematics is objective). And subjectivists should agree that (usually) a trombone (but not a chair) is useless, or pointless, vis-

[22] C.f. Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, xxiii.

à-vis the goal of sitting and that the concept *bachelor* (but not *addition*) is useless, or pointless, vis-à-vis the goal of calculating one's taxes.

What's more, a tool is valuable in accord with how well or poorly it advances its purpose. We value a chair (but not a trombone) for sitting, but value a trombone (but not a chair) for playing music. And we value the concept *addition* (but not *bachelor*) for calculating taxes, but value the concept *bachelor* (but not *addition*) for its associated lifestyle.

Subjectivists and objectivists alike should acknowledge that, relative to a given purpose: (i) a tool (whether an object, belief, or idea) can be more or less useful, or pointless, for furthering it; (ii) that a tool's utility can be evaluated as such; and (iii) that the tool is valued or devalued accordingly.

My proposed strategy for replying to the rhetorical problem is to treat subjectivism itself as a tool. Thus, we may evaluate whether subjectivism is a useful or pointless tool for achieving some goal, and value or devalue it according to how well or poorly it serves that goal.

This strategy provides common-ground between objectivists and subjectivists. For tools are not directly evaluated in terms of objective epistemic virtues. A hammer cannot be true or false, rational or irrational (even if its *uses* can). But a hammer can be evaluated by how well or poorly it achieves its purpose. So it is doubly beneficial to treat subjectivism as a tool: (i) it discourages evaluating subjectivism in terms usually inappropriate for tools (viz. truth and rationality) while (ii) encourages evaluating it in terms appropriate for tools (viz. utility).

One might object that the evaluation of a tool is not an objective matter (e.g. that it is relative to this or that).

But that is to reject the *objectivity* of evaluating a tool, not the mere *possibility* of doing so. My strategy needs only the possibility, not its objectivity.

This possibility, I believe, should be unobjectionable not merely to objectivists, but also to many (if not all) subjectivists – especially those who associate their subjectivism with some sort of *pragmatism*.[23] After all, unless subjectivism itself is treated as a tool, it wouldn't make sense defending it for being useful, or somehow pragmatically virtuous.

Here, then, is an outline of my criticism of subjectivism. Treat subjectivism like a tool. Then it ought to be possible to evaluate its usefulness, when it is not abused or misused. But I will show how subjectivism cannot deliver on any goal it promises to serve without invoking objectivity. Because subjectivists reject objectivity, subjectivism is rendered useless. Just as a broken hammer is pointless

[23] C.f. Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, for one.

vis-à-vis the goal of hammering nails, so too subjectivism is pointless vis-à-vis any goal it promises to serve.

4. A case study

If subjectivism is like a tool, what use might it serve? The answer seems to be that subjectivism can be useful for supporting *coups* against objective epistemic virtues: it can be used to *debunk* truth or rationality.

But it is unobvious what use there is in debunking objective epistemic virtues. There appears to be no *intrinsic* disvalue in them. On the contrary, objective epistemic virtues, such as truth and rationality, strike us as valuable: at first glance, we sometimes do value having *true* beliefs, or beliefs *justified* by the available *evidence*.

This suggests that subjectivism is useful only if the usefulness of debunking objective epistemic virtues derives from *other* useful purposes.

One such purpose, if Kalderon is right, is to prevent the use of objective epistemic virtues to subjugate others. Kalderon plausibly speculates "that [subjectivism] is a reaction to the thought that the authority of reason, and the attendant rhetoric of objectivity, is a mask for the interests of power."[24] To elaborate, some have claimed that truth and rationality can be tools used to subjugate others. Often subjugation is shameful or horrific. So it is useful to guard against it. Subjectivism offers a way: it supports coups against the authority of the objective epistemic virtues the subjugator invokes by denying that they are any more objectively valid than those of the subjugated.[25]

But there is an intuitive (but perhaps quasi-technical) sense in which it is pathological to take there to be intrinsic value in a coup. This is because not all subjugation is oppressive. For example, a parent might subjugate a child by preventing her from recklessly running on the sidewalk, lowering the risk of getting hit by a car. Even subjectivists should doubt the utility of overthrowing this parent as the child's tyrannical oppressor.

We must therefore distinguish *principled* coups, which are directed toward some point or purpose, from *pathological* coups, which are not. The value of a coup derives from the value of the point (if any) to which it is directed. A pathological coup is pointless, hence not valuable. A principled coup can be valuable, if its purpose is useful (e.g. protecting the child). Thus, subjectivism itself can be useful if it supports a valuable, principled coup.

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[24] Kalderon, "Epistemic Relativism," 238.

[25] A nice question is what could possibly ground the usefulness of mitigating this oppression, if not objective moral facts of the very sort rejected by subjectivists.

Natural examples of principled coups target "racist sciences" (e.g. phrenology). But I won't focus on them since their targets are pseudoscience. They are bad science by scientific standards. Invoking subjectivism to discredit them is gratuitous, and so does not provide subjectivism with a distinctive use.

A better example is discussed by Johnson:[26] a conflict between archeologists and Native American tribes over whether to allow scientific analysis of human remains found in tribal lands. Archeologists motivate the research by saying it would illuminate how humans evolved. But this motivation conflicts with the tribes' creationist beliefs about their origins.

As Boghossian notes, the tribal/archeological conflict can seem to engender subjectivist sentiments:[27]

> The [*New York*] *Times* went on to note that many archeologists, torn between their commitment to scientific method and their appreciation for native culture, "have been driven close to a postmodern relativism in which science is just one more belief system." Roger Anyon, a British archeologist who has worked for the Zuni people, was quoted as saying:
>
> Science is just one of many ways of knowing the world. [The Zunis' world view is] just as valid as the archeological viewpoint of what prehistory is about.[28]

But finding subjectivist sentiments here requires care. After all, there is an anemic reading of "just as valid" which has Anyon claiming merely that the Zunis' world view is no less deserving of respect than the archeological viewpoint. Objectivists can, of course, agree with this.

Even so, the anemic reading is not pointless: acknowledging it explicitly can help motivate corrective policies in response to the oppression of Native Americans, whether the point of these policies is: *remunerative* (to compensate tribes for past oppression); *retributive* (to punish the tribes' oppressors); *empowering* (to respect or tolerate the tribes' oppressed beliefs); or *preventative* (to forestall future oppression).

But, presumably, subjectivists see objectivity as an obstacle to these corrective policies. They often speak as if objective epistemic virtues were wielded as "imperialistic" tools either to help cause the oppression or to stall attempts to

[26] George Johnson, "Indian Tribes' Creationists Thwart Archeologists," *The New York Times* (1996).

[27] Some believe, controversially, that creationism is apart from science and has a different epistemology than it. This view is particularly amenable to subjectivism.

[28] Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, 2.

rectify it. Pursuing corrective policies while clinging to objectivity is to undermine them by clinging to what caused or sustained the oppression.

Here subjectivism purports to show its distinctive use. Were the archeological viewpoint no more *objectively* epistemically virtuous than the Zunis' world view, then it could not be wielded against the corrective policies. Subjectivism's distinctive use is to remove this (alleged) objectivist obstacle to our corrective policies by underwriting a coup against objectivity itself.

Since it is uncontroversial that Native Americans were oppressed, one might overlook the general need to substantiate the claims of oppression on which a coup is based.

But that would be a profound mistake. After all, the mere *allegation* of oppression is insufficient to make a coup principled. I might allege that the Obama administration oppressed me by orchestrating a vast conspiracy to stunt my career. Were my allegation sincere, it would be baseless slander. The allegation is pathological, and so does not sustain a principled coup. To reject the general need to substantiate allegations of oppression would be to treat allegations of Native American oppression on a par with my slanderous allegations of oppression by the Obama administration.

Avoiding this intolerable result requires, once again, a distinction between pathological and principled allegations. Specifically, avoiding it requires saying more about why allegations of my oppression pale in comparison to those of Native Americans' than merely reiterating that they do.

Objectivists can do so. They can say that my allegation is pathological because it is false, or unsupported by the evidence, and that a principled coup cannot be based upon pathological allegations.

But subjectivists cannot say this. Since they reject objectivity, they cannot invoke the facts or the evidence to evaluate allegations. So they cannot distinguish between pathological or principled allegations. This deprives them of any corresponding distinction between pathological and principled coups.

To elaborate, consider how my point applies to each of three variants of subjectivism.[29] First, *fact constructivism or fact relativism* denies that there are any absolute facts (either because all facts are constructed or relative). There is no absolute fact of the matter as to whether the tribes were oppressed. But then (allegations of) oppression, however sincere, cannot provide for a principled coup.

Second, *epistemic relativism* denies that there are any absolute epistemic facts (i.e. facts of the form: *E* is evidence for belief *P*). There is no absolute fact of

[29] Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge*, discusses these three variants of subjectivism in chapters 3 and 4, chapters 5-7, and chapter 8, respectively.

the matter as to whether the evidence supports or discredits the belief that the tribes were oppressed. So the evidence pertaining to the belief in the oppression cannot make for a principled coup.

Third, *explanatory relativism* denies that the evidence alone ever causes our beliefs. Non-evidential causes (e.g. background beliefs, LSD, dice) must help cause the belief that the tribes were oppressed, or cause its disbelief (i.e. belief in its negation). Presumably, a coup based upon the belief is principled only if the causes of the belief are privileged over the causes of disbelief. But by precluding any evidential basis on which to privilege the former over the latter, the explanatory relativist makes it obscure how any coup could be principled.

In contrast, objectivists can vindicate principled coups. *Pace* fact constructivism and fact relativism, objectivists say that it is an absolute fact that the tribes were oppressed. *Pace* epistemic relativism, objectivists say that the evidence supports allegations of oppression. *Pace* explanatory relativism, objectivists say that the causes of the allegations can be privileged evidentially.

Thus, not only does subjectivism fail to serve its intended use, objectivism (ironically) serves it better. Objectivists may follow a recipe for adjudicating the tribal/archeological conflict: (i) gather (scientific, religious) evidence; (ii) evaluate the evidence to see which side of the conflict it rationally supports; and (iii) settle on a policy accordingly.[30] This recipe, whatever its merits, is unavailable to subjectivists because it invokes objectivity.

5. Generalizing

This case study suggests a more systematic, general criticism of subjectivism. Subjectivism is supposed to be useful for underwriting coups. The value of a coup rests on distinguishing between pathological and principled coups. But that distinction requires objectivity which subjectivism rejects. So subjectivism cannot find value in any coup. So subjectivism is useless.

[30] To be clear: objectivism itself does *not* entail that the evidence favors (say) archeological science and evolutionary theory, or that reason (and perhaps truth) are therefore on the archeologist's side, or that policy should favor them. Objectivism merely holds that the evidence can favor *some or other side* as opposed to all the rest; it takes no stand whatsoever on *which side that is* (it might very well turn out that the evidence ultimately favors the tribal creationist beliefs!). I speculate that confusing objectivism with objectivism+scientism is one of the main causal sources of dissatisfaction with objectivism. But this dissatisfaction is based upon a common but profound confusion, and is baseless once the confusion is resisted.

One might object to my attempt to generalize on the grounds that I've overlooked other points subjectivism might serve which avoid the difficulties I've raised.

I doubt there is such an overlooked panacea. But I cannot defend this by surveying all the possible points subjectivism might serve. So, instead, I will briefly consider several representative points and suggest that each faces problems analogous to those arising in the case study. This will remove any serious obstacle to generalizing and will challenge subjectivists to explain why generalization fails in any given case.

First, subjectivism might serve the point of *illuminating* various episodes in history, our conviction in certain ideas, or the nature of various conflicts (such as the tribal/archeological conflict). In particular, it might illuminate the "genealogy" of various concepts (e.g. gender), social groups (e.g. races), and methods of inquiry (e.g. science) by exposing unexpected (e.g. social and political influences upon them.

But subjectivists are constrained not to regard such illumination as providing a more *useful* understanding, on pain of circularity. Nor can illumination reveal what is *true* or *better supported by the evidence.* But then it is obscure what recommends one genealogy over any other, if neither usefulness, nor the truth, nor the evidence.

Second, subjectivism might serve the point of *making sense of disagreements* between different groups, each deserving to have their voices heard. Thus, perhaps it might explain how it is that two groups, each deserving of respect, may disagree about human origins.

But subjectivism cannot say apparent disagreement is disagreement about the *facts* or what the *evidence supports*. It is then obscure in what sense there is a genuine disagreement at all, let alone why it is useful to make sense of it. Furthermore, the explanation of the disagreement must be *at least as useful* as any objectivist explanation, if subjectivism is to be *no less useful* than objectivism. But we have already seen how objectivists may explain disagreement in ways which seem no worse off than subjectivist explanations.

Third, subjectivism might serve the point of *tolerance*. For suppose the Zuni's are wrong about their origins and that the archeologists are right. Some might conclude that we needn't tolerate the Zuni's beliefs because those beliefs are *false*. But subjectivism can resist this unpalatable intolerance by taking the Zuni's way of knowing the world to be no less valid than archeologist's.

But there is a more straightforward way of resisting this unpalatable intolerance available to subjectivists and objectivists alike: tolerate false beliefs

when doing so is not too harmful. What's more, subjectivism's way of avoiding unpalatable intolerance ends up tolerating everything, including the harmful. Subjectivists can allow for principled intolerance to the actions and views of the Nazi Dr. Mengele only by invoking a distinction between principled and pathological tolerance. But the natural way to draw this distinction invokes objectivity: presumably, tolerance is pathological precisely when it conflicts with *objective* truth or knowledge about the harmful (e.g. the *fact* that Dr. Mengele's actions were harmful, or *knowledge* that they were harmful).[31]

Fourth, subjectivism might serve the point of *protecting against abuses* of objectivity. Some say that appealing to truth or rationality made it easier for imperialist powers to oppress others. But such appeals are illegitimate, by subjectivists' lights. That might protect against future imperialist oppression.

But it is difficult to see how subjectivism is a more effective protector than objectivism. Subjectivism rejects the most natural way of recognizing, diagnosing, condemning, and preventing acts of oppression: by rejecting as false or irrational the premises on which oppression is based (e.g. that some ethnic group is inferior). But objectivism easily accommodates such rejections (however difficult it might be to *persuade* some to agree with them).

Fifth, subjectivism might serve the point of encouraging a kind of *humility*. Objectivism is often associated with a crude picture according to which various beliefs or concepts are taken to be foundational, upon which all the others rest, and that objective, exceptionless principles may be deduced by rational reflection upon them alone.[32] Allegedly, this "foundationalist picture" has scarcely settled

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[31] In response, Barbara Herrnstein Smith ("Making (Up) the Truth: Constructivist Contributions," *University of Toronto Quarterly* 61 (1992): 427) writes:

> What *can* counter the plausibility of denials of the Holocaust … are … counter-activities such as the public exhibition and analysis of documents and photographs, the development of narratives incorporating vivid descriptions of circumstantial details, the citation and credentialing of survivors and other authorities, and so forth: the production, in effect, of a sense of virtual witnessing; the construction, in short, of knowledge ... to which must be added, as the necessary and inevitable other side of such activities, the destabilization and *de*construction of *other* knowledge.

But it is left obscure in what sense documents, photographs, narratives, citations, and so forth, are of any use in countering Holocaust denials, if not that the documents *say what happened*, or that the photographs *depict what happened*, or that the narratives *are true*, or that the citations *are supported by the evidence*.

[32] This foundationalist picture is often associated with Plato and Descartes, although subjectivists tend vastly to oversimplify their respective views. Subjectivists also often misattribute the picture to objectivists, failing to realize that objectivism is in no way committed to identifying

any philosophical disputes, nor provided us with much substantive knowledge. So a modest sense of humility is in order, and is best achieved by rejecting objectivism.

But humility is compatible with objectivism: many objectivists openly question, criticize, and explore foundational topics, including truth and rationality. For example, many objectivists are engaged in the thriving research program concerning whether we should lower confidence in our beliefs when our "epistemic peers" disagree with them.[33] Even if humility is sometimes in order, other times confidence is too. Even when arguing with the skeptic, we may (it seems) retain our default confidence in our belief that here is a hand and here is another, or that the tribes were oppressed, or that their oppressors acted immorally. Objectivism can justify our confidence: it allows that these claims are true and are supported by the evidence. Subjectivism cannot justify our confidence in this way, and it is obscure how else it could.

While I have not surveyed all the possible points subjectivism might serve, I have considered the most common. Each faces the same general problem: it is difficult, if not impossible, to make sense of how subjectivism might achieve the particular point to which it is directed without relying on the objectivity it rejects. Generalizing, subjectivism is useless because its usefulness requires the objectivity it rejects.

One might object that I have begged the question by illicitly smuggling objectivity into my criticisms. In particular, one might object that my criticism presupposes the *objectivity* of the principled/pathological distinction, but subjectivism rejects this objectivity.

But my criticism does not presuppose that the principled/pathological distinction be objective. Suppose that this distinction is (say) relative to a perspective. Then, choose some such perspective and say *relative to it* how subjectivism is useful. The problems I have already raised will then arise again.

