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RESEARCH ARTICLES

OVERCOMING INTELLECTUALISM ABOUT UNDERSTANDING AND KNOWLEDGE: A UNIFIED APPROACH

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ABSTRACT: In this paper I defend a unified approach to knowledge and understanding. Both are achievements due to cognitive abilities or skills. The difference between them is a difference of aspects. Knowledge emphasizes the successful aspect of an achievement and the exclusion of epistemic luck, whereas understanding emphasizes the agent's contribution in bringing about an achievement through the exercise of one's cognitive skills. Knowledge and understanding cannot be separated. I argue against the claim that understanding is distinct from knowledge because the former is compatible with environmental luck. Achievements rule out environmental luck because abilities can be exercised only in their proper environment. I also reject the intellectualist claim that understanding requires the ability to explain what one intends to understand. The understanding of an item is reflected in our ability to solve cognitive tasks using that item. The more tasks one can deal with by using an item, the deeper is one's understanding of that item. Being able to explain why a claim holds is not necessary for possessing understanding, even though it may be necessary for accomplishing some very specific tasks. Neither understanding nor knowledge require any kind of second-order cognition by default.

KEYWORDS: intellectualism, understanding, knowledge, skills, Linda Zagzebski, John McDowell

1. Introduction

Many contemporary accounts of knowledge and understanding flirt with intellectualism, the thesis, as I construe it, that epistemic standings must be guided by reflective second-order cognition. For instance, in John McDowell's view of perceptual knowledge,[1] factive episodes of perception are in themselves

[1] John McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011).

insufficient for knowledge and the agent must potentially also have reflective access to these episodes. In the same vein, Ernest Sosa, despite distinguishing between animal knowledge and reflective knowledge and acknowledging that the former has some autonomy in relation to the latter, defends that reflective knowledge is epistemically superior to animal knowledge in that "any performance suffers if it is not fully apt."[2] That is, even a reliable or safe belief suffers if it is not guided by second-order knowledge that believing in the current situation would be safe. The scenario is even worse regarding understanding, where it is widely accepted that understanding requires the ability to explain what one intends to understand. Linda Zagzebski[3] and Duncan Pritchard,[4] by accepting such an explainability requirement, set the bar high for the achievement of understanding.

In this paper I will argue against such intellectualism while simultaneously defending a unified approach to knowledge and understanding. Both are achievements due to cognitive abilities or skills. The difference between them is a difference of aspects. Knowledge emphasizes the successful aspect of an achievement and the exclusion of epistemic luck, whereas understanding emphasizes the agent's contribution in bringing about an achievement through the exercise of one's cognitive skills. Knowledge and understanding cannot be separated. I argue against the claim that understanding is distinct from knowledge because the former is compatible with environmental luck. Achievements rule out environmental luck because abilities can be exercised only in their proper environment. I also reject the intellectualist claim that understanding requires the ability to explain what one intends to understand. The understanding of an item is reflected in our ability to solve cognitive tasks using that item. The more tasks one can deal with by using an item, the deeper is one's understanding of that item. Being able to explain why a claim holds is not necessary for possessing understanding, even though it may be necessary for accomplishing some very specific tasks. Neither understanding nor knowledge require any kind of second-order cognition by default.

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[2] Ernest Sosa, *Judgment and Agency* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 87.

[3] Linda Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," in *Knowledge, Truth and Duty,* eds. Matthias Steup and Netthias Steup (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 235-252.

[4] Duncan Pritchard, "Knowledge and Understanding," in *Virtue Epistemology Naturalized: Bridges Between Virtue Epistemology and Philosophy of Science,* ed. Abrol Fairweather (New York: Springer, 2014), 315–327.

I start Sections two and three by putting forward McDowell's intellectualist account of perceptual knowledge and Zagzebski's intellectualist account of understanding. The aim of these two sections is to explicitly identify first the intellectualist requirements these accounts lay on knowledge and understanding, and second to identify the difference that is commonly held between knowledge and understanding. In Section four I argue against the main reasons for such a difference. Knowledge and understanding can both be achievements. Finally, in Section five, I submit a unified approach to knowledge and understanding without intellectualist requirements. This approach is based on the notion of cognitive skills in a Rylean spirit. I then turn to cases of perceptual knowledge and scientific understanding to show how the approach deals with them.

2. McDowell and Reflective Perceptual Knowledge

Disjunctivist views of perception are used to explain how one can be entitled to make a perceptual knowledge claim. John McDowell[5] and Duncan Pritchard[6] have offered explanations of this kind. The general idea is very simple. As exercises of our perceptual capacity[7] in good conditions of observation yield non-defective episodes of perception, if one recognizes them as such, one can base a belief upon that kind of episode. A belief thus justified is perceptual knowledge and it is legitimate to claim it as such. Therefore, if something green is visually present to me and I recognize that I see something green, then I have a conclusive warrant for the belief that this thing is green. Two features here are very important: first, a non-defective episode of perception is a factive reason. As McDowell says,

> when all goes well in the operations of a perceptual capacity of a sort that belongs to is possessor's rationality, a perceiver enjoys a perceptual state in which some feature of her environment is *there* for her, perceptually *present* to her rationally self-conscious awareness.[8]

[5] See McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity*, especially §3.

[6] Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), see especially 13-17.

[7] In this paper I take terms such as *skill*, *ability*, *capacity* and *techne*, at least as *techne* is construed by Zagzebski, as interchangeable, and I will change from one term to another depending on the author discussed.

[8] McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity*, 30-31.

The warrant provided by this kind of perceptual state is indefeasible[9] and conclusive. According to McDowell, an inconclusive warrant is not sufficient to explain how we can have perceptual knowledge, since recognizing the warrant as inconclusive seems to acknowledge that for all the subject knows her perceptual belief may be false.[10] Another motivation for requiring this kind of warrant is that it is sufficient to avoid Gettier-style cases. Borrowing an example from Chisholm,[11] suppose a person is looking into a field and forms the belief that there is a sheep in the field. Suppose further that this belief is true. However, unbeknownst to this person, the animal she is looking at is in fact a dog that is occluding a sheep just behind it. The belief of this person is true and based on perceptual evidence, but it is not a case of knowledge because it is just a matter of luck that her belief is true. Luck, in this case, got in the way of knowledge. To deal with such Gettier-style cases, epistemologists have proposed an anti-luck condition for knowledge that guarantees that the target belief could not easily be false. Indefeasible warrants, as proposed by McDowell, may be stronger than necessary, but certainly does the job.[12] In the present case, the subject's perceptual capacity at best provides her with an indefeasible warrant that she is seeing an animal but not any specific kind of animal. Thus, her belief that there is a sheep in the field is unwarranted and thereby it is not in the market for knowledge.

The second important feature in McDowell's view of perceptual knowledge is that the subject must have reflective access to the factive reason, e.g., that one

[9] McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity*, 31.

[10] It is usually acknowledged that ascribing knowledge to someone excludes the possibility of this agent being in error, as Austin points out, "'when you know you can't be wrong' is perfectly good sense. You are prohibited from saying 'I know it is so, but I may be wrong.'" See John Austin, "Other Minds," in *Philosophical Papers,* eds. James Opie Urmson, and Geoffrey James Warnock (London: Oxford University Press, 1979), 76-116, and especially 98. It is of course a matter of debate whether infallibility is required for ruling out a possibility of error that prevents one from knowing.

[11] Roderick Chisholm, *Theory of Knowledge* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1977), 105.

[12] For instance, some authors defend that the safety principle is sufficient to exclude epistemic luck. A belief is safe if it could not have easily been false. That is, one's belief that p is safe if and only if in the close possible worlds in which one continues to believe that p on the same basis as in the actual world one's belief continues to be true. An infallible belief is safe, but a safe belief is not necessarily infallible. In any case, infallibility excludes the type of luck present in the Gettier-style cases. For a detailed discussion about the safety principle, see Duncan Pritchard, "Knowledge Cannot Be Lucky," in *Contemporary Debates in Epistemology*, eds. Matthias Setup, John Turri, and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 152-163.

sees something green, in order to be able to use it as a reason for a belief. Otherwise one's belief would not be warranted and one would not be entitled to make the corresponding knowledge claim. Again, in McDowell's own words,

> a rational subject who has a bit of perceptual knowledge is self-consciously aware of the warrant provided for her knowledge by a perceptual state she is in. She can invoke her perceptual state in order to say how she is warranted in a belief that counts as knowledgeable by virtue of being warranted in that way.[13]

This feature is an internalist ingredient of knowledge and it is necessary to satisfy the conception of knowledge that Sellars advocates. According to Sellars, an episode can be characterized as knowledge only if the subject is able to place this episode in the logical space of reasons. McDowell completely agrees with this constraint to knowledge, as he points out, "the warrant by virtue of which a belief counts as knowledgeable is accessible to the knower [...] As Sellars put it, she occupies a position in the space of being able to justify what one says."[14] Perceptual knowledge, such as McDowell construes it, intrinsically involves rationality; it is an act of reason and therefore it is possessed only by rational creatures. For McDowell, the main reason for supporting this view of perceptual knowledge, according to which the subject must be able to place a perceptual episode in the logical space of reasons, is explicitly to avoid the myth of the given. As Sellars insisted repeatedly, no sensing is in itself an episode of knowledge.[15] Rationality must operate in perception from the beginning so that its deliverances may have a rational bearing on our beliefs.