Even so, I grant that some of the notions I invoked (e.g. utility and value) can be given objectivist construals. But there are two reasons why granting this is not illicitly to smuggle in objectivity. First, the roles these notions played in my criticism do not require such objectivist construals. Second, my criticism does not *presuppose* objectivity and then claim that it is only by invoking it that

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which way of knowing the world (whether "foundationalist" or otherwise) is best (indeed, many objectivists explicitly reject such a foundationalist picture).

[33] For illustrations, see the papers collected in Richard Feldman and Ted Warfield, eds., *Disagreement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

subjectivism can be useful; rather, I claim that subjectivism *precludes* the best explanation of its usefulness by precluding objectivity.

Finally, one might object that by leaving the principled/pathological distinction undefined, my criticism is too vague to gain any traction.

But this misconstrues my criticism. Subjectivism's usefulness depends upon there being a *recognizable* distinction between the principled and pathological, however it is ultimately drawn. My criticism is that subjectivism cannot provide for *any* distinction recognizable as such.

6. Conclusion

My goal was to solve a rhetorical problem between objectivists and subjectivists. My strategy was to focus on a virtue valued by objectivists and subjectivists alike: usefulness. Subjectivism aims to be useful: to shed some light on thorny conflicts (e.g. by being remunerative, retributive, empowering, or protective). However well-intended subjectivism might be, it faces the challenge of explaining how it can deliver on this promised utility without relying on the very objectivist epistemic virtues it rejects. I doubt that this challenge can be met. What's more, it often (and ironically) turns out that objectivism can deliver where subjectivists cannot. This, I believe, breaks the impasse between objectivists and subjectivists. Those who were unwilling to reject subjectivism as objectively false or irrational should now reject it as pointless.[34]

[34] Thanks to Paul Boghossian, Margaret Cameron, Klaus Jahn, Colin Macleod, Anna-Sara Malmgren, Colin Marshall, John Morrison, Patrick Rysiew, Jeff Sebo, Peter Unger, Audrey Yap, and James Young for helpful comments.

PROPOSITIONAL MEMORY AND KNOWLEDGE

Shin SAKURAGI

ABSTRACT: According to the epistemic theory of propositional memory, to remember that *p* is simply to retain the knowledge that *p*. Despite the apparent plausibility of this theory, many putative counterexamples have been raised against it. In this paper, I argue that no clear-cut counterexample to the claim can be proposed since any such attempt is confronted with an insurmountable problem. If there is to be a clear-cut counterexample to the claim, it must be either a case in which one does not believe that *p* though he remembers that *p*, or a case in which one remembers that *p* but his belief that *p* is somehow unwarranted. I examine a number of putative counterexamples of both types, and show that in neither way can we describe a clear-cut case in which one remembers that *p* while not knowing that *p*.

KEYWORDS: propositional memory, the epistemic theory of memory, memory knowledge, memory justification

I. Introduction

We express our thoughts about memory typically with the verb, 'remember,' and its cognates. Among different sorts of memory we talk about using this verb, the particular sort of memory I will be concerned with in this paper is expressed by 'remember' when it takes a sentential complement, as, for example, in "Bill remembers that he ate breakfast." Following the tradition, I will call this type of memory 'propositional memory,' and define it as follows: for every subject, s, s has a propositional memory that *p* iff s remembers that *p*.

This paper is concerned with a particularly important aspect of this concept. As many philosophers remark, the ordinary use of the expression implies knowledge, that is, if x remembers that *p*, then he knows that *p*.[1] Despite the fact that this view – RK hereafter, following Moon[2] – seems to be grounded in our intuitive understanding of the concept, counterexamples to it have been raised. These putative counterexamples are the main topic of this paper. In the following,

[1] Among notable works defending the epistemic theory are: Norman Malcolm, *Knowledge and Certainty: Essays and Lectures* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1963), Roger Squires, "Memory Unchained," *The Philosophical Review* 78 (1969): 178-196, David B. Annis, "Memory and Justification," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 40, 3 (1980): 324-333, and Robert Audi, "Memorial Justification," *Philosophical Topics* 23 (1995): 31-45.

[2] Andrew Moon, "Remembering entails knowing" *Synthese* (2012), DOI 10.1007/s11229-012-0065-3, published online: 26 Jan 2012.

I will argue that no clear-cut counterexample to the claim can be produced since any such attempt is confronted with an insurmountable problem. I take this predicament to be strong evidence that something is radically wrong with the idea of someone's remembering that *p* without knowing that *p*, and hence to suffice to show the credibility of RK.

II. Propositional Memory Implies Knowledge

RK is, first of all, supported by the apparent absurdity of a claim like "He remembers that the Ravens won the Super Bowl, but he does not know that the Ravens won the Super Bowl." This seems to express a conceptual confusion, but there is nothing absurd about each of those claims independently. Thus, the reason we cannot make sense of the conjunction of both claims must come from there being a conflict between them. The claim that the subject remembers that *p* is in conflict with his not knowing the fact that *p*. Hence, it seems to follow that if we remember that *p*, we know that *p*.[3]

This conclusion explains a well recognized fact about propositional memory: truly remembering that *p* requires that it be true that *p*. Nobody can remember that the first president of the U.S. was Thomas Jefferson.[4] Suppose someone says, "The first president of the U.S. was Thomas Jefferson." However good his justification is, nobody would respond, "Well, you remember that the first president of the U.S. was Thomas Jefferson, but what you remember is false." It is not only that what he rehearses is false, but also that he DOES NOT remember that the first president of the U.S. was Thomas Jefferson. Why can't we remember that *p*, when *p* is false? RK can offer a plausible answer to that question. Indeed, if RK is false, it is not very easy to explain why remembering that *p* requires the truth that *p*.

In the following, I will examine putative counterexamples to RK. For the sake of clarity, it is beneficial to classify those counterexamples into two categories. Let us suppose that knowledge is warranted true belief. (Following Plantinga, I call whatever makes a true belief knowledge warrant.[5]) Given that propositional memory is necessarily veridical, if one's propositional memory is a warranted belief, then it follows that he knows what he remembers. Hence, if

[3] Arguably, this is simply due to a pragmatic confusion. Bernecker proposes such an argument against a similarly intuitive claim that if one remembers that *p*, he believes that *p*. See Sven Bernecker, *Memory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 83.

[4] See, for example, Hintikka's example in Norman Malcolm, *Memory and Mind* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977), 26-7.

[5] Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 3.

there is to be a scenario in which a subject remembers without knowing that *p*, the scenario must rule out that the subject has a warranted belief that *p* in remembering that *p*. This limits the possible cases in which one remembers that *p* without knowing that *p* to: (1) cases in which one does not believe that *p* though he remembers that *p*, or (2) cases in which one believes and remembers that *p* in remembering that *p*, while the subject is not warranted in believing that *p*.

My primary aim in this paper is to show that no *clear-cut* counterexample to RK is possible. In the next two sections, I will discuss each type of case in turn and try to develop a dilemma by showing that these two routes to a clear-cut counterexample to RK face serious problems. I assume that if any attempt to refute RK by way of a counterexample is successful, there must be a clear-cut counterexample to RK ultimately, absent any good reason to think that any counterexample to RK is necessarily ambiguous. I can see no such reason, and suppose that the burden of proof is not on my side. Hence, my argument below will provide a strong support to RK, if not prove it.

III. Remembering that *p* without Believing that *p*

The first route is by way of a case in which one remembers that *p* without believing that *p*. The primary trouble for this route is that it is impossible to describe a case in which we would say a subject clearly has no belief whose propositional content is identical to the content of his propositional memory. As I will show below, this is because we have no plausible way to specify a propositional content which one remembers, but does not believe; attempts to describe such cases seem plausible only insofar as they are underdescribed.

Let us start the discussion by examining one of the most famous examples of this type. Martin and Deutscher, in their seminal work, tell this rather unusual story:

> Suppose that someone asks a painter to paint an imaginary scene. The painter agrees to do this and, taking himself to be painting some purely imaginary scene, paints a detailed picture of a farmyard, including a certain colored and shaped house, various people with detailed features, particular items of clothing, and so on. His parents then recognize the picture as a very accurate representation of a scene which the painter saw just once in his childhood. The figures and colors are as the painter saw them only once on the farm which he now depicts. We may add more and more evidence to force the conclusion that the painter did his work by no mere accident. Although the painter sincerely believes that his work is purely imaginary, and represents no real scene, the amazed observers have all

> the evidence needed to establish that in fact he is remembering a scene from childhood.[6]

One might be inclined to think that this is an example in which one clearly remembers that *p*, but does not know that *p*.[7] He might argue that the painter does not believe, say, that he saw the scenery, but he is painting the picture because he is remembering the scenery. However, it is not clear that this case really is one in which someone remembers that *p* but does not believe that *p*. It is undeniable that the painter is remembering something in painting the picture. Nonetheless, as philosophers have pointed out, what we can confidently attribute to the painter is, at best, only the perceptual or imagistic memory of the scenery.[8] If so, the story does not clearly constitute a case in which one remembers that *p* without believing that *p*. For what must be established is that the painter has a propositional memory that *p* but no belief that *p*. Granted that clearly the painter does not believe that he saw the scenery, or have any particular propositional beliefs about it, this much does not suffice for a clear counterexample to RK. What the painter remembers is how a scene looks, and having this memory-based image itself does not entail that he remembers that he saw the scenery or any propositional memories about the scene. In fact, given the ascription of the memory-based image, nothing that occurs in the story is left unexplained. The painter paints that picture because he is entertaining a memory-based image of it, but he does not realize that the image actually comes from his memory. Hence, so far as Martin and Deutscher's description goes, we do not yet have a clear-cut counterexample to RK.

An objector might respond that the story is simply not fully described. He might say, for example, that if a more detailed background story were to be added, we would see that we had both a reason to attribute to the painter the propositional memory that he saw such and such scenery and a reason not to attribute the belief that he saw that scenery. This is not the case, though. For there is a fundamental reason why the story needs to be underdescribed.

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[6] C. B. Martin and Max Deutscher, "Remembering," *The Philosophical Review* 75 (1966): 167-8.

[7] I'm not sure whether the present example is really intended to be a counterexample to RK by means of attacking (1). For Martin and Deutscher indicates that it shows that one may remember X without believing that X occurs (167), and this claim itself is not a straightforward attack on RK. Nonetheless, they evidently reject RK in the later part of their paper. See Martin and Deutscher, "Remembering," 192.

[8] Robert K. Shope, "Remembering, Knowledge, and Memory Traces," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 33, 3 (1973): 304, Alan Holland, "Retained Knowledge," *Mind* 83 (1974): 357-8.

The present trouble comes from the fact that one's entertaining a memory based image entails remembering something or remembering doing something, but not necessarily a specific propositional memory. Of course, the painter might have some propositional memory, but it is hard to tell what it is in the absence of further evidence. Hence, in order to describe a clear-cut case in which the painter remembers what he does not believe, we need some extra evidence that would suggest some specific propositional memory whose content is not also the content of a belief of his.

However, nothing can be decisive evidence for his having a memory with that particular propositional content if it contains no explicit reference to that content. And such a specification is feasible only by way of citing a propositional attitude (with mind-to-world direction of fit) toward the content. Hence, if I am correct, we cannot provide any plausible story in which one remembers that *p* in entertaining a memory based image without indicating any propositional attitude toward the propositional content that *p*. Therefore, if one tries to 'fully describe' the story so that it shows clearly that the painter remembers what he does not believe, he must have recourse to, implicitly or explicitly, some of the painter's propositional attitudes toward the propositional content of his memory.

Here is essentially why any scenario in which the painter allegedly remembers what he does not believe must remain underdescribed to begin to seem plausible. The difficulty is that we know of no propositional attitude toward the propositional content that *p* which can be decisive evidence for one's remembering that *p* without being evidence for his believing that *p* as well.

When Lehrer and Richard propose the following counterexample to RK, they recognize this problem, so that they have recourse to a mysterious description:

> I am musing about my past and a vivid image occurs to me of an elderly woman standing by a stone well next to a red barn. I have no idea, initially, who the person is. Then suddenly the thought occurs to me that the person is my grandmother, that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. Moreover, the thought is not the result of conjecture or external suggestion; it occurs to me from memory. I have no idea, however, whether this thought that suddenly occurs to me is a true recollection of the past or a figment of my imagination. For all I know, the image I so vividly recall is of some quite different person, or is an image from a movie or dream. I do not know whether my grandmother ever stood by a stone well next to a barn or not. The thought just occurred to me that the woman in the image was my grandmother, and I do not know whether this is so. Suppose, however, in fact, the image is one recollected from a visit to my grandmother's home. The thought has occurred to me from memory, and it is a true recollection. Thus, I do remember that my

> grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn, but I do not, by any means, know that this is so.[9]

The key notion here seems to be the 'thought' which is "from memory." Lehrer and Richard must infer that because the 'thought' that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn occurs from memory, I remember that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. But how can I not believe that my grandmother stood by a stone well next to a red barn while having the memory based 'thought' having the same propositional content? They simply assume that "I do not know, or even believe that" my grandmother stood by a stone well next to a red barn[10]. But if so, they cannot mean by 'thought,' what is ordinarily meant by the word, for 'thought that *p*' is commonly considered a synonym of 'belief that *p*.'

Hence, if the story is to constitute a true counterexample to RK, as is intended, 'thought' must mean something other than this common meaning of the word. But what else could play the role it is supposed to? The first candidate would be simple 'remembering,' namely, the *sui generis* propositional memory. It might be claimed that a *sui generis* instance of a propositional memory that *p* does not imply belief that *p*. However, first, it is not clear that there really is such a *sui generis* memory. Even if we concede its existence, we have no idea what it comes to. Thus, we are entitled to ask, "Why doesn't a *sui generis* instance of propositional memory that *p* imply a belief that *p*?" I can see no plausible explanation forthcoming. In any case, we cannot simply stipulate that a *sui generis* propositional memory does not entail the corresponding belief. Indeed, it is not clear how one can appeal to such a *sui generis* propositional memory that *p* in an attempt of constructing a counterexample to RK without begging the question. The existence of such a *sui generis* propositional memory *ipso facto* entails the possibility that one remembers that *p* without believing that *p*. But how can we assure ourselves that there are any such *sui generis* propositional memories implying no corresponding beliefs without finding in advance any clear-cut example in which one remembers that *p* without believing that *p*? Hence, the

[9] Keith Lehrer and Joseph Richard, "Remembering without Knowing," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 1 (1975): 121. Here my argument is to suspect that the subject believes what he remembers. But an argument may go the other way round. Moon claims that Bernecker's claim that a "flashbulb thought is an instance of propositional memory" doesn't seem clear at all to him, given that the subject has no belief. See Bernecker, *Memory*, 88, and Moon, "Remembering entails knowing", Section 3.1.

[10] Lehrer and Richard, "Remembering without Knowing," 124.

'thought' cannot mean a sui generis propositional memory, if Lehrer and Richard's story is to constitute a successful counterexample to RK.

'Thought' might mean some other propositional attitudes entailing no corresponding belief. For instance, the fact that it seems to one that *p* does not entail that he believes that *p*: it may seem to one that *p* though one knows that it is not so, as in the case of its seeming to one that there has to be a set of all sets that do not contain themselves, though one has just convinced oneself by an argument that this is impossible. And, given a certain background story, the fact that it seems to one that *p* can constitute good evidence for his remembering that *p*. Thus, one might claim that in Lehrer and Richard's story, it simply seems to me that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. Indeed, given what seems to me to be so, we may be inclined to think that I remember that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. Meanwhile, the objector might argue that the fact that I strongly doubt what seems to me to be so supports the claim that I have no corresponding belief. Thus, he might conclude that I remember, but do not believe that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn.

However, this reasoning does not reflect what Lehrer and Richard's story tells. The objector claims that although it seems to me that *p*, since I strongly doubt whether *p*, I do not believe that *p*. Lehrer and Richard's story surely indicates my strong doubt. But what it directly cites is only my second-order doubt about my 'image' (or 'thought'), rather than the first-order one, namely, my doubt whether my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. This is clear when they say, "For all I know, the image I so vividly recall is of some quite different person, or is an image from a movie or dream." Of course, it would be more rational for one to doubt whether *p* if he has a second-order doubt about his own image indicating that *p*. Still, we sometimes have such a second-order doubt, while maintaining the first-order belief, particularly when the belief is held only to some degree.

Believing is a matter of degree, and we often believe something which we are not fully convinced of. Given my second-order doubt, it is evident that I am not fully convinced that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. But it does not follow that I do not believe that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn at all. If this story is to be about someone who does not know that *p* because he does not firmly believe it, it is not a counterexample of the first type, at least. I'll discuss why such a case cannot be fully satisfactory in the next section. At any rate, unless the story clearly excludes

the possibility that I believe it to a degree which is sufficient for knowledge, it does not constitute a clear-cut counterexample to RK.[11]

But can't the story be straightforwardly presented as if I clearly have the first-order doubt? Given my first-order doubt, i.e., given that I seriously doubt whether my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn, there would be strong evidence that I do not have the belief at all.[12] But the essential trouble is: given the same evidence, it is not clear whether I remember that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn. In fact, any evidence strong enough to convince us that I lack the belief cannot avoid depriving us of the ground for attributing the propositional memory to me.