A second motivation for requiring reflective access to factive reasons is to equip the view with resources to deal with what Pritchard called *environmental luck*.[16] For instance, this is the kind of luck a subject has for being in an environment favorable to the successful exercise of her perceptual capacity when she could very easily be in an unfavorable environment. To illustrate this idea, suppose a subject who is able to identify the colors of things by looking at them

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[13] McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity*, 23.

[14] McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity*, 17.

[15] As Sellars points out, there can be no basing relation between sensations and empirical beliefs about the world because sensations do not have propositional content. Sensations do not have epistemic efficacy. For an elaboration of this point, see Wilfrid Sellars, *Science, Perception and Reality* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), especially 127–134.

[16] Duncan Pritchard, "Knowledge, Understanding and the Epistemic Value," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* 64 (2009):19-43, and especially 27.

and is aware that she is reliable in doing so. Let us call her Mary. Thus, Mary is able not only to identify the color of a ball before her but also to claim that she knows the color of this ball because she is reliable in telling the color of things by looking at them. In normal conditions, Mary has reflective access to her episodes of perceptual color discrimination and is able to use them to justify knowledge claims about the color of objects in view. Now suppose that Mary is invited to participate in a psychological experiment. She is going to be asked to determine the color of objects she is presented with in a series of tests. In half of these situations, the light conditions will not be suitable for the exercise of her color discriminatory capacity and she is told that. In a particular test, however, Mary does not know whether the lights are suitable or not. The question then is whether she can identify in a particular test the color of the object presented to her. Of course she cannot know in those cases where the light conditions are unsuitable for the exercise of her color discriminatory capacity. A white wall can appear red under red lights. In this situation, Mary cannot identify the color of the wall. However, what about a test where the light conditions, unbeknown to Mary, are suitable? This is a typical case of environmental luck. Although Mary is under suitable light conditions, during the experiment she could very easily find herself under light conditions unsuitable for the exercise of her color discriminatory capacity. Thus, if she takes the object presented to her now as having the color it appears to have, her belief could easily be false. She does not have knowledge. According to McDowell, even if we suppose that she is able to exercise her color discriminatory capacity, since the light conditions are good, and to see the color of the object, she does not have access to this episode of seeing.[17] Therefore, she cannot use it to sustain a knowledge claim about the color of this object. To prevent such environmental luck from getting in the way of her perceptual knowledge, Mary needs to have reflective access to the fact that she sees the object as having a determinate color. In the situation under consideration, in order to obtain such access, she needs to defeat the testimony that the chances of the light conditions being unsuitable are fifty percent. Thus, reflective access, which I will henceforth call the *reflective-requirement,* seems to be an interesting requirement for perceptual knowledge, as McDowell construes it.

[17] McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity*, 46.

3. Zagzebski and Reflective Understanding

In recent years there has been intense debate in epistemology as to whether understanding is distinct from knowledge. To illustrate the intuition behind the view that understanding is *sui generis* and irreducible to propositional knowledge, we can imagine an individual who learns a theoretical claim by testimony. For example, suppose someone reads in an authoritative book that the Second Law of Newton is $f = m.a$. On the one hand, there is a clear sense in which that individual knows the Second Law of Newton. This person can state the law if asked. On the other hand, there seems to be a sense in which that person does not understand the Second Law if she or he is unable, for example, to apply the law to a variety of cases and, perhaps, to relate it to Newton's other two laws. Therefore, that person can apparently know the Second Law without understanding or grasping how the law works. In a second example, we can imagine an individual who knows by testimony each proposition in the proof of a theorem but does not yet understand the theorem. That person does not understand how these propositions are related to one another. In both cases, the subject, despite having knowledge, falls short of understanding those propositions whose truth is known by the subject. Thus, understanding seems to be something different from propositional knowledge and may not be reducible to it.

What is necessary for understanding that *p*? According to Zagzebski, a person who understands that *p* needs to grasp how that piece of knowledge fits into a body of knowledge; understanding, she points out, "involves the grasp of part/whole relations."[18] Turning to our example, a person who understands Newton's Second Law must be able to relate it to Newton's other two laws and explain these relations within the field of physics. Nevertheless, this will not do, at least not without a caveat. If this person were told again by an authoritative testimonial that Newton's Second Law relates to the other two in such and such ways, and that it can be explained within physics by such and such explanations, it would seem that what this person possesses falls short of understanding even though it cannot be denied that this person possesses knowledge of Newton's Second law and of its relations to Newton's other two laws. Again, if there is a genuine difference between knowledge and understanding, this difference cannot be cashed out in terms of the amount of knowledge. The difference must be of another kind. One suggestion, which finds an echo in Zagzebski's work, is to

[18] Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 242.

equate understanding with achievement resulting from the exercise of an ability or skill. As she points out,

"Understanding is a state gained by learning an art or skill, a *techne*. One gains understanding by knowing how to do something well, and this makes one a reliable person to consult in matters pertaining to the skill in question [...] The person who has mastered a *techne* understands the nature of the product of the *techne* and is able to explain it."[19]

The key notion here is that of *techne* or skill. Without learning a skill, without knowing how to do something well and become a reliable person in the subject matter pertaining to the skill in question, the person cannot have understanding. A skilled musician, for instance, can hear notes and tones in music and relate them in a way that I cannot. Similarly, someone who did not learn math well cannot understand a theorem, although they may know it by testimony. Following Zagzebski, it may be claimed that a person who understands a theorem must be able to produce a proof of this theorem and explain its stages. Similarly, a musician who understands a composition must be able to produce this composition and explain how its elements are related to each other. Thus, the special relation of understanding between a person and a product, which may be a theorem, a composition, or an empirical proposition, depends on two requirements: (i) this product must result from the exercise of a *techne* or skill possessed by the person in question, and (ii) its production can be explained by the person in question. The first requirement might be termed the *achievement-requirement* and the second the *explainability-requirement.* A person who learns an explanation for Newton's Second Law only by testimony does not meet the achievement-requirement. She or he may have knowledge but surely, on this account, does not have understanding of Newton's Second Law.

The testimony case shows how knowledge is possible without understanding. However, is understanding possible without knowledge? Zagzebski, following Elgin[20], thinks that it is, because comprehensiveness instead of truth is the goal of understanding. Incorrect models and false generalizations such as "Objects in a vacuum fall toward the Earth at a rate of 32 ft/sec2," may provide us with more understanding than the much more complex correct model or the more

[19] Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 241.

[20] Catherine Elgin, *Considered Judgment* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), especially 123-124.

complicated truth.[21] Understanding would have more to do with comprehensiveness than with truth, which would mean that propositional understanding does not need to be factive.[22] Other authors do no follow Zagzebski on this. Grimm, for instance, paying attention to everyday situations in which we try to understand why something happened, points out that "our understanding of natural phenomena seems conspicuously factive—what we are trying to grasp is how things actually stand in the world."[23] Our tacit grasp of understanding is simply not in agreement with the idea that it is possible to deepen our understanding through false propositions or incorrect models.

Despite that, there is another reason to think that understanding is possible without knowledge. Given that understanding is an achievement, if achievement is possible without knowledge, then understanding is possible without knowledge as well. Pritchard, for instance, sustains that while knowledge is incompatible with environmental luck, achievement is not. Thus, there may be cases of achievement that are not cases of knowledge because of the presence of environmental luck.[24] Imagine, for example, that a well-trained scientist called Kate is in the lab observing a chemical reaction. Through controlled experimentation and using appropriate instruments, she learns that the chemical reaction takes place when oxygen is mixed with a certain substance. Since Kate is very well acquainted with chemistry theories, she is able to provide an explanation of why mixing oxygen with that kind of substance causes that chemical reaction. She satisfies both conditions for understanding and thus understands why such a chemical reaction takes place. Now suppose that the instrument could easily malfunction, that is, in the majority of the nearby possible worlds, it is the case that the instrument does malfunction and so at best it provides the correct result in the actual world by chance. That Kate is in a situation where the instrument does function well is a case of environmental luck. Therefore, she does not have knowledge since her belief could easily be false. However, according to Pritchard, she has

[21] Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 244.

[22] The reason given by Zagzebski is that "understanding [..] is a state that is constituted by a type of conscious transparency," that is, when one has understanding it cannot be the case that one does not understand that one understands. It seems then that for this to be the case it is necessary that all the factors that constitute understanding are internal and therefore not necessarily factive. See Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 246.

[23] Stephen Grimm, "Is Understanding a Species of Knowledge?," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 57 (2006): 515-535, and especially 518.

[24] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Understanding," 317.

understanding. As Kate employed the instrument skillfully in order to find out what causes the chemical reaction in question, which was her achievement, and the instrument did function properly in that particular situation, she continues to satisfy both requirements for understanding. There seems to be no barrier for her understanding in such a case.

4. Knowledge and Understanding Cannot be Separated

We saw that there are good reasons for thinking that knowledge and understanding can be separated. Testimonial knowledge seems to fall short of understanding because it is not a robust epistemic achievement; and understanding, in turn, does not eliminate environmental luck which is a requirement for knowledge. However, I will argue that this gap between knowledge and understanding can be closed. The difference between them is more a difference between aspects of the same epistemic episode than a difference between two kinds of epistemic episodes. To obtain this outcome, I will first argue that knowledge is also an achievement, even in the case of testimonial knowledge. Then I will argue that achievements exclude environmental luck because *techne*s and skills can only be employed or exercised in their proper environment. Finally, I will also sustain that the reflective-requirement and the explainability-requirement are not respectively requirements for knowledge and understanding, which are not in fact different types of achievements.

Let us examine again the case of testimonial knowledge. Remember that is was claimed that knowing by testimonial that $f = m.a$ is Newton's Second Law is not enough to possess understanding of Newton's Second Law because understanding also requires achievement. However, if our view of testimony is that it is also a *techne* or skill, for instance, the skill of deciding to accept conscientiously a testimonial, which can be improved over time with the right instructions and feedback, then there is no good reason to deny that its successful exercise is a perfect case of achievement. Thus, someone who comes to know Newton's Second Law by testimony in a conscientious way accomplishes an achievement. Can we also ascribe to this person an understanding of Newton's Second Law? It is important to bear to mind that this person should possess the concepts that figure in the law, otherwise it would be difficult to comprehend how it is possible for her to understand what is asserted by the statement of the law and to believe it is Newton's Second Law. In this scenario, a rudimentary but proper understanding of Newton's Second Law might be ascribed to her. It may still be

claimed that this achievement is not enough for understanding, since the second requirement for understanding, the explainability-requirement, is not fulfilled in this case. For instance, Pritchard, commenting on Kate's case discussed previously, points out that understanding a causal connection requires "being able to offer a *sound explanatory story* [emphasis added] regarding how cause and effect are related."[25] A similar consideration would apply to understanding the identity relation that figures in Newton's Second Law, or any kind of relation whatsoever. Thus, as the argument goes, a person who is able to pass on Newton's Second Law, learned by testimony, is likely to have a conception of why something might be related to something else, but this is not sufficient for one to be able to provide a sound explanatory story regarding why something is related to something else. To that, it is necessary to also have a sound epistemic grip on why something is related to something else.

Let us suppose, however, that our hero learns by testimony in a conscientious way that Newton's Second Law holds because of such-and-such factors, that is, she learns by testimony an explanation why that law holds. Now both conditions for understanding are apparently met. Learning Newton's Second Law by testimony as well as an explanation of why such a law holds are both cases of achievement. If this person is asked why the law holds, she may reply asserting the explanation she has learned. What more could be required? Pritchard again resists ascribing understanding to a case similar to this one in almost every relevant aspect. The only difference is that he does not explicitly consider the episodes of testimony as achievements. Nevertheless, he insists that this person still does not have a "sound epistemic grip" on the explained relation,[26] which in his example happens to be a causal relation. I grant that there is a clear sense in which the person in question does not have a deep understanding of Newton's Second Law. Even after learning an explanation for why such a law holds, and assuming that she has a rudimentary understanding of the relevant concepts, she may yet be unable, for instance, to frame different explanations of why that law holds. Her assimilation of Newton's system is still too partial and insufficient to afford a full understanding of Newton's Second Law. All this, however, is beside the point. Once it is accepted that knowledge by testimony is an achievement, why keep saying that testimonial knowledge does not provide understanding, even rudimentary and limited understanding? Pritchard's position seems untenable. On

[25] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Understanding," 323.

[26] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Understanding," 316.

the one hand, if only an achievement can provide a sound epistemic grip on why something is related to something else, then it is unintelligible why testimony construed as an achievement cannot provide such a grip. On the other hand, if that grip depends on acquiring pieces of knowledge about the relevant subject-matter above a certain threshold—for instance, one understands Newton's Second Law only after learning a quite significant part of the Newtonian system—then the difference between knowledge and understanding is not substantive or qualitative, and it is absolutely arbitrary where the line for that threshold is drawn. Moreover, as I see it, the explainability-requirement is too strong. The only evidence Pritchard provides in its favor, apart from an appeal to intuition,[27] is linguistic. He points out that someone who claims to understand some event represents him or herself to others as being able to offer a sound explanatory story about why something else causes that event.[28] In my view, this seems to confuse the requirements for claiming understanding with the requirements for possessing understanding. I will return to this point later, but for now I will point out that it is also common to ascribe understanding of a product, which can be a proposition or an instrument, to someone when this person intelligently uses this product to solve a task.

Notwithstanding the effort for construing knowledge by testimony as an achievement, Pritchard might reply that this will not do because achievements are compatible with environmental luck, whereas knowledge is not. This is a problem that different versions of virtue epistemology have to deal with. Suppose, for instance, the definition of knowledge as a cognitive success—e.g., a true belief—due to cognitive ability or skill. This view of knowledge can handle Gettier-style cases. In Chisholm's case discussed in section one, the person does not have knowledge that the animal before her is a sheep because obtaining a true belief does not result from her perceptual ability. This definition, however, does not seem to have the resources to deal with cases of environmental luck. In the psychological experiment, Mary may succeed in determining the color of an object when, unbeknownst to her, the light conditions are good. This would be a case of achievement—success because of cognitive ability—but it is far from clear that it is a case of knowledge since environmental luck is present in the situation.

At this juncture there are two options: (1) the first is to reject the idea that knowledge is incompatible with environmental luck and, thereby, to claim that

[27] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Understanding," 316.

[28] Pritchard, "Knowledge and Understanding," 322-23.

Mary's achievement in the psychological experiment is an episode of knowledge after all; and (2) the second is to deny that Mary successfully exercised her color discriminatory capacity in the psychological experiment, and thereby to claim that Mary did not attain any achievement regarding the color of things presented to her. The first approach is carried out by John Turri who argues that reliabilism in epistemology should be replaced with a position he calls *abilism*[29]. According to him, folk intuitions regarding knowledge attributions are much more tolerant to the presence of luck than the epistemological tradition has been willing to accept. I do not intend to discuss Turri's position here, I merely want to comment that, even assuming that Turri's empirical evidence is correct, it does not follow that epistemologists should preserve all folk intuitions in their accounts of knowledge. Due to the normativity of knowledge and its connections to other concepts equally central to our world view, this dispute is not to be resolved only on empirical grounds. For the time being, I will stick with anti-luck intuitions. One way to pursue the second approach is to argue that an ability or skill is relative to a type of environment in that it cannot be exercised unless the person who possesses it is in the proper environment.[30] As Millar points out, "being competent at ϕing is being good enough at ϕing and being good enough at ϕing with respect to some environment is being good enough at ϕing there."[31] Accordingly, Mary cannot exercise her color discriminatory capacity in the psychological experiment because the employment of this capacity requires normal light conditions. Anticipating this move, Pritchard replies that the relativization of abilities to environments has the result that they are infallible, which is an unwelcome consequence. In addition, it sounds strange that one loses an ability when one enters a deceptive or unsuitable environment.[32] Both challenges are addressed by Alan Millar who defends that abilities do in fact depend on suitable or favorable environments.[33] First, we are

[29] John Turri, "A New Paradigm for Epistemology: From Reliabilism to Abilism," *Ergo* 3, 8 (2016): 189–231.

[30] I will not defend this claim here. Millar leans on the idea that an ability must be successful every time it is manifested, as he points out, "the notion of the manifestation or exercise of an ability is a success notion." For this to be the case, the current environment must be favorable. See Alan Millar, "What Is It That Cognitive Abilities Are Abilities To Do?" *Acta Analytica* 24, no. 4 (2009): 223-236, and especially 224, where that quotation appears.

[31] Millar, "What Is It," 229.

[32] Pritchard, "Knowledge, Understanding and the Epistemic Value," 27.

[33] Alan Millar, "Abilities, Competences, and Fallibility," in *Performance Epistemology: Foundations and Applications, ed. Miguel Ángel Fernández Vargas* (New York: Oxford

fallible in relation to an ability in the sense that we can try to exercise it and fail to do so. However, this is not a defective exercise of that ability but a failed attempt to exercise it. This can happen because some unexpected cause intervenes or because the environment is not favorable. Second, one does not lose an ability when one enters in an unfavorable environment, one is prevented from exercising it. This is because an ability is not completely internal to the individual, on the contrary, it is partially constituted by environmental factors in that its exercise can only occur in the presence of these factors.