To see this crucial point, let us consider more carefully how one can lack a belief that *p* when it seems to him that *p*. Suppose it suddenly seems to me, for no reason, that Togo gained independence from France. But it is just a groundless idea happens to cross my mind, and I'm fully aware that I know nothing about Togo. We would infer from these facts that I do not believe that Togo gained independence from France. But, of course, the same story (with no further episode) cannot constitute a successful counterexample to RK. For no part of the story clearly suggests us that I remember that Togo gained independence from France. The fact that a groundless thought that *p* happens to cross one's mind would not indicate that he remembers that *p*. Thus, if a subject's experience of its seeming that *p* constitutes good evidence for his remembering that *p*, that experience cannot be merely haphazard.

One might insist that someone can have the experience of its seeming that *p*, regularly and consistently, while not believing that *p*. I concur. But think about a case in which it seems to a man very frequently that *p*, but he knows that he is merely deluded. Indeed, it happens to be the case that *p*. The man does not believe that *p* then. But does he remember that *p*? Not really. No matter how regularly and consistently he has the same experience, we would never say that the man remembers that *p*. We may be inclined to say that the man remembers something, perhaps, the delusional image, but not that he remembers that *p*. One's repeated,

[11] If we may not know things without being fully confident of them, we must face a well-known skeptical challenge. And the global skepticism undermines the basis of any reasonable attempt of providing a good counterexample to RK, since it directly implies that RK is false, if propositional memories are really possible.

[12] One might rather try to describe a case in which I only partially believe that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn, and claim that the degree of my belief is not sufficient for knowledge. But such an attempt would face a trouble analogous to the one discussed in section IV. The lower the degree of my belief is, the less we feel comfortable in saying that I have the corresponding propositional memory.

consistent experience of its seeming that *p* is not sufficient for attributing a propositional memory to him, even when we are convinced that it is appropriate to attribute a different form of memory to him. So what kind of evidence needs to be added in order to convince us to attribute a propositional memory to him? Nothing seems convincing except for things strongly indicate his corresponding belief. Even when we know that it seems to someone that *p* regularly and consistently, provided that he does not behave as if *p* is the case at all, we would remain uncomfortable in saying that he remembers that *p*. This is so even if we are sure that he has a perceptual or imagistic memory. Meanwhile, if he behaves as if *p* is the case, we lose all the ground for suspecting that he does not believe that *p*.

Hence, when we know that it seems to one that *p*, if we have a good reason to think that he does not believe that *p*, we lack a good reason to think that he remembers that *p*. Therefore, if my 'thought' means my experience of its seeming that my grandmother once stood by a stone well next to a red barn, the story cannot constitute a successful counterexample to RK by any means.

Still, it might be responded that the approach fails only because the fact that it seems to one that *p* may be good evidence for his believing that *p*. And one might try to produce a counterexample to RK by appeal to a propositional attitude which may not be good evidence for its corresponding belief, e.g., imagining that *p*, guessing (having an arbitrary thought) that *p*, doubting that *p*, wishing that *p*, etc.

True, one may have a propositional memory while having some of these attitudes toward the same propositional content. But insofar as one's having such an attitude does not constitute evidence for his having the corresponding propositional memory, such a case shows nothing interesting. One might insist that one's guessing that *p* can be evidence for his remembering that *p*. But, of course, it cannot be simply assumed, without further remark, that one's guessing that *p* may be evidence for his remembering that *p*. This would again be question begging. Furthermore, a moment's reflection tells us that such a situation is counterintuitive. It is strange to imagine someone saying that one remembers that *p* in guessing that *p* or that one's guessing that *p* is due to his remembering that *p*.

Nonetheless, someone might still insist that we could manage to describe an exceptional, but conceivable situation in which one's having those propositional attitudes counts as good evidence for his propositional memory. Consider this scenario. A decade ago, when Kelly was in high school, he learned that Florida's population in 1990 was 12,937,926. Now, someone asks Kelly Florida's population in 1990. Kelly has no idea, but he just takes a guess and says, "It's 12,937,926." One

might be inclined to say that Kelly actually remembers that Florida's population in 1990 was 12,937,926. For it is highly unlikely that Kelly got it accidentally right.[13] This sounds right. But such a claim might suggest that Kelly is in fact not guessing, but rather just mistakenly believes that he is taking a guess. Otherwise, the claim must be utterly confused. If one's guesswork is correct, it must be accidentally correct. So if one claims that Kelly remembers that Florida's population in 1990 was 12,937,926 because his guesswork cannot be accidentally correct, then he undermines the claim that it is guesswork at all. But then, how does Kelly come up with the answer? One plausible answer is: he unknowingly believes (probably to some extent) that Florida's population in 1990 was 12,937,926. Surely, sometimes what we once thought was a mere guesswork turns out to be a true recollection.

All similar cases in which one appears to remember that *p* in holding a propositional attitude which cannot constitute evidence for its corresponding belief – doubting, denying, wishing, etc. – would be explained away in a similar fashion, once the story is carefully examined. When one appears to remember that *p* in his imagining, doubting, denying, or wishing that *p*, either his remembering is a mere appearance or those propositional attitudes are mistakenly ascribed, perhaps because the subject has second-order thoughts which don't accurately reflect what is going on.

Now, one horn of the dilemma is clear enough: we know of no propositional attitudes which clearly indicate one's propositional memory that *p* without suggesting his belief that *p*. Hence, no clear cut description of a case in which one remembers that *p* without believing that *p* is possible. Any attempt to describe such a case would remain unsatisfactory, and the scenario, to the extent it seems plausible, would have to be underdescribed.

IV. Undermining Warrant

What about the other horn of the dilemma? The only alternative way to produce a counterexample to RK is to provide a story in which the subject believes and remembers that *p* but is not warranted in believing that *p*. In this section, I will show that any attempt to describe such a scenario must confront a difficulty stemming from the epistemic nature of what is remembered.

Here is a putative counterexample of the second type raised by Sven Bernecker:

[13] Pollock proposes a similar case. See John Pollock, *Knowledge and Justification* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 189.

> [A]t t_1 you came to justifiably believe that S had borrowed Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* from the library. The belief is false. At t_2, all you can remember is that S checked out a book by Caesar; you have forgotten which book you thought S has borrowed from the library. Now it turns out that your memory belief to the effect that S has checked out a book by Caesar is true because S borrowed Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Civili*. Can your belief qualify as memory? We should, I reckon, once again answer in the affirmative.[14]

Let us notice that this is intended to be a classical Gettier type story. The subject is supposedly justified in believing what he remembers, but since it is merely accidentally true, he doesn't know it. A question naturally crosses our mind: Why isn't the story a straightforward scenario in which one doesn't know what he remembers simply because his memory belief is unjustified? In fact, such an approach to the second type counterexample is atypical. Virtually none of the counterexamples which are worth careful treatment appeals to a scenario in which one's belief is downright unjustified.

This seems to be grounded in our intuitive understanding of propositional memory: we are justified in believing what we remember. Thus, if one appears to be downright unjustified in believing that *p*, we are reluctant to say that he remembers that *p*. We can easily see this point by examining such a scenario. Think of someone who came to believe that his blood type is AB, without having it checked, only because AB sounded good to him. He is later asked about his blood type, and says that it is AB, because he feels as if he remembers so. Yet, he is fully aware that he has no legitimate reason to believe that it is AB. Now, do we find this to be a successful counterexample to RK? Of course, not. We accept that he has some memory, likely with a propositional content, but he surely doesn't seem to remember that his blood type is AB.

The intrinsic connection between propositional memory and justification has been endorsed by some philosophers, like Pollock.[15] He claims that we are justified in believing what we remember. We believe that we know many things we learned before, but quite often, we have forgotten how we learned them and could not justify them in the way we could have when we initially learned these things. Are we still justified in believing them? The answer seems to be positive, insofar as we do not realize that we have no access to the original grounds any longer.

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[14] Bernecker, *Memory*, 74.

[15] See Pollock, *Knowledge and Justification*, 193. Huemer nicely demonstrates the point by appeal to Russellian five minutes hypothesis. See Michael Huemer, "The Problem of Memory Knowledge," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 80, 4 (1999): 350.

This intuition surely puts certain restrictions on any attempts to describe second type counterexamples to RK. Therefore, antagonists of RK, like Bernecker, hope to provide counterexamples by way of Gettier type scenarios. They try to describe a case in which warrant for one's memory belief is somehow undermined without depriving us of the grounds for comfortably granting the corresponding propositional memory to him.

Unfortunately, those counterexamples are not even close to clear-cut counterexamples. Let's get back to Bernecker's story. Contrary to his conviction, it doesn't seem to be a clear-cut counterexample to RK at all. Attacking another story of the same type proposed by Bernecker, Adams simply denies that the subject has a propositional memory at issue,[16] and Moon has "no clear intuition" about whether the subject has it.[17] It is worth calling attention to the way Bernecker refers to the *memory*, as both philosophers suggest. Bernecker asks whether the subject's belief qualifies as a *memory*. To this extent, we may concur. However, remembering a true belief is not necessarily an instance of propositional memory, as a downright unwarranted true memory belief may not. If he straightforwardly asked us whether the subject remembers that S checked out a book by Caesar, then many of us, including both philosophers, would hesitate. Notice here that this already establishes my point, no matter what rejoinder Bernecker offers. At least, the scenario fails to constitute a clear-cut counterexample to RK.

One might wonder whether we can adjust the scenario so as to present the subject as having the propositional memory. Let us think of another case by Bernecker:

> … at t_1 you came to justifiably believe that S has borrowed Caesar's *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* from the library. From this belief you inferred that S has borrowed a book by Caesar. This belief was true. But, unsuspected by you, the belief was true because S has borrowed another book by Caesar, the *Commentarii de Bello Civili*. … now suppose that you seem to remember at t_2 what you believed at t_1, namely that S borrowed a book by Caesar. Can you in fact remember what you seem to remember? I don't see any good reasons for answering in the negative.[18]

Does the subject remember that S borrowed a book by Caesar? I simply have no clear intuition, probably because, as Adams points out, the scenario is

[16] Fred Adams, "Husker do?" *Philosophical Studies* 153 (2011): 85.

[17] Moon, "Remembering entails knowing," Section 3.3.

[18] Bernecker, *Memory*, 73-74.

"under-described."[19] So, let us add a little more details, in accordance with Adams's suggestion, in order to make it clear that the subject has the propositional memory. Suppose that "you saw a book with the name 'Caesar' on it, but just inferred the wrong book by Caesar was checked out." Now, I'm more inclined to say that the subject remembers that S has borrowed a book by Caesar. However, the problem is simply that the subject now appears more likely to know that S has borrowed a book by Caesar. After all, there is a problem analogous to the one we saw above: the more clearly unwarranted one's belief is, the less clear he has the corresponding propositional memory.

We can observe the same trouble in other Gettier type scenarios. Consider an undefeated defeater scenario in which one's knowledge is clearly undermined. Suppose John saw Greg driving a car, and came to know that Greg was driving a car. Suppose, furthermore, Greg's wife later lied to John by telling him that Greg does not drive a car, and suppose that John accepts that, and becomes uncertain about his belief that Greg was driving a car. In this case, John's lack of conviction seems to undermine the warrant of his belief, so that John no longer knows that Greg was driving a car. Now, those who hope to construct a scenario in which one clearly remembers that p without knowing that p because of an undefeated defeater must be attracted by Naylor's observation, i.e., "I may remember that p and yet, if my memory lacks conviction or if I have conflicting evidence that is only somewhat credible, not know that p …"[20] If this is correct, we must be able to construct an analogous scenario in which John remembers that Greg was driving a car without knowing it simply by deploying the same type defeater.

Again, the problem is that such a defeater cannot help but present the story also as if John no longer remembers that Greg was driving a car. Imagine a scenario in which John clearly knows that Greg was driving a car, and, in light of a certain background story, it seems clear that John remembers that Greg was driving a car. Let us call this scenario S1. Now, consider the following modified scenario, S2: in addition to the same background story, in S2, John is uncertain about whether Greg was driving a car because of the lie Greg's wife told. In this modified scenario, because of this defeater we agree that John no longer knows that Greg was driving a car. But in the face of the same defeater, is it clear that John remembers that Greg was driving a car? I'm inclined to say that he does not remember that Greg was driving a car. At least, the answer is far from obvious.[21]

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[19] Adams, "Husker do," 84.

[20] Andrew Naylor, "Justification in Memory Knowledge," *Synthese* 55 (1983): 270.

[21] A similar story can be found in Bernecker, *Memory*, 78. The scenario is far from a clear-cut counterexample to RK. Indeed, Bernecker implicitly accepts that we may be reluctant to say

However, absent the defeater episode, we clearly think that John remembers that Greg was driving a car. If that is right, not only our intuition as to John's knowledge, but also as to John's propositional memory must have changed between S1 and S2. But how? After all, the difference between the two scenarios consists only in the defeater episode. Thus, our intuition as to John's propositional memory must be affected by whether the defeater is absent or not.

One might wonder if we can meet the challenge by reinforcing our intuition that the subject has the propositional memory. He hopes to adjust the story and add some episode which strongly suggests to us that the subject has the propositional memory. Let us call an episode which gives us such impression a memory episode. Indeed, both S1 and S2 contain the same memory episode which gives us the impression that John remembers that Greg was driving a car. The challenge here is that this memory episode cannot support our intuition strongly enough in S2 in face of the defeater episodes. We hesitate, at least, about declaring that John in S2 remembers that Greg was driving a car. Can we replace the memory episode with one which stays effective even in the face of such a strong defeater episode? Of course, we can. But the essential trouble is that such a memory episode would influence the warrant of the corresponding knowledge claim; in particular, it would weaken the undermining power of the defeater in turn. Consequently, in a story containing such a memory episode, even if the subject clearly remembers that *p*, it wouldn't be very clear that he doesn't know that *p*.

Let us add another memory episode to S2. Suppose, for instance, even after John comes to be uncertain about his belief that Greg was driving a car, John is still wondering whether the driver he saw was really not Greg. So John scrutinizes the details of his memory by recalling the visual experience he had. Indeed, in the visual image John recalls in his mind, someone looking just like Greg is driving a car. Now, in this story, does John not remember that Greg was driving a car? I'm inclined to say that John remembers that Greg was driving a car. To say the least of it, it is less problematic to attribute John of the propositional memory in this scenario than the previous one. But how about his knowledge? We also feel more comfortable in saying that John knows that Greg was driving a car.

This sufficiently shows that the more clearly warrant for one's memory belief is defeated, the less clear he has the corresponding propositional memory. All these observations lead us to a conclusion: not only knowledge, but also propositional memory presupposes warrant. And no undefeated defeater episode

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that the subject has the propositional memory, because of his lack of confidence. See Adams, "Husker do," 88, and Moon, "Remembering entails knowing," Section 3.2.

can undermine only warrant for knowledge, while keeping warrant for propositional memory unhurt.[22]

Now the problem on the other horn of the dilemma is clear. If there is to be any clear-cut counterexample to RK, such a scenario must contain a memory episode which could legitimately give us a clear impression that the subject has a propositional memory, and that impression must be held strongly against any story sufficiently undermining the subject's knowledge. We have no idea what kinds of memory episode and undermining scenario could fulfill this task. Therefore, we cannot describe no clear-cut case in which one remembers that *p* without knowing that *p* because he is not warranted in believing that *p*.

V. Conclusion

We can safely conclude that both routes to constructing a clear-cut counterexample to RK fail to be satisfactory. Neither a case in which one has no belief nor a case in which warrant for one's belief is undermined can constitute a clear-cut example in which one remembers that *p* without knowing that *p*. And I see no reason to suppose that some of those necessarily ambiguous stories are in fact genuine counterexamples to RK. Therefore, we have no plausible reason to suppose that there is a genuine counterexample to RK.[23]

[22] An anonymous reviewer points out that it is possible that a certain defeater undermines knowledge more than memory. If this is true, it leaves open the possibility that one remembers that *p* without knowing that *p*. My response is two folds. First of all, it seems unlikely that we can construct a clear-cut counterexample to RK by appeal to such a defeater. Second of all, how can we show the existence of such a defeater without begging the question? The only plausible way of clearly showing that the undermining force of a defeater is more in the case of knowledge than that of memory seems to be by way of describing a case in which one remembers that *p* without knowing it.