It may seem that Mary is able to identify a red thing when there is one before her in the psychological experiment, but she cannot do that in that environment, since she could very easily have mistaken a white object for a red one. In that environment, she has the ability to identify whether something is red fifty percent of the time in which she tries to do so, which is, as it were, an ability too trivial to deserve mention. In the first section, in line with McDowell's view of perception, I mentioned that if Mary were able to rule out the possibility of inappropriate light conditions—suppose, for instance, she notices an alternation in the facial expression of the experimenter which is reliably correlated with the light conditions being good or bad—then she would be able to identify red things in the psychological experiment. This is not in tension with the present discussion. Much more is required for Mary to be able to identify red things in the psychological experiment. Similarly, much more is required for an archer to be able to shoot at fixed targets in a strong storm than in clear weather. It is perfectly possible to have the latter ability without having the former. The same applies to Mary. It is a mistake to think that all the requirements one must fulfill to be able to identify red things in the psychological experiment are also requirements one must fulfill to be able to identify red things in good light conditions. Variations in the environment or in the target task have consequences for the requirements for having or exercising the relevant ability. Consequently, McDowell's reflective-requirement is not, I claim, a general requirement for all perceptual discriminatory abilities in whatever environment one happens to find oneself. It may be necessary in some environments or for accomplishing some special tasks, but perceptual knowledge in general does not depend on fulfilling that requirement. Additionally, for reasons that will soon become clear, we should think in the same way about the explainability-requirement for understanding, since it is necessary only in special environments or occasions.

University Press, 2016), 62-82, and especially 64.

5. Retreating from Intellectualism: A Unified Approach

Cognitive episodes that are the outcome of the exercise of a cognitive ability are cases of knowledge. They are successful because of cognitive ability, and they avoid environmental luck because cognitive abilities can only be exercised in favorable environments. At the same time, the exercise of a cognitive ability manifests understanding; it is an achievement and the agent deserves credit for it. The difference between knowledge and understanding is a difference of aspects. When we describe a cognitive episode as a case of knowledge, we emphasize its success, its safety, and the exclusion of epistemic luck, whereas if the same episode were described as a case of understanding, the emphasis would fall on its being the outcome of the exercise of a cognitive ability. Thus, without betraying my claim that the same cognitive episode can simultaneously be a case of knowledge and a case of understanding, there is a sense in which understanding is more agent centered than knowledge. We describe a cognitive episode as an episode of understanding when we are interested in the abilities of the agent who manifests that understanding, that is, we are interested in what that agent is able to do regarding the object of her understanding.[34] This explains why our ways of expressing understanding is more sensitive to gradation than our ways of expressing knowledge. Insofar as cognitive abilities may be better or worse at achieving cognitive episodes, the understanding obtained by exercising them can be deeper or shallower. Thus, someone who can explain Newton's Second Law by relating it to other principles of Newton's physics understands it better than someone who can apply that law to only a few situations. Suppose the first is a well-trained physicist and the second is an apprentice who are learning Newton's physics mostly by conscientious testimony. Both understand Newton's Second Law, but the first individual, being able to use this law to solve a richer set of problems, has a deeper understanding than the second. Nevertheless, when these episodes are seen as cases of knowledge, there is no significant difference. That Newton's Second Law is $f = m.a$ is equally safe in both situations.

My proposal is that understanding a product, which, remember, can be a theorem, a composition, an empirical proposition etc., is a function of what the

[34] Zagzebski seems to sustain a similar view when she says that "understanding is a property of persons." See Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 245. I would prefer to say that understanding is a relation between a successful cognitive episode and a cognitive ability. Agent's abilities, rather than one's own current mental states, are the agent's crucial factors when we are talking about understanding.

agent is able to do with this product, of how rich is the agent's space of actions in which this product is placed. A person has more understanding of a product than another person if the first person is able to do more things with that product than the second. The set of tasks an agent is able to solve using a product offer a measure of the depth of the agent's understanding of that product. On this account, propositional understanding and objectual understanding can be addressed in the same way since they both rest upon skills and *technes*. We learn and improve specific skills, such as perceptual and recognitional skills, in order to deal with certain types of objects as well as learning and improving specific skills, such as inferential skills, in order to deal with certain types of propositions.

One last point about understanding: it does not require the explainability-requirement. This requirement can be necessary for accomplishing specific tasks due to the very nature of the task, but there is nothing special about the explainability-requirement regarding the nature of understanding. Being able to do something with a product is sufficient to have some understanding of the product. This feature of the proposed view should be seen as a virtue, since it helps to avoid a potential regress generated by the reflective-requirement as well as the explainability-requirement. If perceptual knowledge required that one knows that one is perceiving because an episode of perception must be placed in the space of reasons, then it should be expected that one knows that one knows that one is perceiving because an episode of placing an episode of perception in the space of reasons must itself be placed in the space of reasons and so forth. If understanding required that one is able to explain a product, then it should be expected that one is also able to explain that explanation and so forth. As I will illustrate bellow in the case of perception and in the case of science, perceptual understanding and scientific understanding do not necessarily require second-order cognition.

5.1. Perceptual Knowledge and Understanding

First, we should be more explicit in pointing out that the reflective condition is a requirement not for the possession of knowledge, but for the legitimacy of claiming knowledge. The task of claiming perceptual knowledge is distinct, although it presupposes the task of discriminating an object by sight or touch in the surrounding environment. We can and should conceive of perception and introspection as separate capacities or skills whose deliverances can be intelligently combined in order to sustain a perceptual knowledge claim. However, unlike McDowell's view, perception knowledge is possible without introspection. If,

following Ryle, we conceive perceiving as "exercising an acquired skill"[35] to detect or discriminate things, then the exercise of a perceptual skill yields perceptual episodes in which a feature of the environment is present to a subject. I would not say that this is achieved without the help of rationality, but at least without the necessary help of introspection. An individual can see a red object without knowing that she is having an episode of vision. The latter achievement is not constitutive of the former, it is, perhaps, merely a necessary condition for the act of claiming perceptual knowledge. A subject can act upon what is disclosed by her perceptual states, accomplishing a wide range of different tasks, long before she can introspect those states. As Gibson points out, "to see things is to see how to get about among them and what to do or not do with them. If this is true, visual perception serves behavior, and behavior is controlled by perception."[36]

Are we back to the myth of the given? I do not think so. I agree with Sellars and McDowell that pure sensing is not in itself an episode of knowledge. However, now we are talking about a perceptual capacity or skill possessed by an agent. A perceptual skill must at least be distinguished from a thermometer. In order to make this distinction, we need to see this skill as sensible to some counter-factual conditions, and its exercise must make adjustments in the face of changes in the perceived object or in the environment. The sensibility to counter-factual conditions does not need to involve the possession of propositional knowledge since it can be explained by a kind of practical understanding. Perceptual skills embody practical understanding because the agent knows how to deal with some counter-factual conditions in order to bring about certain desired results. This notion of practical understanding comes from John Campbell who points out that "a squirrel interacting with a nut […] does need to be able to think about the nut, to identify its casually indexical properties […] A practical grasp of the properties of the nut means that it can bring about the desired result."[37] In a very similar line, Alva Noë says, "We can see what there is when it is there, and what makes it the case that it is there is the fact that we comprehend its sensorimotor significance. Sensorimotor understanding brings the world into focus for perceptual

[35] Gilbert Ryle, "Sensation," in *Collected Papers, Volume 2: Collected Essays 1929–1968* (Oxford: Routledge, 2009), 349-362, and especially 360.

[36] James Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979), 223.

[37] John Campbell, *Past, Space and Self* (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1995), 49.

consciousness."[38] On the sensorimotor view of perception, a subject can see the voluminousness of a tomato, for instance, if she knows how to explore her sensorimotor abilities in order to place the back of the tomato in plain view. Perception construed as a set of specific skills to explore properties of objects or as a set of skills to accomplish discriminatory tasks involving these objects embodies practical understanding. The more discriminatory skills one has to deal with an object, the deeper one's perceptual understanding of that object. In this sense, we are far away from the myth of the given.

5.2. Scientific Knowledge and Understanding

As in the case of perceptual knowledge and understanding, I do not think that the explainability-requirement is necessary to have an understanding of a proposition. Contrary to Zagzebski's suggestion, a person may acquire a skill and not be able to explain its products or exercises. This is easier to accept in the perceptual case. A trained musician can explain how or why she can hear notes in music that I cannot hear. She can even be a bad instructor in teaching someone else how to hear and discriminate those types of notes. This sounds reasonable in the case of perception. However, I submit that similar considerations also apply to an academic or intellectual skill. In Thomas Kuhn's account of scientific knowledge, what a scientist learns when she assimilates an exemplar, a paradigm, is not a set of methodological rules prescribing how science should be practiced, but a set of skills on how to practice science:

> Scientists can agree that a Newton, Lavoisier, Maxwell, or Einstein has produced an apparently permanent solution to a group of outstanding problems and still disagree, sometimes without being aware of it, about the particular abstract characteristics that make those solutions permanent. They can, that is, agree in their identification of a paradigm without agreeing on, or even attempting to produce, a full interpretation or rationalization of it. Lack of a standard interpretation or of an agreed reduction to rules will not prevent a paradigm from guiding research. Normal science can be determined in part by the direct inspection of paradigms, a process that is often aided by but does not depend upon the formulation of rules and assumptions. Indeed, the existence of a paradigm need not even imply that any full set of rules exists.[39]

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[38] Alva Noë, *The Varieties of Presence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 20.
[39] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, 50 Anniversary Edition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 44.