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THE PERSISTENT PROBLEM OF THE LOTTERY PARADOX: AND ITS UNWELCOME CONSEQUENCES FOR CONTEXTUALISM

Travis TIMMERMAN

ABSTRACT: This paper attempts to show that contextualism cannot adequately handle all versions of 'The Lottery Paradox." Although the application of contextualist rules is meant to vindicate the intuitive distinction between cases of knowledge and non-knowledge, it fails to do so when applied to certain versions of "The Lottery Paradox." In making my argument, I first briefly explain why this issue should be of central importance for contextualism. I then review Lewis' contextualism before offering my argument that the lottery paradox persists on all contextualist accounts. Although I argue that the contextualist does not fare well, hope nevertheless remains. For, on Lewis' behalf, I offer what I take to be the best solution for the contextualist and argue that once this solution is adopted, contextualism will be in a better position to handle the lottery paradox than any other substantive epistemological theory.

KEYWORDS: lottery paradox, contextualism, epistemology

I. The Lottery Paradox

There are a few epistemological puzzles that revolve around what is referred to as "The Lottery Paradox." A standard formulation of one of these paradoxes is as follows. Suppose Poor Bill and Skeptical Susan are talking and Susan invites Bill to come with her on an African Safari next year. Bill, a wage slave, politely declines, saying that he will not have enough money to go. Now, suppose that Bill plays the lottery each week and if he were to win the lottery, he would have enough money to go on an African Safari. If Bill knows that he will not have enough money to go on the safari and Bill recognizes that this entails that he will lose the lottery, then by the closure principle,[1] Bill knows that he will lose the lottery; hence the paradox. It seems that while Bill knows he will not have enough money to go on a

[1] The closure principle can be formulated as "If person *S* knows *p*, and *p* entails *q*, then *S* knows *q*." This definition is from Steven Luper, "The Epistemic Closure Principle," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/closure-epistemic/>.

safari next year, he does *not* know that he will never win the lottery. How can this be?

David Lewis, and other contextualists,[2] attempt to solve the paradox by arguing that the truth-value of these knowledge ascriptions are sensitive to certain facts about the context in which they are uttered. The facts about context that are considered relevant differ between contextualists, so for simplicity's sake, I will focus on those which Lewis gives in his seminal work, "Elusive Knowledge."[3] If Lewis' contextualism can be made to work by its own lights, then it needs to account for our intuition that knowledge claims like "I know I will lose the lottery" are false, while maintaining that we can still rightly claim to know propositions such as "I know I will not have enough money to go on an African Safari next year."[4] Unfortunately, Lewis' account fails to do just that, or so I will argue. At the same time, Lewis' contextualist solution is ingenious and unique. One of its many virtues is that it allows for us to know that we will lose the lottery when the *Rule of Resemblance* is not salient, which, as we will see, is the intuitively right result.[5] Yet, once we consider how the *Rule of Resemblance* applies in analogue lottery cases, Lewis becomes stuck between a rock and a hard place. Specifically, he will either have to deny we have knowledge in cases where it intuitively seems like we have knowledge, or grant that we *can* know we will lose the lottery in contexts in which we seem to lack knowledge about whether we will lose the lottery. Hence, if my argument works, there will be two horns that Lewis will have to choose from. Either we do not know that we will lose the

[2] For similar contextualist accounts that could be used, please see Stewart Cohen, "How to be a Fallibilist," *Philosophical Perspectives* 91 (1988): 581-605, Stewart Cohen, "Skepticism, Relevance, and Relativity," in *Dretske and His Critics,* ed. Brian McLaughlin (Massachusetts: Blackwell Press, 1991), 17-37, and especially Stewart Cohen, "Contextualist Solutions to Epistemological Problems: Scepticism, Gettier, and the Lottery," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 76 (1998): 289-306. See also Peter Unger, "The Cone Model of Knowledge," *Philosophical Topics* 14 (1986): 125-178, Peter Unger, *Philosophical Relativity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), and Keith DeRose, "Solving the Sceptical Problem," *Philosophical Review* 104 (1995): 1-5. Some of Cohen's work uses his falliblism to solve the lottery paradox in a way similar to, but less complex than, Lewis' solution. I use Lewis' account in this paper because I believe it's the strongest form of contextualism. I focus only on his contextualist rules for both simplicity's sake and length issues. Suffice it to say that alternative accounts are similar enough to Lewis' that they do not seem to be able to avoid the objections I raise in this paper. Lewis' account seems to get the *least* wrong in lottery cases.

[3] David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 74 (1996): 549-567.

[4] This example is drawn from John Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004),160-162.

[5] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 282.

lottery, but at the expense of something close to universal skepticism, or we can actually know that we will lose the lottery, even when it's salient that we are holding a ticket in a fair lottery.

My paper takes the following form. First, I briefly explain why this issue should be of central importance for contextualism, indeed any epistemological theory, instead of something merely tangential. I then review Lewis' contextualism before offering my argument that the lottery paradox persists on all contextualist accounts, including Lewis' contextualism. Although I argue that the contextualist does not fare well, hope nevertheless remains. For, on Lewis' behalf, I offer what I take to be the best solution for the contextualist and argue that contextualism is in a better position to handle the lottery paradox than any other substantive epistemological theory. I end the paper with a brief digression, examining how contextualists can handle another formulation of the lottery paradox that concerns *the sufficiency thesis* and the *conjunction principle*.

II. The Importance of Addressing the Lottery Paradox

Lottery paradoxes may seem like a relatively minor issue in epistemology. Whether an epistemological theory can account for our intuitions in lottery cases seems less crucial than whether it is consistent, can avoid skepticism, captures *most* of our intuitions about which knowledge ascriptions are accurate and handles relevantly similar issues. If lottery cases were isolated components of all epistemological theories, I would agree. However, lottery cases are of central importance to any substantive epistemological theory precisely because the way lottery cases are dealt with has important implications for each of the aforementioned aspects of any epistemological theory. In other words, lottery cases which are not properly accounted for run the risk of being generalized within a theory.[6] Generalizing the rules that apply to lottery cases usually exposes inconsistency with the theory in question. Revising the theory in light of the inconsistency can often result in undermining many knowledge claims to which we feel entitled. This is what I take the issue to be with contextualism generally, and Lewis' account, specifically. As such, examining how an epistemological theory handles lottery paradoxes seems to be of crucial importance.

[6] For more on this issue, see Igor Douven and Timothy Williamson, "Generalizing the Lottery Paradox," *The British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 57 (2006): 755-779.

III. (Lewis') Contextualism

In an attempt to find a middle ground between two (supposedly) undesirable epistemological theories (i.e. skepticism and fallibilism), Lewis opts for a contextualist framework, which *essentially* consists of five rules combined with a definition of knowledge. These rules are the *Rule of Actuality*, the *Rule of Belief*, the *Rule of Resemblance*, the *Rule of Reliability* and the *Rule of Attention*. It might be useful to start by giving a definition of knowledge and building upon that. Lewis can assert that a subject "S knows that P iff, for every possibility W in which not-P, S knows that not-W" and then add a detailed contextualist framework.[7] The scope of possibilities in this definition is restricted to those possibilities which may not properly be ignored, and the possibilities that may not be properly ignored are determined by context. How might one determine the relevant role of context? Lewis' five rules are supposed to provide the way to distinguish between those possibilities which may be properly ignored and those which may not. The consequence is that one is able to maintain her ordinary everyday knowledge (e.g. I have hands) most of the time. She only fails to know these claims once the context shifts, preventing one (or more) of the five rules from being met.

In what follows, I will review Lewis' five contextualist rules while explaining how his contextualism is supposed to handle a formulation of the lottery paradox. Lewis' contextualist solution is original and *prima facie* plausible. His account allows for us to know that we will lose the lottery when the Rule of Resemblance is not salient.[8] But in any context where this rule becomes salient, we will lose knowledge that we won't win the lottery. Applying Lewis' contextualist rules to lottery cases will yield the right result in most, but not all, cases. Before I review what I take the problematic cases to be, I will offer an exposition of Lewis' contextualist rules. The first rule is the *Rule of Actuality* and is simply the stipulation that the "possibility that actually obtains is never properly ignored."[9] This should be fairly straightforward and accounts for the truth condition of knowledge. I cannot know that I will lose the lottery if I have the winning ticket.[10] The second rule is the *Rule of Belief* and is also fairly

[7] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 273.

[8] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 282.

[9] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 274.

[10] It might be worth noting that this rule is an externalist one. That is, we will almost never (and never with skeptical hypotheses) be able to determine with absolute certainty whether this rule is met. As such, we might not have meta-knowledge in many cases, which may be an unwelcome conclusion for some.

straightforward. It is the claim that a "possibility that the subject believes to obtain is not properly ignored" and this is true "whether or not he is right to so believe."[11] Thus, I cannot know that I have hands if I actually believe that I am a BIV and consequently believe that I do not have hands. This just accounts for the belief condition of knowledge.

The third rule is the *Rule of Resemblance*, which is a bit more complicated. Here is the most straightforward and concise manner in which it can be stated: If two possibilities saliently resemble one another and "if one of them may not be properly ignored, neither may the other."[12] This rule is tricky, and the trickiness occurs as a result of the qualifier 'salient,' as well as the ambiguity of how the term 'resemble' is being used.[13] Although Lewis never provides an explicit account of how these terms are being used, we can avoid any problems of ambiguity by considering clear examples on both ends. I will do this shortly. A final point about the rule is worth noting. Lewis acknowledges that there is an *ad hoc* element to its application.[14] It is not applied to the resemblance that any skeptical possibility resembles actuality with respect to the subject's evidence.[15] For if it were applied in that way, then (near) universal skepticism would be the result. Lewis appeals to the *Rule of Resemblance* to take care of the lottery problem.[16] We will therefore return to it shortly.

The final three rules are the *Rule of Reliability*, the *Rule of Conservatism* and the *Rule of Attention.* The *Rule of Reliability* is exactly what it sounds like. It requires that knowledge be obtained by a reliable process (e.g. vision). If you acquire a true belief that meets the other rules by some unreliable process (e.g. palm reading), then you lack knowledge.[17] The *Rule of Conservatism* allows (very defeasibly) that we may properly ignore what those around us ignore.[18] This will also play a role in the lottery paradox discussion. The *Rule of Attention* is almost

[11] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 275.

[12] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 275.

[13] There are also issues Lewis notes, such as cases where "one possibility saliently resembles two or more others," where one resembles the second in one respect, but resembles the third possibility in another respect.

[14] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 276.

[15] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 276.

[16] It's worth noting that the *Rule of Resemblance* applied to the lottery paradox is similar to Cohen's 'salience' rule. See Cohen, "How to be a Fallibilist," 121 and Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries*, 159.

[17] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 277. This rule is, of course, defeasible. The *Rule of Actuality* alone or conjoined with the *Rule of Resemblance* can easily undermine the *Rule of Reliability.*

[18] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 277. Again, this is defeasible and could be undermined by any of the other rules.

tautological. It simply requires that whatever is properly ignored is *as a matter of fact* being ignored. It's not enough for it to be the case that it *could* be properly ignored by the individual. It also has to actually be the case that it *is currently being ignored by the individual*.[19]

IV. How Contextualists Try to Handle the Lottery Paradox

At this point, we can consider how Lewis' account handles the lottery paradox. The *Rule of Resemblance* is supposed to rule out any case of knowing I will lose the lottery when I am thinking about the lottery.[20] Lewis argues that for "every ticket, there is the possibility that it will win," which means that these "possibilities are saliently similar to one another: so either every one of them may be ignored, or else none may."[21] But one of them will be the winning ticket, so by the *Rule of Actuality*, it may not properly be ignored. Since one may not be properly ignored, and since they all saliently resemble one another, none may be properly ignored.[22] Now, while we cannot properly ignore the possibility of having the winning ticket when we are thinking about playing the lottery, we can (according to Lewis) properly ignore the possibility of having the winning lottery ticket when we are properly ignoring the fact that we are (or could in the future) play the lottery. Consider Lewis' case of Poor Bill again. Poor Bill is a wage slave who spends all of his spare cash gambling, including playing the lottery. We might say that we know "Poor Bill will never be rich." But if the possibility that Bill's ticket wins saliently resembles the actual winning ticket, then we cannot properly ignore the possibility that Bill will win the lottery and therefore would not know that he will never be rich. But Lewis' account contains a loophole due to his qualifier 'salient.' Lewis writes that when talking about the cases in which one is considering the fact that she is playing the lottery …

> I saw to it that the resemblance between the many possibilities associated with the many tickets was sufficiently salient. But this time, when we were busy pitying poor Bill for his habits and not for his luck, the resemblance of the many possibilities was not so salient. At that point, the possibility of Bill's winning was properly ignored; so then it was true to say that we knew he would never be rich

[19] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 277-278.

[20] Specifically, Lewis states "It is the *Rule of Resemblance* that explains why you do not know that you will lose the lottery, no matter what the odds are against you and no matter how sure you should therefore be that you will lose." (277).

[21] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 276.

[22] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 276.

> … And at that point, it was also true that we knew he would lose – but that was only true so long as it remained unsaid! (And maybe unthought as well).[23]

If this works, Lewis provides us with a nifty solution to this version of the lottery paradox, but I have reservations about whether it can work given (i) Lewis' stipulation that there is necessarily a winner in his lottery cases and (ii) his 'salience' qualifier. If my argument against Lewis is sound, then Lewis' account (as described) will lead to a much wider skepticism than he (or any contextualist) would want to embrace. The first thing to note is that the 'salience' qualifier can be applied to lottery cases too, as which facts and possibilities are salient in any individual's mind is merely a contingent matter. It's a psychological fact that when *most* people play the lottery, the possibility that they will win is salient, but it's not a logical truth that when one plays the lottery the possibility of winning is salient to the one playing. There are possible worlds where people play fair lotteries and the fact that there is a chance they will win is never salient to any player. John Hawthorne even notes that some people in the actual world play the lottery without the possibility of winning ever becoming salient to them.[24]

V. Some Problems with Lewis' Contextualist Account

I will now consider an issue with (i), consider the best response on Lewis' behalf and then argue that this response does not avoid the lottery paradox without resulting in a kind of skepticism. In the process of doing this, I will discuss (ii) as well. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that Lewis' account works for lottery cases where there is a guaranteed winner. The following question naturally arises. What about cases where no one is guaranteed to win? In the actual world, there are lotteries with no guaranteed winner and most people have the intuition that one *cannot* know she will lose *any* fair lottery (regardless of whether there is a guaranteed winner).

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[23] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 282.

[24] Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries*, 84. At least, he seems to say something along these lines. In his discussion of fallibilism's handling of the lottery paradox, he responds to Cohen's salience criteria. He asks "Why should it be inevitable that I take the falsity of the lottery proposition seriously once the question is raised?" The problem is that despite this fact that it may be plausible to claim that the minute chance of winning the lottery may be salient in most cases, it is not necessarily so for every case. Indeed, Hawthorne notes that sometimes people do "flat-out assert that they will not win the lottery." Maybe one cannot assert that he will lose the lottery without the possibility that he will win being salient to him. If so, we can just revise the example to avoid this problem. My own example is this section should get around this objection.

There are two possible answers Lewis could give in lottery cases with no guaranteed winner. On the one hand, he could just accept that we can know we will lose the lottery in such cases. But he probably does not want to take that route for a few reasons. First, it fails to capture the intuition that people have about lotteries, which is an issue contextualism is supposed to solve. If Lewis' contextualism can only show that it gets some subset of lottery cases right and others wrong, it fails to achieve this goal. Second, the distinction between the lottery cases where there is a guaranteed winner and one where there is not seems *ad hoc* and therefore unjustified. It's *ad hoc* because the probability that one holds a winning ticket could be identical in both lottery cases and any combination of Lewis' contextualist rules could be met or violated in either lottery case.

As an illustration of this point, note that the probability that someone is a winner in a fair lottery (with a guaranteed winner) is determined by the number of tickets held over the number of tickets there are. If someone has one ticket, then her odds of winning are 1/n, where n is the number of tickets being held in the lottery. In a fair lottery where there is no guaranteed winner, the probability that an individual will win is determined by the number of tickets she has over the number of total possible combinations of lottery numbers. So, if an individual has one ticket, then her chances of winning would be 1/c, where c is the total number of possible winning number combinations in the lottery. The odds of any fair lottery *with* a guaranteed winner (1/n) can be made identical to the odds of any fair lottery *without* a guaranteed winner (1/c). We only need to make the number of tickets (n) in the lottery (with a guaranteed winner) equal to the number of total winning number combinations (c) in the lottery (without a guaranteed winner). Then, we have a case where the probability of winning or losing is the same between the two lottery options, each lottery is fair (i.e. there is no trickery going on in selecting the winner or winning numbers), the possibility of winning is not salient and any combination of Lewis' rules could either be met or violated. Since both types of fair lotteries bear all of the relevant similarities, it is seemingly absurd for Lewis to ascribe knowledge in the case where there is no guaranteed winner and deny it in the case where there is one.[25]

[25] Some people might still have the intuition that there is some relevant difference between the two lottery cases. They might argue that it's the fact that someone is guaranteed to win that is relevant. There are two things to say in response. First, it's not clear why the fact that someone will win is relevant. The odds of winning for each ticket holder is the same in both cases. The common intuition seems to be that a person does not know she will lose the lottery *because* they might be the winner regardless of whether someone else is guaranteed to win if they lose. Second, even if this is a relevant difference, Lewis' contextualism would still fail to capture our intuition in lottery cases where there is no guaranteed winner. I could then reframe my

Fortunately, one need not make such *ad hoc* distinctions. Since both lottery types are relevantly similar, contextualists should want to treat them as such. They can do this by arguing that we do *not* know that we will lose the lottery in either case. But then a new, equally troubling, question arises. Can Lewis' contextualist rules be applied to exclude knowledge of lottery cases where there is no guaranteed winner? Unfortunately not, for it looks like revising the rules to account for this type of lottery case will inevitably result in the issue of salience coming back to haunt Lewis' account. How might Lewis respond? He could presumably broaden the *Rule of Resemblance* by appealing to counter-factuals. That is, even in cases of fair lotteries with no guaranteed winner, Lewis might argue that the *Rule of Resemblance* still holds for each individual ticket because in some nearby world, there is an individual who had the winning ticket (i.e. the ticket with the correct combination of numbers) and this would clearly be true for every fair lottery. Suppose Lewis does say that. We could then ask him about the following case.