A scientist apprentice first learns how to solve basic problems before trying to solve more complex ones. Initially, the apprentice applies principles learned by testimony without wondering why they work, relying rather on the expertise and authority of senior scientists. The skill to explain the principles of a discipline or the skill to relate one to another in a very systematic way is assimilated very late in the learning process. Before becoming a senior scientist, the apprentice is able to solve a wide range of scientific problems without being able to explain the very principles being used to deal with these problems. This is because the skill or ability to explain the principles of a discipline is important for dealing with some very specific tasks, such as the task of articulating a theory, but it is much less relevant for those who are merely applying the theories of a discipline. For instance, senior experimental physicists are not so skillful in articulating the theories of their fields as their corresponding senior theoretical physicists, simply because they do not need this skill in a very high level to do their job. Moreover, even senior theoretical physicists do not fulfill the explainability-requirement in a full-blown sense; this is the point of Kuhn's remarks. Senior scientists know how to do theoretical physics without being able to explain how or why science works; they generally are not, nor need to be, philosophers of science. Of course, as already said, they must be able to explain how some things work in the laboratory and why some objects behave in certain ways and not in others. That is, they need to know how to provide good explanations about the subject-matter of their disciplines. They need to know how to do that only because in this case discipline-specific explanations are necessary to solve some specific tasks in their disciplines. However, they do not need to know how to explain why some of those discipline-specific explanations are good and others are not, although they need to be able to tell them apart. No scientist is less entitled to be called a ‘scientist’ simply because she is not able to offer a philosophical theory of explanation. Nothing that I have said prevents a scientist from learning how to provide those kinds of second-order explanations, nor implies that her scientific practice could not be improved by learning or developing such a theory. The main point is that science can be done well and it is normally done well without any kind of reflective understanding about the practice of science itself. At the same time, it can be granted that our understanding of a subject-matter is deepened by improving our scientific skills to deal with that subject-matter.

6. Concluding Remarks

Zagzebski sustains that understanding "is an episode that is constituted by a type of conscious transparency [...] it is impossible to understand without understanding that one understands."[40] For her, the explainability-requirement is necessary for understanding. Notwithstanding, I argued that understanding does not necessarily involve the explainability-requirement, since one can understand a product without being able to explain why this product comes about or how it is related to other products. This is because understanding requires only achievement obtained by the exercise of a cognitive skill or *techne*; even when the achievement is theoretical; theoretical understanding stems from the exercise of explanatory and theoretical skills. As Gilbert Ryle points out, "a scientist is primarily a knower-how and only secondarily a knower that."[41] In terms of explanation, skills come first. I submit that an agent understands a product only if this agent has a skill or a set of skills by which one is able to accomplish a set of tasks involving that product. Without a skill to deal with that product, the agent cannot grasp or understand that product. Skills are the basis of understanding. A skillful person embodies understanding which is manifested when she exercises her cognitive skills. Apart from avoiding the regress problem, the present account of understanding also does more justice to the gradual aspect of understanding. We deepen our understanding of a kind of product when we learn to accomplish more tasks involving instances of this kind of product. There is nothing special about reflection—understood as a second-order cognition—it is just a complex skill required for accomplishing some specific tasks. Finally, knowledge and understanding are achievements because of cognitive skills. Since abilities or skills can be exercised only in their proper environment, their exercise rules out epistemic and environmental luck. Depending on the skill, its exercise yields knowledge of objects or propositional knowledge. Knowledge and understanding are not different kinds of cognitive episodes, they merely single out different aspects of cognitive achievements.

[40] Zagzebski, "Recovering Understanding," 246.

[41] Gilbert Ryle, "Knowing How and Knowing That," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 46, no. 1 (June 1946):1-16, and especially 16.

TESTIMONIAL INSULT: A MORAL REASON FOR BELIEF?

Finlay MALCOLM

ABSTRACT: When you don't believe a speaker's testimony for reasons that call into question the speaker's credibility, it seems that this is an insult against the speaker. There also appears to be moral reasons that count in favour of refraining from insulting someone. When taken together, these two plausible claims entail that we have a moral reason to refrain from insulting speakers with our lack of belief, and hence, sometimes, a moral reason to believe the testimony of speakers. Reasons for belief arising from non-epistemic sources are controversial, and it's often argued that it's impossible to base a belief on non-epistemic reasons. However, I will show that *even if it is* possible to base a belief on non-epistemic reasons, in the case of testimonial insult, for many or most cases, the moral reasons for belief don't need to be the basis of our doxastic response. This is because there are, in many or most cases, either sufficient epistemic reasons for belief, or sufficient moral reasons for action that guide our response to testimony. Reasons from testimonial insult, in many cases, simply lead to overdetermination. Even if there are such moral reasons for belief, they are therefore practically unnecessary in many cases. There are, though, some cases in which they play an important role in guiding belief. This perhaps surprising conclusion is one unexplored way to defend epistemic over pragmatic reasons for belief.

KEYWORDS: belief, testimony, insult, reasons, moral, epistemic

1. Introduction

What should be our doxastic response toward someone's testimony? In other words, what normative reasons count in favour of belief, disbelief and suspended judgment concerning *p* when someone has told us *p*? It's typical to focus discussion on this question around *epistemic* reasons, which bear on whether or not the testimony is, or is likely to be true.[1] Centring discussion on such epistemic reasons

[1] Nishi Shah, "A New Argument for Evidentialism," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 56 (2006): 481-498. I follow Lord in defining epistemic reasons as "the reasons for belief, disbelief, and withholding that bear on *epistemic rationality or justification*, which is… constitutively tied to truth" (Errol Lord, "Epistemic Reasons, Evidence, and Defeaters," in *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*, ed. Daniel Star (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), n.8).

is relevant to epistemologists because it's thought that responding appropriately to these kinds of reasons is essential for knowledge.[2] However, epistemic reasons may not be the only reasons that bear on how we should respond to testimony. Some authors maintain that there are other norms in play too. Common amongst these are *pragmatic* reasons for belief, such as believing for instrumental gain. One widely cited example of a pragmatic reason is believing certain propositions in order to overcome illness.[3] So, whilst believing for pragmatic reasons may not be sufficient for knowledge, it may be sufficient for obtaining other desirable goods.

An important kind of pragmatic reason for belief comes from *moral* considerations. One such example is derived from the Kantian notion that theistic belief is required in order to wholly believe in a moral order, which is itself required to motivate people to contribute to the good in the world.[4] If this is so then one has a moral reason for belief in God. One moral example that connects directly with testimony is *testimonial injustice*.[5] If a kind of injustice is performed when a speaker is disbelieved purely on the basis of social identity prejudice, then the speaker's audience have a moral reason to revise their doxastic response to the testifier so as to correct the injustice.

This paper considers another possible moral reason for believing a speaker's testimony. The reason comes from recent reflection on the claim that not believing speakers can be insulting for the speaker. G. E. M Anscombe once made a similar remark: "It is an insult and it may be an injury not to be believed."[6] There are

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[2] Mark Schroeder, "Knowledge is Belief for Sufficient (Objective and Subjective) Reason," *Oxford Studies in Epistemology*, 5 (2015): 225-252.

[3] Gilbert Harman, *Reasoning, Meaning and Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 6.

[4] Robert Merrihew Adams, "Moral Arguments for the Existence of God," in *The Virtue of Faith and Other Essays in Philosophical Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 144–163; Michael Pace, "The Epistemic Value of Moral Considerations: Justification, Moral Encroachment, and James' 'Will To Believe'," *Nous* 45 (2011): 239-268. This is also related to J. L. Mackie's sentiments that "the abandonment of a belief in objective values can cause, at least temporarily, a decay of subjective concern and sense of purpose" (*Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* (London: Pelican Books, 1977), 34).

[5] Miranda Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[6] G. E. M Anscombe, "What is it to Believe Someone?" in *Rationality and Religious Belief,* ed. C. F. Delaney (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1979), 150. I have attempted to give an account of Anscombe's claim in my paper "How to Insult and Compliment a Testifier," *Episteme*, 15:1 (2018): 50-64. For another account, see Allan Hazlett, "On the Special Insult of Refusing Testimony," *Philosophical Explorations*, 20 (2017): 37-51. Similar remarks to that of Anscombe

several ways in which philosophers have tried to elaborate on this claim, but I want to explore the following: Supposing that under certain conditions, it is insulting to reject a speaker's testimony (to disbelieve or suspend judgment about it). Call this a *testimonial insult*. Do testimonial insults give us a reason to believe the speaker as a means of avoiding paying her an insult?[7] The argument would then be:

(1) If some action or attitude A is an insult against a person, then one has a moral reason to avoid A-ing,

(2) Rejecting the testimony of a speaker is sometimes an insult against the speaker,

(3) So, there is sometimes a moral reason to avoid rejecting a speaker's testimony.