> **The Yankees Game** – I pick up the New York Times and read that the Yankees won their last game 6 to 5. I seem to acquire knowledge that the Yankees won 6 to 5, despite the small possibility that there is a typo in the paper.[26]

Yet, if this is true, why could I not similarly acquire knowledge that I will lose the lottery when the odds that I will lose are the same as the odds that there is no typo in the paper?[27] On this interpretation, Lewis cannot appeal to the *Rule of Actuality* to distinguish these two cases, as the lottery case without a guaranteed winner might not have anyone that actually won. Furthermore, it seems like we can appeal to nearby possible worlds in the exact same way in The Yankees Game case as the lottery case. So, broadening the *Rule of Resemblance* to apply to the lottery case (without a guaranteed winner) undermines knowledge in cases like The Yankees Game.

The no-guaranteed-winner lottery case generalizes, and its consequences are far-reaching. There is nothing distinctive about typos in a paper or baseball games. All that was necessary to get the Yankees Game thought experiment off the ground was that (1) It relied on some action (e.g. reading a paper) via which

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Yankees Game case to mirror this type of lottery case (i.e. It would be a case where the reader is aware that there is some paper out there with a typo in it).

[26] Assume for the sake of argument that I have not yet checked any other sources.

[27] The odds that there is a typo could be quantified in a few different ways. One way would be to divide the number of sentences with typos made by the NY Times in its history by the total number of sentences in the paper's history. Or, if there is one specific paper with a typo in it, we could divide 1 (that paper) over the total number of papers issued that day.

one intuitively gains knowledge and (2) there is some non-zero chance that the person is mistaken about the proposition she comes to believe. And here is where the real problem lies. Almost every knowledge claim we make meets conditions (1) and (2). So, for every knowledge claim we make that meets these two conditions, there is some world with a (no-guaranteed-winner) lottery, where the odds that one is mistaken in her knowledge claim *p* is identical to the odds that a person will win the fair lottery in this possible world.[28] Yet, we intuitively want to say that we can truly make these knowledge claims, but deny that the individuals in the possible world know that they will lose the lottery. The distance between the actual world in the lottery case and the nearest possible world where someone wins should be equal to the distance between the actual world where any knowledge claim (meeting conditions (1) and (2)) is made and the nearest possible world where that proposition is false.[29]

Lewis is not without recourse yet. He might rightly claim that winning the lottery when we buy a lottery ticket is salient to us, while entertaining the possibility of a typo in a paper as prestigious as the New York Times is not normally salient to us. For that reason, he might argue that his 'salience' qualifier in the *Rule of Resemblance* would rule out knowledge in the lottery cases, but not in cases like The Yankees Game (or more broadly, any knowledge claims that meet conditions (1) and (2)). Nevertheless, the problem looms. When this rule is applied in the actual world, it is probably an accurate description of *most* people's psychology (when they are buying lottery tickets and reading newspapers), but it is not a necessary truth. In other words, the fact that winning the lottery is salient to most individuals, whereas there being a typo in the New York Times is not salient to most individuals, is merely a contingent matter of fact and so would not intuitively demarcate cases of knowledge from cases of non-knowledge in nearby possible worlds. Moreover, it probably does not get the intuitively right results in our world in every instance. To illustrate this possibility, consider the following case.

[28] I'm stipulating that in this possible world, the possibility of winning is not salient in their mind. This should allow all five of Lewis' knowledge-vetoing rules to be avoided.

[29] This is because the odds that the proposition in question is false is always identical between the lottery case and the non-lottery proposition case. It is built into the thought experiment that the world with a typo is a nearby, relevantly similar one. Otherwise, we run into problems with determining what the odds are that there is a typo in a paper in some far away possible world. We can assume that the world is very much like ours and typos occur for the same type of reasons, so the probability that there is a typo is approximately the same between the actual world and any nearby, relevantly similar possible world.

> **The Disinterested Lottery Player** – Susie believes that she knows she will lose the lottery each time she plays. However, she also believes that promises confer moral obligations. Susie promised her mother on her deathbed that she would play the lottery each week. Susie's mother was irrational and played the lottery as often as she could afford a ticket. Sure that her family was bound to win someday, her dying wish was for Susie to play the lottery on her behalf once she was dead. To meet (what she believes is) her moral obligation, Susie does play the lottery weekly for her mother. But, since Susie believes she knows she will lose, each week Susie buys a lottery ticket and then immediately throws it out.

In this case, for Susie, the chance that she will win the lottery is no more salient to her than the chance that a typo in the New York Times will cause her to falsely believe that the Yankees won their last game. That is to say, neither possibility is salient for Susie. Lewis' contextualism[30] seems to entail that Susie knows she will lose the lottery each week, as none of his rules are violated. Perhaps Lewis would respond that the relevant difference between the two cases can be recognized via an appeal to the *Rule of Conservatism* (i.e. We may (very defeasibly) ignore those possibilities that those around us ignore). Lewis could rightly point out that those around us do (under normal circumstances) ignore the possibility that we acquired false beliefs because of typos in a paper. Sadly this will not solve the lottery case. The *Rule of Conservatism* says that we need not pay attention to the things other people ignore. It does *not* say that we must pay attention to the things around us that other people pay attention to. Susie is not required to make it salient to herself that she might win the lottery simply because it's salient to other people.[31] More importantly, even if one did want to require Susie to do this by adding a sixth contextualist rule, Susie could still know that she would lose the lottery if Susie lived in a world where it was never salient to people that they might win the lottery. I take it that most people's intuition is that no one can know that they will lose a fair lottery, and whether the possibility of winning is salient to the majority does not affect the strength of this intuition. So, adding a sixth contextualist rule will not work. At the same time, I have not (and cannot) consider all the possible rules that a contextualist might add to his account. So, the argument I am making against contextualism is not decisive. There could be some relevant difference between all lottery and all non-lottery cases that a contextualist might be able to discover. But so long as such a rule remains undiscovered, my argument hopefully retains its force. We are left with an account of the contextualist position which seemingly entails that we can know that we will lose some fair lotteries under certain conditions. This is a real

[30] So does Cohen's fallibilism and (I would argue) all forms of contextualism.

[31] Or, if she is, it's not because of what is required by the *Rule of Conservatism*.

problem since it contradicts the commonsense intuition that, as Lewis writes, "you do not know that you will lose the lottery, no matter what the odds are against you."[32] It looks as though contextualists cannot have their cake and eat it too.

VI. What Contextualists Ought to Say about the Lottery Paradox

If my argument works, then contextualists either face endorsing a view that entails near universal skepticism or endorsing a view that allows us to know that we can lose a fair lottery. Neither option seems particularly palatable. Does this mean that we ought to write contextualism off as a viable epistemological theory? Although I don't see how the contextualist can get around the two-horned dilemma I raise for the lottery paradox, I want to argue that contextualism can accept one of the horns relatively unscathed. The best defense for the contextualist in this case is a good offense. The lottery paradox is a problem for any epistemological view that allows for people to know some propositions are true when there is a non-zero chance that their belief is false. Except for skepticism, this seems to be a problem for every epistemological theory. Here is why. For any epistemological theory that allows someone to know a proposition is true when there is some non-zero chance the person could be mistaken, we can construct a fair lottery case where the odds of winning the lottery are exactly the same as the odds that the proposition one 'knows' is true is actually false. Given the intuition that most people have about lottery cases,[33] the result would be a tension in the epistemological theory in question. Either we know we will lose the lottery or we don't know the proposition in question or there is an inconsistency[34] in the view. It often seems to be an implicit assumption in the literature that the best way to account for our seemingly conflicting intuitions is to find the relevant difference between lottery cases and other cases of knowledge. This way we can show that our intuitions are really accurate and that we use the term 'knowledge' consistently. Given the vast literature in the field and, in my opinion, the lack of a satisfactory answer[35] to lottery cases, it is worth taking seriously the idea that we just use the term 'knowledge' inconsistently. Once this is accepted, we could revise the way we use the term to get out of the paradox. This is where contextualists can come out on top. Even though contextualism cannot sharply

[32] Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 276.

[33] We can never know that we will lose a fair lottery.

[34] Or a consistent, but *ad hoc*, distinction.

[35] Even if the reader finds an account of lottery cases compelling, it should still be admitted that no explanation has achieved anything akin to widespread acceptance. Then again, that is standard in philosophical discourse.

distinguish all lottery cases from all non-lottery ones, Lewis' five rules get it right *most* of the time. Endorsing Lewis' contextualist rules in addition to the aforementioned definition of knowledge gets us as close as we can conceivably get to solving the problem, or so contextualists might want to argue. They are left with a much smaller bullet to bite (i.e. we can know that we can lose a fair lottery sometimes, in certain cases) than any form of invariantism.[36] In short, contextualists should admit that they cannot solve the lottery paradox, but then argue that no one else can either. At this point, the contextualist is in a good position to demonstrate that contextualist theories have the best resources to come closer to solving the paradox than any plausible alternative epistemic account. This actually provides us with a good reason to adopt a contextualist view.

VII. Another Lottery Paradox: A Short Addendum

There is another lottery paradox, which Dana Nelkin refers to as the "rationality version," that is closely related to the one addressed in this paper.[37] What we want to say about this formulation depends upon what, exactly, we want to say about the first type of lottery case. I will define a few relevant terms, provide a brief explication of the problem and outline my solution. My solution is not definitive, but I hope that it contributes to the discussion and offers a new way of solving a second lottery paradox. Consider the following two plausible principles …

> 1) *Sufficiency Thesis* (ST) "A proposition w is rationally acceptable if Pr(w) > t."[38]

'Pr' is a probability distribution over propositions, while 't' represents a threshold value close to 1. The threshold can vary depending on the epistemological theory in question. But any non-skeptical view will requires that 't' be less than 1.

> 2) *Conjunction Principle* (CP) "If each of the propositions w and c is rationally acceptable, so is w ^ c."[39]

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[36] To be clear, this is because invariantist theories cannot account for the contextual differences between lottery cases (e.g. the possibility of winning is much more likely to be salient to the lottery player than possibilities of error are likely to be salient to the knowledge ascriber). So, the number of fair lottery cases that we could know we would lose should be greater for any invariantist account than it would for any contextualist theory.

[37] See Dana K. Nelkin, "The Lottery Paradox, Knowledge, and Rationality," *Philosophical Review* 109 (2000): 375-376, for an interesting discussion on the topic. Nelkin's solution is different from mine.

[38] Douven and Williamson, "Generalizing the Lottery Paradox," 755.

[39] Douven and Williamson, "Generalizing the Lottery Paradox," 755.

Given the acceptance of ST and CP, we get what John Hawthorne calls "the threat from conjunction introduction."[40] He claims that an unpalatable consequence of the initial theory of relevant alternatives not only allows someone to know that they will lose the lottery, but also entails that they are able to predict everyone who will lose. For example, suppose that Johnny has entered a fair lottery with 5,001 ticket holders. He reasons that he will not win because the chance that this will occur is small enough to rule out. Furthermore, his friend Billy also has a lottery ticket. So Johnny can know that Billy will lose based upon the same reasons he knows that he will lose. Hawthorne argues that if Johnny knows that he will lose and Johnny knows that Billy will lose, then Johnny can know that both he and Billy will lose. This becomes a problem if we suppose that Johnny knows 5,000 of the 5,001 ticket holders, in which he will safely be able to assert that he knows each one of them will lose. If we let the threshold in ST be less than 1 and accept CP, then the result is that people like Susie can predict who will win the lottery, which is absurd. To see why, consider the following case.

> **The Disinterested Lottery Players –** Suppose Susie has eight siblings who share her feelings about the lottery and the moral nature of promises. Suppose that they each made the same promise to their mother that Susie did and play the lottery for the same reason. Lewis' contextualism would entail that Susie can know each of her siblings, considered jointly, will lose.

For the sake of simplicity, let's suppose the right threshold in ST is .8.[41] Also, let's suppose that Susie and her siblings are playing a lottery with only 10 possible outcomes. Each person holds one ticket.

Now, given the conjunction principle, Susie could reason as follows.

> 1. My odds of winning are 1/10. So by ST I know that I will lose.[42] Call this knowledge claim [L]S
>
> 2. My first sibling's odds of winning are 1/10. So by ST, I know S1 will lose. Call this knowledge claim [L]S1
>
> 3. My second sibling's odds of winning are 1/10. So by ST, I know S2 will lose. Call this knowledge claim [L]S2
>
> 4. [Repeat for Siblings 3-8]

[40] Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries*, 94.

[41] This is, of course, way too low.

[42] Given the salience qualifier in the *Rule of Resemblance*, I grant Susie would not know this (on Lewis' account) when she is thinking this issue through. But, presumably, she could know this on Lewis' account as soon as she stopped thinking about the odds ceased to be salient in her mind.

Once Susie has reasoned her way through each of her siblings' cases, by CP, she can infer that none of her siblings will win the lottery even though there is a 90% that one of them wins. That is, since PR entails that Susie can know [L]S and she can know [L]S1, CP entails that Susie can know ([L]S ^ [L]S1). She could eventually predict that there will be no winner (if the 10th option was not a ticketholder) or she could predict who the winner is (if the 10th option was a ticket holder). Obviously, Susie cannot do either one, and this needs to be accounted for by any plausible epistemological theory.

The line of thought that I think is worth developing rejects CP. If we (1) accept justification as a necessary condition for knowledge and (2) hold that justification depends on the subjective probability PR being sufficiently high, then (1) and (2) should entail that CP is false. Here is an illustration of the point.

> **What Susie Can Know –** Everything true in the previous case is true here. Recall that it was stipulated that t = .8 and the lottery consisted of 10 number variations. Given this, Susie can only know that, at most, two people who will lose at any given time. If we allowed CP, then Susie could come to know that large groups of people will lose, which would violate ST. That is, if we granted that Susie could know [([L]S ^ [L]S1) ^ [L]S3], then PR = .7, which is below the set threshold. Anytime we allow CP and ST, agents can acquire knowledge about sets of things that are above t in ST.[43] The fact that accepting both CP and ST results in this tension means that we ought to reject CP.[44] In the case I considered, there are 55 different propositions Susie could know, but each are mutually exclusive. For example, Susie could know ([L]S ^ [L]S1) OR ([L]S ^ [L]S2) OR say ([L]S3 ^ [L]S9), but not more than one of these mutually exclusive combinations.[45]

Rejecting CP may be a hard sell, but it is arguably not as problematic as it may initially seem. The odds of Susie *and* S1 losing are greater than the odds of Susie losing *or* S1 losing. If we accept ST (as we should) and the idea that subjective probability is closely related to justification (as I think we should), then with each conjunction of lottery propositions (via CP), a certain amount of justification is lost. By the time you have a conjunction of knowledge propositions about every ticket holder, justification has withered away completely.[46]

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[43] And this will be true no matter what t is set as.

[44] The rejection of PR would result in skepticism, which we want to avoid if at all possible.

[45] The 'OR' in this sentence should be read as the exclusive, not inclusive, disjunction.

[46] Hawthorne has written a fair amount on the issue and there is some interesting discussion in John Hawthorne and Luc Bovens, "The Preface, the Lottery, and the Logic of Belief," *Mind* 108 (1999): 241-264.

VIII. Conclusion

After providing a short overview of Lewis' contextualism and how it is meant to handle lottery cases, I raised a few unaddressed issues about lotteries. The main argument I advance is that Lewis' contextualism is either committed to saying that we can know that we will lose a fair lottery or adopting something close to universal skepticism. Lewis does not consider lottery cases where there is no guaranteed winner. I argue that there is no relevant difference between lotteries where there is a guaranteed winner and where there is no guaranteed winner. Because each case is relevantly similar, we ought to treat them as such.[47] I then offered a thought experiment to demonstrate that Lewis' contextualism allows for a person to know she can lose the lottery, as none of his contextualist rules are violated in my case. Next, I argued that the lottery cases generalize and that Lewis' contextualism could not deny knowledge in these lottery cases without also having to deny knowledge in every case where we could be mistaken. Since skepticism would be worse than a few counter-intuitive knowledge claims, I concluded that contextualists should bite the bullet and allow that we can know we will lose a fair lottery sometimes. On contextualists' behalf, I argued that they are in a better position to handle the lottery paradox than any invariantist account. I end the paper by considering another lottery paradox that contextualists who adopt my proposed solution will inherit and argue that they can get out of this lottery paradox by denying the conjunction principle.[48]

[47] Even if both types of lottery cases are not treated the same, Lewis' Contextualism would not be off the hook. It still could not account for our intuitions about those lottery cases with no guaranteed winner.

[48] I would like to thank André Gallois, Matt Eller and Amanda O'Neil for helpful comments and feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

DEBATE

THE PERMISSIBILITY SOLUTION TO THE LOTTERY PARADOX – REPLY TO LITTLEJOHN

Thomas KROEDEL

ABSTRACT: According to the permissibility solution to the lottery paradox, the paradox can be solved if we conceive of epistemic justification as a species of permissibility. Clayton Littlejohn has objected that the permissibility solution draws on a sufficient condition for permissible belief that has implausible consequences and that the solution conflicts with our lack of knowledge that a given lottery ticket will lose. The paper defends the permissibility solution against Littlejohn's objections.

KEYWORDS: epistemic permission, justification, lottery paradox, probability

1. Introduction

A large and fair lottery is held; one of the tickets is going to win. It seems that for each ticket I'm justified in believing that it will lose. It seems to follow from this that I'm justified in believing that all the tickets will lose. But I'm certainly not justified in believing that all the tickets will lose. That, in a nutshell, is the lottery paradox.[1] I have suggested that the paradox can be solved if epistemic justification is conceived of as a species of permissibility.[2] (Call this solution the *permissibility solution*.) Clayton Littlejohn has objected that the permissibility solution draws on a sufficient condition for permissible belief that has implausible consequences and that the solution conflicts with our lack of knowledge that a given ticket will lose.[3] This paper defends the solution against those objections.

[1] The lottery paradox is due to Henry Kyburg, *Probability and the Logic of Rational Belief* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 197.

[2] Thomas Kroedel, "The Lottery Paradox, Epistemic Justification and Permissibility," *Analysis* 72 (2012): 57–60.

[3] Clayton Littlejohn, "Lotteries, Probabilities, and Permissions," *Logos and Episteme* 3 (2012): 509–514.

2. The Permissibility Solution

The lottery paradox arises from the following three claims, which seem individually plausible but jointly inconsistent:[4]

(1-J) For each ticket, I'm justified in believing that it will lose.

(2-J) If, for each ticket, I'm justified in believing that it will lose, then I'm justified in believing that all the tickets will lose.

(3-J) I'm not justified in believing that all the tickets will lose.

Assume that epistemic justification is a species of permissibility. Assume, that is, that I'm justified in believing that p iff I'm epistemically permitted to believe that p.[5] (For brevity, I'll simply use 'permitted' for 'epistemically permitted' in what follows.) If we rephrase (1-J)–(3-J) in terms of permissibility, we get:

(1-Pe) For each ticket, I'm permitted to believe that it will lose.

(2-Pe) If, for each ticket, I'm permitted to believe that it will lose, then I'm permitted to believe that all the tickets will lose.

(3-Pe) I'm not permitted to believe that all the tickets will lose.

According to the permissibility solution, the clause 'for each ticket, I'm permitted to believe that it will lose' in (1-Pe) and (2-Pe) is ambiguous because different scopes can be assigned to 'permitted.' On a narrow-scope reading, the clause expresses separate permissions: that is, it expresses that I'm permitted to believe that the first ticket will lose, permitted to believe that the second ticket will lose, and so on. On a wide-scope reading, the clause expresses a single permission to have a number of beliefs, that is, the permission to believe that the first ticket will lose, believe that the second ticket will lose, etc. The ambiguity can be brought out more fully by formalization. Assume that there are n tickets in the lottery. For $1 \leq i \leq n$, let t_i be the sentence 'Ticket number i will lose.' Let $B\phi$ be the sentence 'I believe that ϕ,' and let $\mathbf{Pe}\psi$ be the sentence 'It is permissible for me that ψ.' We can then disambiguate (1-Pe) as follows:

(1-Narrow) $\mathbf{Pe}Bt_1 \,\&\, \mathbf{Pe}Bt_2 \,\&\, \ldots \,\&\, \mathbf{Pe}Bt_n$.

(1-Wide) $\mathbf{Pe}[Bt_1 \,\&\, Bt_2 \,\&\, \ldots \,\&\, Bt_n]$.

[4] The nomenclature differs slightly from Littlejohn's, which in turn differs slightly from that of my "The Lottery Paradox, Epistemic Justification and Permissibility."

[5] For a recent discussion of this claim, see Clayton Littlejohn, *Justification and the Truth-Connection* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 42–53.

Similarly, (2-Pe) can be disambiguated into the following two claims:

(2-Narrow) If $\mathbf{Pe}Bt_1$ & $\mathbf{Pe}Bt_2$ & … & $\mathbf{Pe}Bt_n$, then $\mathbf{Pe}B[t_1$ & t_2 & … & $t_n]$.

(2-Wide) If $\mathbf{Pe}[Bt_1$ & Bt_2 & … & $Bt_n]$, then $\mathbf{Pe}B[t_1$ & t_2 & … & $t_n]$.

Claim (3-Pe) is unambiguous and can be formalized as

(3-Unamb) $\sim \mathbf{Pe}B[t_1$ & t_2 & … & $t_n]$.

Let us consider the last two claims first and then continue from the top of the list.

Claim (3-Unamb) is clearly true. I know that it is false that all the tickets will lose; it would be grotesque if I were permitted to believe something that I know to be false.

Claim (2-Wide) seems to be true too. It is an instance of the following closure principle, which seems very plausible: if I'm permitted to have a certain set of beliefs, then I'm also permitted to have a single belief whose content is the conjunction of the contents of those beliefs.

Claim (1-Narrow) seems to be true. After all, it is highly probable that a given ticket will lose (provided that n is large enough), which seems to permit me to believe that it will lose. Since this holds for each ticket, we get (1-Narrow).

Now it may seem as though we are en route to paradox despite the disambiguation of (1-Pe) and (2-Pe). For (1-Narrow) may seem to entail (1-Wide). Given that we accept (2-Wide), this would yield the negation of (3-Unamb), contradicting our assessment of (3-Unamb) as true. There is, however, no need to accept that (1-Narrow) entails (1-Wide). It is a general feature of permissibility that it doesn't agglomerate. That is, I might be permitted to do this, permitted to do that, etc., without being permitted to do all of these things. For instance, I might be permitted to eat this piece of the cake, permitted to eat that piece of the cake, etc., without being permitted to eat the whole cake. Given the general failure of permissibility to agglomerate, it is reasonable to claim that epistemic permissibility doesn't agglomerate either. Thus, I might be permitted to believe this, permitted to believe that, etc., without being permitted to have all these beliefs at once. We can therefore accept (1-Narrow) while rejecting (1-Wide).

Claim (2-Narrow) is inconsistent with (1-Narrow) and (3-Unamb); we therefore have to reject (2-Narrow) given that we accept (1-Narrow) and (3-Unamb).

Here is a summary of our assessment of the claims (1-Narrow) through (3-Unamb):

(1-Narrow)	(1-Wide)	(2-Narrow)	(2-Wide)	(3-Unamb)
T	F	F	T	T

Our assessment bears on the solution of the lottery paradox as follows. If we disambiguate (1-Pe) and the antecedent of (2-Pe) uniformly, we take the paradox to be constituted either by the set {(1-Narrow), (2-Narrow), (3-Unamb)} or by the set {(1-Wide), (2-Wide), (3-Unamb)}. Either set is inconsistent, but we can straightforwardly deny one of the three claims in each case, viz. (2-Narrow) and (1-Wide) respectively. If we don't disambiguate uniformly, we get the sets {(1-Narrow), (2-Wide), (3-Unamb)} and {(1-Wide), (2-Narrow), (3-Unamb)}. The latter set, {(1-Wide), (2-Narrow), (3-Unamb)}, is the least interesting reading of the paradox. Whether the set is inconsistent depends on whether (1-Wide) entails the antecedent of (2-Narrow) (which, plausibly, it does), but at any rate all of its members except (3-Unamb) can be straightforwardly denied. The set {(1-Narrow), (2-Wide), (3-Unamb)} is more interesting. All of its members are true; *a fortiori* they are not jointly inconsistent. This dissolves the paradox if we take it to be constituted by {(1-Narrow), (2-Wide), (3-Unamb)}. It may also explain how we trapped in the first place. If we consider the first two claims of the original paradox individually, the most charitable reading of the first claim is the true claim (1-Narrow), and the most charitable reading of the second claim is the true claim (2-Wide). (The third claim is unambiguously true anyway.) This may make us inclined to accept the first two claims of the original paradox. When we consider the all three claims collectively, however, uniformity takes precedence and we are led to one of the sets {(1-Narrow), (2-Narrow), (3-Unamb)} and {(1-Wide), (2-Wide), (3-Unamb)}, which are no longer consistent. Fortunately, the permissibility solution still allows for a principled rejection of one of the claims in each case.

3. The Sufficient Condition for Epistemic Permissibility

In the defence of (1-Narrow) presented in the previous section, I claimed that the high probability that a given ticket will lose permits me to believe that it will lose (provided the lottery is large enough). Generalizing from this case yields the following sufficient condition for epistemic permissibility:[6]

(High) If the probability that it is the case that *p* is sufficiently high on my evidence, then I'm permitted to believe that *p*.

[6] See Littlejohn, "Lotteries, Probabilities, and Permissions," 512.

By supporting (1-Narrow), principle (High) provides a rationale for an important aspect of the permissibility solution. Littlejohn objects, however, that a proponent of the solution can't afford an endorsement of (High).

His objection goes as follows.[7] Suppose that I not only contemplate what I'm permitted or not permitted to believe but exercise the permissions to believe certain ticket-propositions. It seems to be all right for me to believe of just one ticket that it will lose. It is certainly *not* all right for me to believe of each ticket that it will lose. Suppose that I'm in the process of acquiring one belief after another to the effect that ticket number so-and-so will lose. Then at some point I will have reached a maximum number of such beliefs beyond which I'm no longer permitted to acquire additional ones. (Where this point lies is a vague matter, of course, but this need not worry us here.) The losing probability of each ticket remains the same, however; we therefore have a counterexample to the sufficiency principle (High). We also have a counterexample to (1-Narrow), since in the scenario some conjuncts of (1-Narrow) are false.[8] Since the permissibility solution endorses both (High) and (1-Narrow), it has to be rejected.

A closer look at this objection reveals a fallacy. Here is a more rigorous reconstruction of the objection. Suppose that I come to believe the ticket-propositions in the order t_1, t_2, etc. At some point I'll reach a proposition – call it $t_{\max}$ – such that, intuitively, I would be epistemically blameworthy for acquiring ticket-beliefs beyond my belief that $t_{\max}$. According to (1-Narrow), I'm separately permitted to have each of these beliefs:

(4) $\mathbf{Pe}Bt_1 \,\&\, \mathbf{Pe}Bt_2 \,\&\, \ldots \,\&\, \mathbf{Pe}Bt_{\max}$.

Given that I don't acquire beliefs beyond my belief that $t_{\max}$, I don't seem to do anything wrong. We may therefore assume that – notwithstanding the general failure of permissibility to agglomerate – I'm also permitted to have all these beliefs at once:

(5) $\mathbf{Pe}[Bt_1 \,\&\, Bt_2 \,\&\, \ldots \,\&\, Bt_{\max}]$.

Let Max be the sentence '$Bt_1 \,\&\, Bt_2 \,\&\, \ldots \,\&\, Bt_{\max}$'; we can then express (5) more concisely as

(6) **Pe**Max,

and the assumption that I believe t_1 through $t_{\max}$ can simply be expressed as

[7] See Littlejohn, "Lotteries, Probabilities, and Permissions," 512–513. I somewhat simplify the dialectic of Littlejohn's presentation.

[8] Littlejohn himself ("Lotteries, Probabilities, and Permissions," 512) merely claims that if one denies (High), the motivation for (1-Narrow) is unclear.

(7) Max.

The objection continues as follows. It would be impermissible for me to acquire the belief that Bt_{max+1} while continuing to hold the beliefs in Max. Thus, we have:

(8) $\sim\mathbf{Pe}[\text{Max} \,\&\, Bt_{max+1}]$.

Let us introduce (epistemic) obligation as the dual of (epistemic) permissibility. In other words, if we let $\mathbf{Ob}\phi$ be the sentence 'It is (epistemically) obligatory for me that ϕ,' we have:

(9) $\mathbf{Ob}\phi$ iff $\sim\mathbf{Pe}\sim\phi$; and $\mathbf{Pe}\phi$ iff $\sim\mathbf{Ob}\sim\phi$.

Thus, (8) is equivalent to the claim that I'm obligated not to believe that the next ticket will lose while retaining the beliefs I already hold:

(10) $\mathbf{Ob}\sim[\text{Max} \,\&\, Bt_{max+1}]$.

It is uncontroversial that (epistemic) obligation is closed under logical equivalence.[9] Since $\sim[\text{Max} \,\&\, Bt_{max+1}]$ is logically equivalent to the material conditional $[\text{Max} \supset \sim Bt_{max+1}]$, (10) thus entails

(11) $\mathbf{Ob}[\text{Max} \supset \sim Bt_{max+1}]$.

Earlier we assumed

(7) Max.

According to the objection, (7) and (11) entail

(12) $\mathbf{Ob}\sim Bt_{max+1}$.

That is, according to the objection, (7) and (11) entail that I'm obligated not to believe that the next ticket will lose. Given the duality of permissibility and obligation, (12) is equivalent to the claim that I'm not permitted to believe that the next ticket will lose, that is, to the claim that

(13) $\sim\mathbf{Pe}Bt_{max+1}$.

Claim (13), however, yields a counterexample to (High) and to (1-Narrow).

The objection goes wrong at a crucial step. The inference from (7) and (11) to (12) is an instance of the principle of *factual detachment*, which says that

(FactDet) If $\mathbf{Ob}[\phi \supset \psi]$ and ϕ, then $\mathbf{Ob}\psi$.

[9] See Paul McNamara, "Deontic Logic," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition)*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/logic-deontic/, § 1.3.

Factual detachment is implausible, however. Bootstrapping cases like the following constitute counterexamples.[10] It seems plausible that it's obligatory for me that if I believe that it's obligatory for me that p, then p ($\mathbf{Ob}[B\mathbf{Ob}p \supset p]$). Given that I believe that it's obligatory for me that p ($B\mathbf{Ob}p$), factual detachment would license the inference to the conclusion that it's in fact obligatory for me that p ($\mathbf{Ob}p$). It might be, however, that my belief that it's obligatory for me that p is completely irrational and that I do in fact have no such obligation. So we had better give up factual detachment. But then a gap in the objection emerges, and there is no obvious way of bridging it.

Where does this leave us? If we hold on to (High) and (1-Narrow) and thus reject (13), we have

(14) $\mathbf{Pe}Bt_{\max+1}$.

So I *am* permitted to believe that the next ticket will lose and I retain this permission even if I acquire this belief while holding on to my previously acquired lottery-beliefs. Given (8), however, I'm *not* permitted to believe that t_1, believe that t_2, …, believe that $t_{\max}$, *and* believe that $t_{\max+1}$. Isn't this odd?

Compare the parallel situation in the cake example. Suppose that I eat the whole cake. I thereby do something that I wasn't permitted to do (i.e., eating the whole cake). But I also do a number of things that I was permitted to do (e.g., eating this or that particular piece of the cake). I do something wrong, and this isn't mitigated by the fact that some of the constituent actions of my wrongdoing weren't themselves wrong. If I want to avoid wrongdoing altogether, I should refrain from performing all the constituent actions. Nevertheless, if I do perform them, each of them is permitted. Likewise for the lottery: if I believe t_1 through $t_{\max+1}$, I thereby do something that I wasn't permitted to do (having all these beliefs together).[11] But I also do a number of things that I was permitted to do (e.g., believing that t_1). I do something wrong, and this isn't mitigated by the fact that some of the constituent cognitive actions of my wrongdoing weren't themselves wrong. If I want to avoid wrongdoing altogether, I should refrain from performing all the constituent cognitive actions. Nevertheless, if I do perform them, each of them is permitted. If you find the situation in the cake example acceptable, your assessment should carry over to the lottery case. If you don't, you might continue to find the situation somewhat odd. But this oddity, I take it, would be less worrying than the lottery paradox itself. (For better or worse, the

[10] See John Broome, "Normative Requirements," *Ratio* 12 (1999): 398–419, 404–405.