What makes this particular moral reason arising from testimonial insult especially interesting and worth exploring is its social significance. Throughout this paper I will give certain examples of this significance, but suffice for now to say that testimonial insult is particularly important for the way we think of interpersonal trust, and certain relationship groups such as marriage and friendship.

This paper has two broad aims: first, to defend premises (1) and (2), and hence to try to establish (3); second, to explore the place of reasons for belief arising from testimonial insult alongside epistemic reasons for belief in order to identify what sort of functional role they occupy. In addressing this second aim, we will see an interesting and perhaps surprising result. In many cases where rejecting testimony gives one a moral reason to believe the testimony, there are other, non-moral sufficient reasons for the hearer to believe the testimony. Oftentimes these alternative reasons simply show that one does not need to believe the testimony on the basis of the moral reason one has: one can believe the testimony for the non-moral reason. In other cases, there are other, equally good means by which someone can avoid paying an insult that involve action rather

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have been made by J. L. Austin: "If I have said I know or I promise, you insult me in a special way by refusing to accept it" ("Other Minds," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society Supplement* 20 (1946): 171); and Adam Smith in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*: "It is always mortifying not to be believed" (VII.iv.24).

[7] Later in this paper I discuss the role that *accepting* a speaker's testimony can play in avoiding paying the speaker an insult. For now, though, I am focussing solely on doxastic means of avoiding the insult.

than belief. What I will conclude, then, is that even if, in theory, testimonial insults give moral reasons for belief, in practice, for many or perhaps most cases, one need not actually base one's beliefs on these reasons because there are sufficient or equally good alternatives. It follows that testimonial insult, as a moral reason for belief, does not need to actually play a functional role in guiding our doxastic response to testimony for many or most cases. I will also show, though, where moral reasons for belief deriving from testimonial insult do have an important bearing on what to believe.

I will begin in §2 by defending premises (1) and (2) by outlining how rejecting testimony is sometimes insulting for the speaker. Then, in §3, I will focus my defence on premise (1) by showing what reasons we have to avoid insulting others in general, and in testimonial contexts in particular. I will hence be favouring the view that there are genuine moral reasons for belief. However, in §4, upon close analysis of cases of testimony, I will show in which circumstances moral reasons that are grounded in avoiding insulting testifiers need not be the basis for one's belief. I will also show where they have an important bearing on what to believe.

There have been numerous attempts to reject the possibility of moral reasons for belief.[8] Rather than responding to these objections, I will present my argument as a conditional: *even if it is* possible to base a belief on non-epistemic reasons, in the case of testimonial insult, the arising moral reasons for belief do not in many or most cases need to be the basis for our doxastic response to testimony; there are, in many or most cases, sufficient alternatives in the form of epistemic reasons for belief, or moral reasons for action. I take this conclusion to be somewhat surprising, and to provide a unique strategy that others may find useful who would like to focus greater attention toward epistemic reasons for belief, and away from non-epistemic reasons.

2. Insult and Testimony

The simple claim made in (2) – affirmed by Anscombe and others – is that when some speaker S tells, or testifies to a proposition p to some hearer or audience H, if H's doxastic response to p is one of non-belief, then this response of H's – the doxastic attitude that H forms in response to S's testimony – constitutes an insult against S. I shall attempt to bring a little more clarity to this claim.

[8] Shah, "A New Argument."

What is meant by H's doxastic attitude being one of *non-belief*? Although there is usually thought to be just one kind of *positive* doxastic response, that of *belief*, there are two options when it comes to non-belief: *suspension of judgment*, and *disbelief*. In either case, the testimony of the speaker is resisted, rejected, or in some way not believed. A slightly simplified, but formal way to state the claim is that when S tells H that p,[9]

H forms D toward $p \rightarrow$ D is insulting for S.[10]

Why might D be insulting for S? Two points need to be addressed here. First, rejecting a proposition testified to by a speaker is tantamount to not believing the speaker herself.[11] Second, according to some accounts of testimony, when a speaker asserts p, she puts forward p as true and hence vouches for the truth of p.[12] In vouching for p, the speaker makes a reflexive remark about herself as a credible source of truth. She is saying that one may use her testimony to form a reliable belief concerning p under the confident assumption that she is a credible testifier. This may come in at least two forms. One could be credible with respect to speaking truly, or with respect to knowing competently. It seems that both of these are involved, to some extent at least, in the credibility one requires to properly vouch for the truth of a proposition.

Two recent papers have independently maintained that it's in the undermining of this credibility that the hearer's non-belief is insulting for the speaker.[13] When H does not believe S *because* she takes S to be either epistemically incompetent or dishonest, this reflects negatively, in an insulting way, on S's credibility as a testifier. Now, a characteristic of insults is that they are disparaging to the other person in some way,[14] and having your credibility as a testifier called

[9] 'Tellings' are often performed by verbal, or spoken language, but can also be performed in written form, such as letters, and by hand gestures.

[10] As a key, D is a doxastic attitude covering disbelief and suspension of judgment, H is the hearer and S is the speaker, and p is the proposition testified to.

[11] Anscombe's own work addresses what it is to believe *someone*, rather than some *proposition*. But in cases of testimony, believing the testimony p amounts to believing the person, and not believing the testimony p amounts to not believing the person.

[12] Elizabeth Fricker, "Second-Hand Knowledge," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LXXIII (2006): 594.

[13] Malcolm, "How to Insult;" Hazlett, "On the Special Insult."

[14] David Archard, "Insults, Free Speech and Offensiveness," *Journal of Applied Philosophy* 31 (2014): 129.

into question can be disparaging for a number of reasons.[15] Working on the assumption that something like this account of testimonial insult is broadly accurate, we can see under what conditions it is insulting to not be believed by someone. However, it looks like there will also be cases where lack of belief will *not* constitute an insult: when the reasons for this are unrelated to the credibility of the speaker. Suppose we are going for a meeting, and you tell me we are booked into room number 10. Unbeknown to you though, I have changed the booking from room number 10 to number 11. Even though I disbelieve what you tell me, I don't do so for reasons relating to your credibility – you aren't being dishonest or incompetent – I simply know something you don't, nor should you. This means the conditional above is too strong. Instead, when S tells H that *p*,

H forms D toward *p* for reason R → D is insulting for S

where R stands for any reason for not believing the testimony that reflects negatively on the credibility of S as a testifier. Only when the non-belief is for this reason will it be insulting.

One possible reason for thinking that the above conditional is too strong are cases in which the hearer is epistemically warranted in rejecting the speaker's testimony.[16] Anscombe herself appeared to defend such a position: "Compare the irritation of a teacher at not being believed. On the whole, such irritation is just… But if what was *not* believed should turn out to be false, his complaint collapses."[17] From this we might say that if someone disbelieves a speaker because she is justified in believing the speaker to be speaking falsely, then this is not insulting for the speaker. However, cases like this *are* still disparaging for speakers. To take Anscombe's example, say a science teacher is disbelieved by her students for the reason (R) that the students believe the teacher to lack credibility as a scientist. In addition, suppose that the students are correct in their assessment, and that what the teacher presents to them is not true. Regardless, the students' disbelief manifests an insult against the teacher. This is the teacher's livelihood, and it is

[15] In Malcolm, "How to Insult," I offer several cases to explain why this carries negative implications for the speaker, some of which, for example, affect her social role as a distributer of knowledge.

[16] See, for instance, Hazlett: "refusing someone's testimony constitutes insulting her only when it manifests unreasonable (unjustified, irrational, unwarranted) doubt about her credibility" ("On the Special Insult," 43-44). See also Jeremy Wanderer, "Addressing Testimonial Injustice: Being Ignored and Being Rejected," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 62 (2012): 165-166.

[17] Anscombe, "What is it to Believe," 9.

being challenged, and rightfully so, on the basis that the teacher is incompetent as a scientist – in the very thing that the teacher is supposed to have expertise and competence in. Of course, the teacher cannot complain about being disbelieved, but it still follows that she's insulted because she is regarded as incompetent (see §4.3 for further discussion and defence of this claim).

Supposing that the above conditional holds, then the next feature to be noted is that the consequent does not maintain that S *is* insulted by D. Since D is an internal mental state, S might never become aware of D. We might wonder, then, why D is insulting for S on those occasions where S does not become aware of D. After all, insults are disparaging and hence cause offence to the insulted party. But insults can still be performed even if the insulted party is not aware that she has been insulted. It seems possible, for instance, to be insulted in a language one does not understand. Moreover, a person's internal racist attitudes would be insulting toward others if they became revealed. This suggests that insults merely have the *potential* to offend, and do not depend for their existence on causing *actual* offence.

Does it follow from this that if S becomes aware of the insult then S will be offended by it? It seems not. This is because someone might not regard an insult as offensive, despite the fact that when accusing someone of having a certain property that is tracked by the insult, this accusation ought to cause offence. Take, for instance, a newspaper reporter who thrives on spreading falsehoods to garner more attention for her journalism. If you accuse her of being a liar, you are attributing the property of being a liar onto the reporter that you take to be negative, which you intend to be an insult, and which, under normal circumstances, would be regarded as offensive. However, the reporter might appropriate this property in a positive fashion, and take your accusation as a compliment. Given this, she might become aware of your insult, and yet not be offended by it.

One way to make sense of this is in terms of the distinction between 'illocutionary act' and 'perlocutionary effect.'[18] The illocutionary command to 'shut the door' may be successfully performed in the sense that it's been spoken felicitously, whilst the perlocutionary effect of the command may be unsuccessful if the person commanded fails to actually shut the door. Similarly, an insult can

[18] J.L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1962). For further discussion of Austin's distinction as it applies to insult see Jerome Neu, *Sticks and Stones: The Philosophy of Insults* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 164-170.

succeed in picking out some denigrating property of a person, and yet fail if that person is not offended by it. So, when S tells H that *p*,

S becomes aware of D → S is warranted in feeling offended by H.

This conditional can make sense of cases like the dishonest reporter. Importantly, though, it also has an ethical function of making sense of other cases, such as examples of injustice. Suppose you are brought up in a society in which it is customary to belittle people because of their skin colour, race, gender, sexuality, etc. (A society that does not, unfortunately, even require imagining). If you are belittled in virtue of any of these features in an unjust way, you may simply accept it without feeling offended. You might just agree that this is your status in society and live with it. Does it follow that you have not been insulted? I wouldn't say so. These kinds of cases of injustice look entirely insulting, and you are warranted in feeling offended, even if you never do feel offended.

A final issue I want to address at this stage is whether, despite appearances, one's doxastic response to testimony really ever can be insulting for people. Suppose we think of insults as being *intended* to denigrate and offend the other. Well, if we think that our doxastic states are not under our direct voluntary control, then it would follow that we can't directly adopt them with *any* intention in mind, let alone one to insult another person. This objection fails though because one's actions, words and attitudes can be insulting by accident or without any intention to insult. An innocent hand gesture in one culture is insulting to people in another, just as one's direct confrontational stance in an argument can be insulting in some cultures, and not insulting in others. And yet perhaps these culturally-sensitive acts are not, in fact, insults after all, but only bear the mere appearance of an insult. The person feeling insulted is actually unwarranted in this feeling for the very reason that insults must be intended, and sometimes we just aren't aware of a culture's systems. This may be correct for culturally-sensitive insults, but there are other unintended insults that are not culturally-sensitive. An overheard insult is one such case. I can say something denigrating of you to a friend without intending to insult you, but if you overhear what I say, then I will insult you, and moreover, you will be warranted in feeling insulted. Moreover, suppose I believe that some politician is poor at her job, through no direct choice of my own. Isn't this belief insulting to her? And if she became aware of this, wouldn't she be warranted in feeling insulted? Finally, I can insult someone unintentionally by insulting her intelligence with overbearing, protracted advice on straightforward everyday matters. If the culturally-sensitive examples are not

sufficient to show that insults can be unintentional, then I suggest these three cases demonstrate that insults needn't be intended to actually exist.[19]

Let's move now to consider ethical issues around insults, and how these apply to the specific case of testimonial insult.

3. Reasons Against Insulting

Given that various actions and attitudes constitute an insult, it seems plausible that this fact gives us reasons to refrain from performing such actions or holding such attitudes. I expect that there are several arguments that support this claim, but I will prioritise discussion of two.

First, insults may cause harmful effects against the insulted party. According to the above account, one of the causes of insults are offence. Joel Feinberg has claimed that "to be forced to suffer an offence…is an unpleasant inconvenience, and hence an evil."[20] This could be the case if the offence one suffers brings up certain reactive emotions such as anger, humiliation, fear and resentment.[21] These emotions can make it harder to live one's life and sometimes even to exist cooperatively with others in society. Consider a group of people living in a community who are consistently targeted by verbal pejoratives from those whom they come into contact with. Not only will offence and the emotions caused by it be the likely and justified outcome of the insult for the individuals of the group, but so will a lack of any feeling of trust, which in turn can cause one to feel isolated and unwilling to do kindness toward others.

Although this offence and emotional response is a possible, and perhaps in some situations, likely outcome of insult, insults are not sufficient to cause such a response. This is for two reasons that were given in the previous section. First, the insulted party might not become aware of the insult, and second, even if they do they might not feel offended. Therefore, the strongest claim that can be made here is that given the potential for insults to cause offence and other reactive emotions, we have a reason against performing them. For ease, I will refer to this as *the offence norm*. So, according to the offence norm, we have a *pro tanto* reason against insulting others because, if the person becomes aware of the insult, this can cause a particular harm against the insulted party – namely, they cause unpleasant

[19] For further discussion see Neu, *Sticks and Stones*, 18-24.
[20] Joel Feinberg, *Offence to Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 49.
[21] Feinberg, *Offence to Others*, 13 & 21.

or undesirable emotions and reactive attitudes, such as offence, fear and resentment.

Even though the offence norm provides reasons against insulting others, these reasons can be easily outweighed. In particular, people usually *deserve* to be given the truth, even when this is insulting, and hence, they deserve to be insulted. Telling a political dictator who is responsible for the deaths of her own people that she is an evil monster might demand to be said *because of*, rather than *despite of*, the fact that it may cause insult. After all, helping words aren't always kind. There is also the issue of liberty and freedom of speech which itself involves the freedom to insult.[22] Hence the pro tanto reasons given by the offence norm can be, and often are, outweighed by other reasons.

Can this account of general reasons against insult be applied to the specific case of testimonial insult? For the offence norm at least, this appears to be the case. Just consider how important it can be, in some situations, for one person to be believed over another. Various interpersonal relationships appear to manifest this importance, such as that between spouses. Suppose one tells the other something of significance, say, that she's lost her job but was unfairly treated in this regard. To then have this testimony not believed by her spouse can be insulting. Moreover, it looks like it could cause offence leading to a negative emotional response. Her spouse won't side with her on a significant issue, and if the spouse doesn't believe her for the reason that she is thought to be a liar, this could easily cause a good deal of resentment and distrust. These, it seems, are the sorts of situations that can often cause interpersonal relationships to begin to degrade. Since *believing* the spouse in the first place would have prevented her from being insulted, and from feeling offended, it looks like the offence norm gives us a reason, in these kinds of situations, to believe what has been said. Indeed, not just any reason, but a *moral* reason, albeit one that is merely pro tanto.

But are there deserved or warranted cases in which a speaker *should* be disbelieved despite of, or even because of the offence this insult will cause? It looks like there are. Take the story of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf*. Refusing the Boy's testimony could be a valuable corrective to his behaviour. If nobody ever believes habitual liars like the Boy, then hopefully this will have a positive influence on their behaviour so that they will seek to become more reliable, and hence truthful testifiers.

[22] See Neu, *Sticks and Stones*, Chapter 6.

We can see this issue more clearly by the way it connects with the debate over the norms of assertion. Given the obvious problems that arise when speakers mislead hearers into believing falsely, it is widely held that assertion is governed by a norm which instructs speakers on when one is warranted in performing an assertion. Leading candidates for this norm include knowledge,[23] justification,[24] and truth.[25] If a speaker is in clear violation of a norm such as one of these, insulting that person by rejecting her testimony could lead her toward sticking to the norm in future discourse. This may be so for the reason that if people adopt a policy of refusing your testimony because you are either a liar, epistemically incompetent, or perhaps even both, then this will cause you to feel shame and embarrassment. This will hopefully lead to change in the individual. The insult paid, in these cases, seems therefore to perform a certain rehabilitative function: if the speaker won't speak the truth more often, then no one will believe her anymore about anything, and this can be a socially isolating punishment. This can also be understood in terms of blame. By disbelieving someone, we blame her for not acting as she should, and this blame then becomes a reason for the person to act otherwise in future. Bernard Williams calls this rehabilitative concept a 'proleptic mechanism.'[26] So, it seems as though testimonial insults, when the testimony ought to be rejected, are not merely reasons that fail to count against believing the speaker, but actually look like reasons that count in favour of *disbelieving* her. In these kinds of cases, we have all-things-considered reasons to reject the testimony in the knowledge that it will insult.

Let's consider a second argument that gives us reasons against performing insults in general. It is sometimes argued that individual and collective flourishing is an ultimate, non-instrumental good.[27] By insulting others, we run the risk of undermining this good – we can make it more difficult for ourselves and for others

[23] Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), Chapter 11.

[24] Jennifer Lackey, "Norms of Assertion," *Nous* 41 (2007): 594-626.

[25] Daniel Whiting, "Truth is (Still) the Norm for Assertion: A Reply to Littlejohn," *Erkenntnis* 80 (2015): 1245–1253.

[26] Bernard Williams, "Internal Reasons and the Obscurity of Blame," in *Making Sense of Humanity: And Other Philosophical Papers 1982-1993* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 42-43.