[11] *A fortiori* this holds for the case in which I believe t_1 through t_n.

oddity would also be more general, since it arises for epistemic and non-epistemic permission alike.)

4. Believing (and Asserting) What Isn't Known

Another objection of Littlejohn's draws on the claim that we can't have knowledge of any of the lottery-propositions.[12] Let *p* be the sentence 'Ticket number so-and-so will lose.' Given that I'm sufficiently reflective, I know that I don't know that *p*. Now consider the claim

(15) *p*, but I don't know that *p*.

It seems that the probability of (15) on my evidence is very high. Given (High), it follows that I'm permitted to believe (15). According to Littlejohn, believing (15) would be "deeply irrational," however.[13] Say that knowledge is the norm of belief iff I'm permitted to believe only what I would know if I believed it. Then we can state the objection somewhat more generally as follows: if knowledge is the norm of belief, then the permissibility solution to the lottery paradox has to be rejected.

It doesn't seem promising to respond that my belief that a given ticket will lose would constitute knowledge after all. (At least in our setup; of course I may come to know *post factum* that a given ticket lost.) And certainly this couldn't be the case for *each* ticket, since knowledge entails truth and we stipulated that one ticket was going to win. Proponents of the permissibility solution should therefore tackle the objection head-on and deny that knowledge is the norm of belief. They should argue that this is simply the price we have to pay in order to solve the lottery paradox: in order to marry permissible belief to probability, we have to divorce it from knowledge first.

The denial of the knowledge norm for belief can be made more palatable by pointing out that it need not affect the knowledge norm of *assertion*. Saying '*p*, but I don't know that *p*' certainly sounds odd, and we may take this to show that I shouldn't assert what I don't know.[14] But it would be consistent with this for beliefs of the form *p, but I don't know that p* to be acceptable.[15] And even if *some* beliefs of the form *p, but I don't know that p* are objectionable, this might be purely because we're not justified in believing that *p* in the first place. A belief of

[12] See Littlejohn, "Lotteries, Probabilities, and Permissions," 512–513.

[13] Littlejohn, "Lotteries, Probabilities, and Permissions," 512.

[14] See Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 238–269.

[15] See Aidan McGlynn, "Believing Things Unknown," *Noûs*, forthcoming.

the form *ticket number so-and-so will lose, but I don't know that ticket number so-and-so will lose* would then fall outside the objectionable class, since, given (1-Narrow) and the conception of justification in terms of permissibility, I have ample justification for believing that ticket number so-and-so will lose.[16]

[16] For helpful comments and suggestions, I would like to thank John Hawthorne, Benjamin Kiesewetter, Timothy Williamson, and the participants of a session of the seminar "Recent Work in Theoretical Philosophy" that took place in Berlin in December 2012.

ON THE NECESSITY OF THE EVIDENTIAL EQUALITY CONDITION FOR EPISTEMIC PEERAGE

Michele PALMIRA

ABSTRACT: A popular definition of epistemic peerage maintains that two subjects are epistemic peers if and only if they are equals with respect to general epistemic virtues and share the same evidence about the targeted issue. In this paper I shall take up the challenge of defending the necessity of the evidential equality condition for a definition of epistemic peerage from criticisms that can be elicited from the literature on peer disagreement. The paper discusses two definitions that drop this condition and argues that they yield implausible verdicts about the instantiation of the epistemic peerage relation.

KEYWORDS: evidence, epistemic peerage, disagreement, likelihood

1. No evidential equality for epistemic peerage: the case of philosophical disagreement

A widely endorsed definition of epistemic peerage maintains that two subjects are epistemic peers if and only if they are equals with respect to general epistemic virtues and share the same evidence about the targeted issue.[1] Call any definition that encapsulates the necessity of the evidential equality condition a *standard definition* of epistemic peerage.

In a recent article appeared in this journal, Nicolás Lo Guercio[2] has argued that in order to satisfactorily address the issue of philosophical peer disagreement one must take into account two distinct concepts of epistemic peerage that give up the evidential equality condition. Lo Guercio calls these two concepts **strong** and **weak** epistemic peerage. Let me quote the definitions he proposes:

[1] See for instance Bryan Frances, "The Reflective Epistemic Renegade," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 81, 2 (2010): 424, Thomas Kelly, "The Epistemic Significance of Disagreement," in *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, vol. 1, eds. Tamar Szabó Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005) 173-4, Jennifer Lackey, "A Justificationist View of Disagreement's Epistemic Significance," in *Social Epistemology*, eds. Alan Millar, Adrian Haddock, and Duncan Pritchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 302.

[2] Nicolás Lo Guercio, "Philosophical Peer Disagreement," *Logos & Episteme* 3, 3 (2012): 459-67.

> **Strong Epistemic Peer**: Two agents are strong epistemic peers when (1) they have approximately the same epistemic virtues, (2) they acknowledge the same facts and (3) their epistemic perspectives are sufficiently alike.
>
> **Weak Epistemic Peer:** Two agents are weak epistemic peers when (1) they have approximately the same epistemic virtues, (2) they acknowledge the same facts but (3) their epistemic perspectives relevantly diverge.[3]

The rationale of this distinction is, roughly put, the following. As far as philosophical discourse is concerned, we'd better rule out the evidential equality condition since a certain item *i* counts as evidence only relatively to a subject's *epistemic perspective*. A subject's epistemic perspective is constituted by the subject's norms, policies and methodological commitments. To illustrate this point, Lo Guercio considers the case of intuitions: some philosophers maintain that intuitions are evidence; others say that they aren't. However, friends and foes of the evidential status of intuitions can share *the fact* of having a certain intuition. Lo Guercio contends that once we admit the possibility that two philosophers can acknowledge the same facts yet they have relevantly divergent epistemic perspectives, we should make room for two distinct responses to peer disagreement. When two subjects are strong epistemic peers, they should adopt a conciliatory stance; when they are weak epistemic peers, on the contrary, they are entitled to stick to their guns. Call any definition that drops the evidential equality condition a *nonstandard definition* of epistemic peerage.

Lo Guercio doesn't discuss (1) by contending that it is widely granted in the debate. I will follow him and leave a detailed analysis of (1) for another occasion.

The first wrinkle in Lo Guercio's argument is that there is no mention of the fact that the problem of epistemic peer disagreement arises not simply when two subjects instantiate the epistemic peerage relation but when they take themselves to instantiate it. Call this the *acknowledgment condition*.

The acknowledgement condition plays a crucial role in the issue of what doxastic attitude the individuals should adopt after the discovery of a disagreement with a peer. If one were not aware that one is in an epistemic peer disagreement, then one wouldn't even consider that disagreement could play an evidential role. To put it roughly: how can I rationally respond to peer disagreement (no matter what this response should be) if I'm not aware that I am in a peer disagreement?

In addition, it has been pointed out that one should have good reasons for thinking that one's opponent is one's epistemic peer.[4] This appears to be a

[3] Lo Guercio, "Philosophical Peer Disagreement," 462.

plausible requirement: why should I adopt a certain epistemic practice if I don't have good reasons for thinking that the necessary condition that triggers that very behaviour is satisfied? To put the point differently, it is unclear why I should adopt a certain response to peer disagreement if I don't have good reasons to think that the subject I'm disagreeing with is my epistemic peer.

The second minor qualm I have about Lo Guercio's proposal targets his explanation of the notion of evidence. Lo Guercio claims that "being evidence is not a straightforwardly factual property, but a property that *a proposition* has only relative to some system of epistemic norms, policies […]."[5] Lo Guercio maintains that two people can be strong epistemic peers if they have the same perspective; having the same perspective amounts to taking the same "facts" as evidence; intuitions are such facts. As far as I can see, the only reading of "fact" that is compatible with the satisfaction of (2) in both definitions of epistemic peerage has it that subjects acknowledge that they have the same intuition. In my view, having the same intuition means that both subjects have the occurrent, attitudinal mental state of intuiting that *p*. The talk of sameness of facts is accounted for at the level of *types* of facts, as it were. Although subjects can't literally have the same token experiential mental states, i.e. they can't literally have the same intuitions, these tokens are of the same experiential mental type. If we don't share an epistemic perspective, the intuition doesn't count as evidence; if we do share the perspective, we both take our intuitions to be evidence. More specifically, what we do is to take the mental state of intuiting that *p* to be evidence about a certain philosophical problem. And yet, this is inconsistent with the claim made by Lo Guercio and cited above to the effect that evidence is a property of propositions. For given the second condition of epistemic peerage proposed by Lo Guercio, evidence should be a property of mental states, i.e. the intuiting that *p*.

Having said that, let us move on to canvass the tenability of the distinction between weak and strong epistemic peers. As far as I can see, the concept of weak epistemic peerage should allow us to establish that disagreement between philosophers who don't share an epistemic perspective yet have the same intuitions can be safely regarded as a disagreement among epistemic peers. To assess this idea, let us avail ourselves of Timothy Williamson's example of the two

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[4] See for instance David Enoch, "Not Just a Truthometer: Taking Oneself Seriously (but not Too Seriously) in Cases of Peer Disagreement," *Mind* 119, 476 (2010): 973, Nathan L. King, "Disagreement: What's the Problem? Or a Good Peer is Hard to Find," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, online first: DOI: 10.1111/j.1933- 1592.2010.00441.x (20111): 13, Lackey, "A Justificationist View," 304.

[5] Lo Guercio, "Philosophical Peer Disagreement," 460, emphasis mine.

epistemologists who disagree about the import of the Gettier cases.[6] The example goes as follows. A philosopher thinks that the *Gettier intuition*, viz. the intuition that a subject Gettier-related to a proposition *p* has a justified true belief in *p* that doesn't amount to knowledge, shows that knowledge isn't equivalent to justified true belief; the other thinks that what Gettier cases show varies depending on cultural and socio-economic background. They disagree on the evidential role of the Gettier intuition though they both have that intuition. To put it in Lo Guercio's lingo, they share the fact of intuiting that a subject in a Gettier scenario has a true justified belief in *p* without knowing it, yet they disagree about the thesis that this psychological fact is an epistemic fact. That is, they disagree on the thesis that this intuition plays an evidential role. On closer inspection, the only epistemic component of both definitions of epistemic peerage offered by Lo Guercio that is satisfied in such a case is (1), that is, the idea that subjects have approximately the same epistemic virtues. To see this, notice that philosophers don't share the epistemic perspective, and notice also that the second condition, i.e. sharing the fact of intuiting that *p*, is an admittedly non-epistemic component of both definitions.

Let us pause on the claim that philosophers who share these general epistemic virtues are (weak) epistemic peers. The first thing that must be emphasised is that this idea also emerges from Gary Gutting's definition of epistemic peerage. Gutting contends that two individuals are epistemic peers if they are equals with respect to factors such as "intelligence, perspicacity, honesty, thoroughness, and other relevant epistemic virtues."[7] Therefore, the notion of weak epistemic peerage proposed by Lo Guercio collapses into Gutting's once we deal with a case of two philosophers who disagree on the evidential import of the Gettier intuition because of two different epistemic perspectives.[8]

Having clarified this, let us see whether this strategy successfully undermines the necessity of the evidential equality condition.

Consider the following scenario. Jennifer and Lucille are talking about what it takes to know a certain proposition. Jennifer is a professional philosopher, whereas Lucille is a professional computer scientist. Both Jennifer and Lucille, when presented with Gettier cases, have the intuition that gettiered beliefs don't amount to knowledge. Jennifer and Lucille regard with esteem each other: they

[6] Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 211.

[7] Gary Gutting, *Religious Belief and Religious Skepticism* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 1982), 83.

[8] To forestall misunderstandings, I'm not claiming that Lo Guercio's definition always collapses into Gutting's.

take themselves to be equally thoughtful, intelligent careful and honest. Therefore, Jennifer and Lucille satisfy conditions (1) and (2) of weak epistemic peerage. And yet, Jennifer takes the Gettier intuition to be evidence about the problem at stake, whereas Lucille doesn't. More generally, their respective epistemic perspectives seem to relevantly diverge.

This is a clear case of philosophical disagreement, for two subjects are disagreeing about a philosophical problem, i.e. the definition of knowledge. The question that needs to be raised, to my mind, is whether Jennifer and Lucille take themselves to be epistemic peers at all, no matter how weak the sense of epistemic peerage could be.

To address this question, let us suppose that both Jennifer and Lucille are aware of the fact that a good conception of knowledge has to avoid the threat of external world scepticism, viz. the thesis that we don't know whether there is an external world. Lucille is acquainted with some of the most famous issues revolving around the problem of scepticism. She knows the difference between Cartesian and Humean scepticism; she knows the difference between scepticism and idealism; and she is also aware of Hilary Putnam's nowadays-famous thought experiment of the brains in a vat. The brain in a vat scenario is a typical sceptical scenario: it stipulates that brains in a vat (henceforth BIV) would have qualitatively identical thoughts to those unenvatted. When a BIV says "There is a hand before me", there is in fact no hand before him, only a simulated hand produced by the supercomputers that stimulate the envatted brains. Putnam offers a semantic solution to this sceptical challenge: accordingly, if we adopt semantic externalism, it turns out that the sentence "We are brain in a vat" is false. Lucille is persuaded by Putnam's argument. Therefore, she thinks that Putnam's argument carries the day against the BIV hypothesis and avoids scepticism. However, Lucille isn't aware of the fact that the argument from semantic externalism does not affect certain versions of the BIV scenario. Take the following case.[9] Suppose that my brain was removed from my body last night and is now, for the first time ever, in a vat, with appropriate virtual reality hookups. In this case, semantic externalism cannot avoid scepticism. The take home message is that we can reproduce a sceptical scenario no matter what theory of reference we endorse. By contrast, Jennifer is aware of this piece of evidence that bears on the problem of scepticism which is also evidence on the problem of knowledge, for she is a professional philosophers and is acquainted with all data bearing on this philosophical issue.

[9] See Crispin Wright, "On Putnam's Proof That We Are Not Brains-in-a-Vat," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 92 (1992): 67–94.

In light of this example, I think that it would be too bald a contention to say that Jennifer takes Lucille to be her epistemic peer on the issue of knowledge. Indeed there is a clear epistemic difference between two subjects that seem to matter once we have to establish whether Jennifer shouldn't change her doxastic attitude after the discovery of disagreement with Jennifer. The epistemic difference lays in a different familiarity with the evidence about the problem of knowledge. Jennifer could (and should) maintain that her friend has underestimated the force of the sceptical challenge since she isn't aware of some crucial evidence, i.e. semantic externalism can't rule out some sceptical scenarios.

This is a concrete example where, in order to establish the instantiation of the epistemic peerage relation, two subjects should look at considerations concerning evidential equality. Moreover, since subjects should have good reasons for taking themselves to be epistemic peers, this example shows that Jennifer had better not take Lucille to be her epistemic peer since she has a reason for doing so. The reason is that Lucille is ignoring an evidential datum in the assessment of how the problem of scepticism bears on the definition of knowledge. Notice moreover that the example is independent of whether Lucille and Jennifer have similar epistemic perspectives. Indeed, even if they both took the Gettier intuition to be evidence, Lucille still wouldn't have access to an important piece of evidence on the problem of knowledge.

As far as I can see, Jennifer has good reasons for not taking Lucille to be her epistemic peer at all. More generally, considerations about possession of evidence or lack thereof seem to be good candidates for playing the role of those epistemic reasons one can appeal to in order to adjudicate one's opponent's epistemic credentials. By contrast, it's by no means clear how a definition epistemic peerage that rules out evidential equality manages to satisfy the plausible requirement that subjects should have reasons for taking themselves to be epistemic peers. I surmise that enemies of the necessity of the evidential equality condition could parry this concern by claiming that the only reason subjects should look at is the track record of success. However, this contention relies on the unwarranted assumption that we can really get to a comparison between track records of success in philosophy. And yet, it is far from being obvious to maintain that history of philosophy is the history of a progress that, time to time, moves closer to the truth and to say that there is a well-established track record of progress in philosophy. I can't fully address this topic in this paper. Therefore, I content myself with saying that the appeal to track record of success isn't easily available in domains of discourse like philosophy.

In my view, the foregoing analysis provides sufficient grounds to reject Lo Guercio's nonstandard definitions of epistemic peerage.

2. Replacing Evidence with Likelihood

Another account of epistemic peerage that rejects the necessity of the evidential equality condition may be derived from the work of Adam Elga. Let me start off with quoting his definition of epistemic peerage:[10]

> You count your friend as an epistemic peer with respect to an about- to-be-judged claim if and only if you think that, conditional the two of you disagreeing about the claim, the two of you are equally likely to be mistaken.[11]

Elga does not mention evidential equality and intellectual virtues because he emphasises the connection between the beliefs held by two subjects and the notion of mistake. That is to say, his definition aims at capturing the relation between belief and truth without pausing on the epistemic features that may secure this tie, e.g. evidential support.

Elga's nonstandard[12] definition of epistemic peerage makes a more general case for the rejection of the necessity of the evidential equality condition for epistemic peerage than Lo Guercio's does, for it isn't narrowed to a single area of discourse. To understand better the import of Elga's definition, Ernest Sosa has suggested to the effect that Elga and Kelly's definitions collapse into one if we interpret the notion of being equally likely to be mistaken as relying on the evidence and the epistemic virtues enjoyed by subjects.[13] That is to say, if the notion of likelihood were relative to the conditions posited by the standard definition, then the two definitions would *de facto* state the same conditions.

However plausible Sosa's interpretation may be, I take it that the real virtue of accepting Elga's conception springs from a different conception of likelihood, that is, a conception that interprets this notion only relatively to the notion of truth. Furthermore, Elga explicitly says that his use of epistemic peers is nonstandard by thus differentiating his notion of epistemic peerage from the standard one proposed, for instance, by Thomas Kelly. Therefore, it seems to me

[10] David Enoch endorses a somewhat similar definition. He claims to follow Elga's definition. See Enoch, "Not Just a Truthometer," 956.

[11] Adam Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," *Noûs* 41/3 (2007): 499 fn. 21

[12] Notice that Elga explicitly uses this label, see Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 499, fn. 21.

[13] See Ernest Sosa, "The Epistemology of Disagreement," in *Social Epistemology*, eds. Millar, Haddock, and Pritchard, 278–297.

fair to say that Elga is really proposing a different definition of epistemic peerage that doesn't encapsulate the necessity of the evidential equality condition.

Elga's definition opens up an important issue concerning the nature of epistemic peerage. In my view, if we adopted Elga's definition, the notion of epistemic peerage would merely rely on the external tie between subjects' beliefs and their probability of being mistaken or, conversely, right. That is, peerage depends on the fact that subjects' beliefs are equally connected, i.e. have the same likelihood, to truth or falsity. To put it differently, it's the equal degree of truth-conduciveness that guarantees the satisfaction of the peerage relation irrespective of subjects' evidence and intellectual virtues. By contrast, the standard definition puts to emphasis on aspects that pertain the subject's *internal* condition, viz. the evidence and the intellectual virtues she possesses.

Having said that, let me quote Elga's defense of this nonstandard definition:

> In defense of my use, suppose that you think that conditional on the two of you disagreeing about a claim, your friend is more likely than you to be mistaken. Then however intelligent, perspicacious, honest, thorough, well-informed, and unbiased you may think your friend is, it would seem odd to count her as an epistemic peer with respect to that claim, at least on that occasion. You think that on the supposition that there is disagreement, she is more likely to get things wrong.[14]

To my mind, this defense is not completely exempt from criticism. To illustrate my concern, let us unpack Elga's defense a little. One goes from the supposition that there is disagreement, to the conclusion that her friend is more likely than oneself to be mistaken. It must be stressed that Elga does not invoke the idea that the subject has independent reasons for thinking that her opponent, although equally intelligent and informed, is more likely than her to be mistaken. That is to say, it isn't required here that the subject has some evidence for the claim that her opponent is more likely than her to be mistaken.

As far as I can see, Elga's defense is flawed because it's not sufficient to think that the other is more likely to be mistaken in order to demote his epistemic condition: one needs reasons for claiming that the opponent is not a peer. Otherwise, this way of demoting one's epistemic condition would be totally arbitrary. So, I contend that even a proponent of the nonstandard definition advanced by Elga has to supply reasons for demoting the opponent's epistemic credentials. What could these reasons be? It seems to me that a supporter of Elga's account has little room of manoeuvre here, for since she doesn't appeal to evidence, she could only appeal to a comparison between track records. By

[14] Elga, "Reflection and Disagreement," 499, fn. 21.

contrast, a supporter of the internal conception of epistemic peerage has more than one arrow to her bow, for she could appeal to issues bearing on the possession of certain pieces of evidence; or to the different familiarity with that same evidence; or to the lack of a certain intellectual virtue that is particular salient in the targeted domain and so on and so forth.

However it may be, let us evaluate Elga's definition for its ability to handle cases in which we would be inclined to attribute epistemic peerage to the individuals. Jennifer Lackey objected to Elga's definition by proposing the following case:

> (BIRDS)
> June may be a complete novice with respect to identifying birds of prey, and Jill may be an expert ornithologist. When June is sober and Jill is highly intoxicated, however, we may be equally likely to be mistaken about whether the bird flying overhead is an osprey.[15]

Lackey's case emphasises the blindness of this definition to factors that may pertain to the appraisal of the subjects' epistemic credentials. Let us try to enhance this line of criticism by thinking at the following scenario.

Suppose that Herman, son of a famous clairvoyant, under certain conditions that usually obtain, is an unwitting reliable clairvoyant weather forecaster. He possesses no evidence or reasons of any kind for or against the general possibility of such a cognitive power, or for or against the thesis that he possesses it. One day Herman forms the belief that it will rain tomorrow morning in Paris, though he has no evidence either for or against his belief. Consider now Paul. He is a professional weather forecaster. He knows all the observational systems, he is aware of the best forecasting techniques, numerical forecast models and so on. Considered all the evidence and the best available techniques for analysing it, he forms the belief that it will rain tomorrow morning in Paris. Suppose now that Herman and Paul know each other as experienced weather forecasters; suppose moreover that in the majority of cases they are in agreement, and when they disagree, Herman is right as often as Paul is. Hence, Paul counts Herman as epistemic peer, for they are equally likely to get things right. And yet, this strikes me as an awkward result, for there is a glaring epistemic asymmetry between them. Indeed, whereas Paul can warrant his judgments by arguing for them relying on his competent analysis of the evidence, Herman cannot warrant his judgments unless we grant him an inductive or abductive strategy that appeals to his track record of success. Intuitively, besides inductive or abductive ways of warranting his predictions, Herman doesn't have any reason for making the

[15] Lackey, "A Justificationist View," fn. 17.

judgments he makes about weather forecasting. He does not have internal reasons for supporting his own claim, for he does not possess any evidence in favour of his predictions.

The problem we are facing is the following. If the peerage relation is established on the basis of an external relation only, that is, if the individuals are peer only if the same degree of truth-conduciveness obtains, then we should take Herman and Paul as to be epistemic peers. And yet, it seems *prima facie* plausible to claim that Herman and Paul are in two very different epistemic conditions, for Paul can disclose his own evidence in favour of the judgments and competently explain what kind of reasoning has led him to conclude that *p*. It is worth stressing that nothing of what I've said so far is meant to argue against the idea that Paul and Herman enjoy the same degree of truth-conduciveness. As far as I can see, it could well be the case that they are equally likely to be mistaken as in Lackey's case about birds, but this equal likelihood stems from two very different epistemic conditions. These epistemic disparities can be reflected in their epistemic practices. Suppose indeed that Paul and Herman are in disagreement about a prediction and come to a situation of full disclosure in which they have to explain why they've reached opposite conclusions about whether it will rain tomorrow. Well, it seems clear that Paul is better equipped than Herman when a defense of their weather predictions is concerned. For Paul can cite his measurements, data, and reasonings about the issue. By contrast, Herman would admit his total absence of evidence on the problem and his inability of defending his predictions. At any rate, if we embraced Elga's definition, all these plausible considerations wouldn't have any weight on how to establish the instantiation of the epistemic peerage relation. For what is relevant for epistemic peerage is the likelihood of being right; since Herman and Paul are on a par with respect to this aspect even after full disclosure, Paul couldn't stop counting Herman as his peer simply by arguing that Herman has no evidence whatsoever about weather forecasting. Why do these considerations are not available to the supporter of the nonstandard definition of epistemic peerage advocated by Elga? If they were, the notion of likelihood should be interpreted in the way suggested by Sosa. And yet, if this were the case, we should conclude that the standard and the nonstandard definition collapse into one another.

The foregoing discussion allows me to claim that in order for Paul to have good reasons that allow him to properly evaluate Herman's epistemic credentials and not regard him as an epistemic peer, considerations about evidence are necessary.

Conclusion

The main purpose of the paper was to discuss two attempts of defining epistemic peerage that don't take evidential equality to be a necessary condition for epistemic peerage. In my view, both attempts fail to yield highly plausible and intuitive verdicts about the acknowledgment of the instantiation of the epistemic peerage relation in some scenarios. I've tried to show that correct verdicts are yielded once we acknowledge that the notion evidence plays a crucial role in the evaluation of subjects' epistemic credentials. In my view, the nonstandard definitions advocated by Lo Guercio and Elga don't succeed in undermining the contention that evidential equality is a necessary condition for epistemic peerage.[16]

[16] I am grateful to Fernando Broncano-Berrocal for helpful comments and discussion.

INFINITISM AND AGENTS LIKE US: REPLY TO TURRI

Joshua A. SMITH, Adam C. PODLASKOWSKI

ABSTRACT: In a recent paper, "Infinitism and Epistemic Normativity," we have problematized the relationship between infinitism and epistemic normativity. Responding to our criticisms, John Turri has offered a defense of infinitism. In this paper, we argue that Turri's defense fails, leaving infinitism vulnerable to the originally raised objections.

KEYWORDS: infinitism, regress problem, John Turri, epistemic normativity

The *regress problem* for epistemic justification has it that, since any belief is justified only if it is based on good reasons, and the beliefs serving as reasons also stand in need of justification, as do *those* beliefs serving as reasons, and so on, we face an infinite regress. According to Peter Klein's[1] infinitist response to the regress problem, the most we can hope for is provisional justification amidst an infinite, non-repeating chain of reasons for a given belief. Recently, John Turri[2] defended Klein's infinitism from two objections we raised.[3] Here, we argue that Turri's defense fails, leaving Klein's account vulnerable to the originally raised objections.

We raised two concerns for Klein's position, the first of which is an improved version of the *finite minds* objection. According to the original objection, because an agent cannot possess an infinite number of reasons, infinitism is untenable. Klein's reply is that we need not actually possess each reason in a chain of reasons; rather, each such reason need only be *available* to the agent. A reason is available to an agent so long as she has either an epistemically credible disposition to cite the reason, or possesses a second-order disposition to form a disposition to take on that reason. We deny that appealing to second-order dispositions improves Klein's position. The problem is that, in order for a reason to

[1] See Peter Klein, "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Regress of Reasons," *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 297–325, and Peter Klein, "Human Knowledge and the Infinite Progress of Reasoning," *Philosophical Studies* 134 (2007): 1–17.

[2] John Turri, "Infinitism, Finitude, and Normativity," *Philosophical Studies* (2011): Accessed February 10, 2013, doi: 10.1007/s11098-011-9846-7.

[3] Adam Podlaskowski and Joshua Smith, "Infinitism and Epistemic Normativity," *Synthese* 178 (2011): 515–527.

be available to an epistemically responsible agent, she must be able to cite that reason as a step in the relevant chain of reasons. However:

> Unlike many financial transactions, each epistemic transaction (i.e., citing a reason) depends on making another one, and *that* transaction depends on making another one, and so on. One cannot make an arbitrary transaction, breaking into the sequence without having made the transactions leading up to the entry point, and expect to benefit from the justificatory work (i.e., epistemic transactions) that led to that point. Instead, each transaction depends on its place within the sequence.[4]

In order to possess the requisite second-order dispositions to form beliefs to cite as reasons – as Klein suggests – those dispositions must be sensitive to the order of *every* given reason in the pertinent chain of reasons. But because we are finite agents (with limited abilities and lifespans), we lack the requisite dispositions to attend to the particular order in which reasons occur in an infinite chain of reasons. Call this the *finite and less-than-ideally-ordered minds objection*.

Turri puts forward a defense of Klein's position from this objection. His principal reply is that, though we do not possess dispositions *to act beyond* our lifetime, we do possess dispositions that *cannot be manifested* in our lifetime. As Turri puts it:

> We don't have dispositions to act beyond our lifetime, of course, but infinitism doesn't require this. In general, one can have the disposition to do A in conditions C, even if C does not and will not obtain in one's lifetime. For instance, suppose that a cure for AIDS will not, in fact, be found until after I die. Despite that, I'm still disposed to cheer if a cure for AIDS is found. Similarly, the infinitist can say that we also have dispositions to cite the relevant reasons if we were in the relevant circumstances, even though we won't, in fact, ever be in the relevant circumstances.[5]

In way of reply to Turri, while we grant him the point that we might, in some respect, possess dispositions which contingently fail to be manifested, we also maintain that this alone will not secure the infinitist's position. To motivate our reply, consider the following example. Suppose one asks if a normal person is disposed to walk the mile from point *A* to point *B*. Since many people are fully capable of walking a mile, one might be tempted to suggest that a normal person is so disposed (even if they might never do so in their lifetime). But suppose we add to the example the information that *A* to *B* is five billion miles from here, and the

[4] Podlaskowski and Smith, "Infinitism and Epistemic Normativity," 521.

[5] Turri, "Infinitism, Finitude, and Normativity," 5.

person must walk all five billion miles before getting to *A*. In this case, is the person disposed to walk from *A* to *B*? It seems that a person might be disposed to do so, if she was motivated to do so, had the necessary resources available, and she had a sufficiently long lifespan to complete the task. But no *normal* person could make the hike; for a mortal like us, it is doubtful that we are disposed to achieve what is, for us, impossible.

Notice that Klein's position is even more demanding than the case of a person walking five billion miles, since the infinitist's chains of reasons are *infinitely* long. While Turri is right to point out that we might be disposed to accomplish some tasks if we were to live to such and such a time, we should have more clearly articulated our concern thusly: agents *like us* are not disposed to act in ways that are impossible for them, and citing each reason in an infinitely large series of reasons is impossible for *such agents*.

In response, the infinitist might invoke an idealization of an agent like us – e.g., one with the gift of immortality – in order to make the plausible claim that, in some sense, we possess the requisite second-order dispositions. This appears to be quite sensible, since our identifying dispositions often involves a certain degree of idealization. Still, this move leads to disaster for the infinitist. To see the problem facing the infinitist here, first recall that the regress problem is a problem for creatures *like us*: the problem arises for creatures with *finite* epistemic resources (such as processing power, memory, ingenuity, and time) who are epistemically responsible. Were we in possession of infinite epistemic resources, we would face no such problem. But infinitism, with its emphasis on provisional justification, is intended as a solution to a problem that *we* face. As such, the infinitist cannot help himself to idealizations where epistemic agents are no longer finite without eliminating altogether the need for provisional justification. Even if it is conceded to Turri that the infinitist may idealize away from the fact that we have long histories of giving up on tasks, idealizing away from one's finite nature is not similarly permissible. So though we grant that the infinitist is allowed *some* idealizations, we maintain that not *all* idealizations are permissible.[6]

Even if we are right to deny the infinitist the appeal to idealizations, this might still appear to create a problem for another one of our objections to

[6] Compare Gail Stine's claim that she is, "in principle suspicious of all principles of epistemic logic on the general grounds that while the logic of a knower who is in some way simplified and idealized may be useful for limited purposes, what we are ultimately interested in are actual knowers who can be pretty obtuse and idiosyncratic, yet still lay claim to knowledge." Gail C. Stine "Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Deductive Closure," *Philosophical Studies* 29 (1976): 250.

infinitism. According to our other major objection, the *normativity objection*, a necessary condition on it being the case that one ought to justify beliefs is that one can, *in principle*, do so; but we cannot justify beliefs, given the finite and less-than-ideally-ordered-minds objection. So we ought not justify beliefs – we are left epistemically blameless. But as Turri points out, we appeal to what one can do *in principle* in the first premise of the normativity objection. At first glance, this seems to allow that one could, for instance, live forever, or supertask.

Our appeal to what a finite agent can do in *principle* should have been given a clearer formulation. Not all idealizations are unhelpful in this discussion, as we suggested above. All we meant to ward off by the qualifier 'in principle' are things like momentary lapses of memory, reason, etc. Idealizing in that way is a far cry from idealizing to the infinite lifespan, processing power, memory, or other things suggested above. Moreover, we submit that the idealizations employed in the service of the normativity objection (if there are any) are also a far cry from what the infinitist needs.

By way of illustrating the difficulty the infinitist faces, we would like to call attention to another point of disagreement with Turri. In response to an objection he credits to Stewart Cohen, Turri suggests that:

> I'm disposed to say 'one thousand and one' if I'm counting by ones and I had just said 'one thousand'. The same seems true for any arbitrarily large finite natural number n: I'm disposed to say '$n + 1$' if I'm counting by ones and I had just said 'n'.[7]

This sounds quite plausible for the small numbers Turri actually mentions. But consider a number in the neighborhood of $1 \times 10^{6000000000000}$. When counting in that neighborhood, do we *really* have the disposition to cite the next number? Do we have the processing power to even keep the whole number in mind, much less get it right? We're dubious of that. While we agree with Turri over what is probably a large range of dispositions, we disagree that we have the relevant dispositions for "any arbitrarily large finite natural number." This example, by analogy, illustrates quite nicely the kinds of dispositions the infinitist requires of us with respect to reasons, but that we most likely lack.

Having clarified the role of idealization in discussions of infinitism, we maintain that our original criticisms stand.

[7] Turri, "Infinitism, Finitude, and Normativity," 5.

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