[27] Miriam McCormick, *Believing Against the Evidence: Agency and the Ethics of Belief* (Oxford: Routledge, 2015).

to flourish. Why might this be the case? We can derive an answer from the following remarks made by David Archard:

> There is something wrong with insulting another, namely the assertion or assumption of dominance, the aim or intention of disparaging and dishonouring the other. It is a failure of civility, a fall from the standards that should regulate the interactions of persons of equal moral worth and status.[28]

There are a few distinct claims being made here. First, in insulting others, the insulter assumes a position of dominance over the insulted. Second, insults, when intended, *aim* to disparage others or, at least, as we saw previously, they can cause offence and a negative emotional response, which will still be the case with unintended insults. Third, insults cause us to fail to meet social standards of civility. These standards of civility regulate our interactions with others to ensure that we treat them with equal moral worth and status, and therefore, we fail to treat people in this way.

Supposing that insults can lead to these outcomes, it would seem that by insulting others, we would not be flourishing as individuals, and we may prevent others from flourishing too. This is because we hardly encourage collective flourishing by assuming a dominant position over others, nor from disparaging them or treating them as having lesser moral worth and status. Rather, collective flourishing means trying to advance and encourage others in a positive fashion, instead of climbing over them with offensive remarks. Moreover, we may detract from ourselves as individuals. As great figures like Martin Luther King Jr. show, humility and respect leads to greater individual flourishing than arrogance and aggression. Rather than casting aspersions, one can grow in greater moral character, and hence individual flourishing, by resisting the urge to disparage others, and where necessary, to confront someone's misgivings with good example and understanding.

As with the prior issue of insults causing offence, simply resisting insult is not sufficient for human flourishing. Nor might it even be necessary, although it may well detract from it. What we see, then, is that if by performing insults we detract from our attainment of individual and collective flourishing, then we have a reason to refrain from performing them. We can refer to this as *the flourishing norm*, according to which, we have a pro tanto reason against insulting others because if the person becomes aware of the insult, then the insult can make it

[28] Archard, "Insults, Free Speech," 137.

harder in some way or other for ourselves and others to attain the ultimate good of individual and collective flourishing.

This reason to avoid insulting others also seems to carry across into instances of testimony. One case in point comes when a person's intellectual arrogance fosters timidity in others as testifiers.[29] Suppose, for instance, that someone takes themselves to be intellectually superior to people compared with a certain social group. Furthermore, suppose this arrogant belief causes this person to disbelieve most of the things that are asserted from this social group. Not only do we appear to have an instance of epistemic injustice, but also an unwarranted insult in the form of a systematic rejection of testimony for the reason that the speaker(s) are thought to be of limited credibility as testifiers. This is damaging for the collective flourishing of this social group since it could foster timidity in them in the sense that they might become disposed to silence, rather than being disposed to share what they know.[30] Moreover, this is damaging for the individual's flourishing since a means of acquiring knowledge has been lost. As such, it seems as though considerations of collective and individual flourishing bear on the doxastic response people should give to testimony.

Despite the fact that the flourishing norm gives reasons, these can be easily outweighed by some of the similar considerations we found when addressing the offence norm. For instance, for those people who deserve to be given the truth, even when this leads to an insult for that person, it doesn't necessarily detract from human flourishing. If someone is abusive, informing that person in a way that can be insulting, whether intentionally or not, may be necessary for all the individuals involved to flourish.

This sort of example also has relevant application in cases of testimony. One particular kind of flourishing we can achieve is *intellectual*.[31] This might be compromised, though, if people are allowed to consistently violate the norms governing proper assertion. In that case, people would be spreading unwarranted assertions at best, or falsehoods at worst, and this will inhibit individual and

[29] Alessandra Tanesini, "'Calm Down Dear': Intellectual Arrogance, Silencing and Ignorance," *Aristotelian Society: Supplementary Volume* 90 (2016): 71-92.

[30] This is relevant to Kristie Dotson's notion of 'testimonial quieting' in her paper, "Tracking Epistemic Violence, Tracking Patterns of Silencing," *Hypatia* 26, 2 (2011): 236-257.

[31] Berit Brogaard, "Intellectual Flourishing as the Fundamental Epistemic Norm," in *Epistemic Norms: New Essays on Action, Belief, and Assertion*, eds. Clayton Littejohn and John Turri (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11-31.

collective development. Hence, believing someone's testimony so as to avoid causing insult when that person is in violation of her duties as a speaker can actually *undermine* the flourishing of oneself and others. Just as with the offence norm, then, the flourishing norm merely offers a pro tanto reason for belief. This reason may be sufficient for responding to testimony in a particular way in some situations, but will be outweighed in others.

In this section we have looked at two pro tanto reasons we have to avoid insulting others, and applied this to instances of testimony. In these cases, it appeared that there are some pro tanto moral reasons that bear on the issue of what our doxastic response should be toward that testimony. These reasons fall out of general reflection on reasons against performing insults. In the next section, I will reintroduce epistemic reasons we have for responding to testimony. When we do so, we find that, perhaps surprisingly, the reasons discussed in this section do not need, in many cases, to be taken into practical consideration concerning whether one should believe a speaker to avoid insulting her.

4. Testimonial Insult, Reasons for Belief and Reasons for Action

4.1 Comparing Reasons for Belief

To compare our various reasons for testimonial belief (those beliefs, including disbelief and suspension of judgment, that are formed on the basis of testimony), I want to simplify matters by introducing a taxonomy. One way to do this is in epistemic terms. So, we could say that for any set of testimonial beliefs a person has, each belief in the set is either epistemically warranted or is epistemically unwarranted. Working on the assumption that warrant can be defined in terms of one's reasons,[32] we could say that one is epistemically warranted in taking D toward *p* on the basis of testimony *t* provided one has responded sufficiently to the epistemic reasons one has for adopting D toward *p*. The view I am defending, then, claims that for any doxastic attitude D a person S holds on the basis of testimony *t*, D either responds sufficiently, in an *epistemic* sense, to S's *epistemic* reasons, or D does not respond sufficiently, in an *epistemic* sense, to S's *epistemic* reasons. One's

[32] For more on this issue see Clayton Littlejohn, "Reasons and Belief's Justification," in *Reasons for Belief*, eds. Andrew Reisner and Asbjørn Steglich-Petersen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 111-130; and Kurt Sylvan and Ernest Sosa, "The Place of Reasons in Epistemology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*, ed. Daniel Star (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

testimonial beliefs can therefore be divided into two groups, determined by their responsiveness to the epistemic reasons a person has.

I noted briefly in the introduction that I take epistemic reasons to be the kinds of considerations that count in favour of truth. That is, having an epistemic reason for believing *p*, such as having evidence for *p*, is a reason that counts in favour of the truth of *p*. Suppose you have evidence that a friend stole your pen. This evidence counts in favour of the truth of the proposition that your friend stole your pen. Given this, you have an epistemic reason to believe that your friend stole your pen. Now, if the evidence is indeed strong enough to mandate belief, then responding to it with belief would be the correct response. You would be responding sufficiently to the epistemic reasons you have. In that case, we can say that your doxastic attitude is *epistemically warranted*. However, you could also respond insufficiently by either disbelieving or suspending judgment concerning whether or not your friend stole your pen. In either of these cases, your doxastic attitude would be *epistemically unwarranted*. These appear to be the only two options for evaluating each belief in your set in *epistemic* terms.

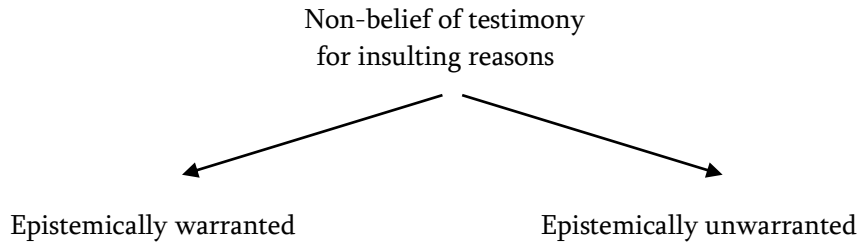
But what about other reasons that count in favour of taking D toward *p*? Shouldn't we divide up our beliefs according to these reasons as well? For instance, the relationship you have with your friend might give you a moral reason to be partial in one's belief towards evidence concerning her.[33] Or consider that by believing she can overcome her illness, Jane has a greater chance of surviving it. It looks like, therefore, Jane has a pragmatic reason to believe that she can overcome her illness. Should we individuate the beliefs we have according to their responsiveness to pragmatic, as well as epistemic considerations?

It seems plausible that we *could* divide up our beliefs this way, but we *needn't*. This is because for each belief we hold for which pragmatic considerations bear on whether we should believe it, there are, in addition, always epistemic reasons that bear on whether we should believe it. Jane has a pragmatic reason for her belief. Let's suppose she does believe that she can overcome her illness, and that this really will help her to overcome it. Now, she might have evidence that warrants believing this proposition. For instance, she could be suffering from a disease that when treated early has a 90% survival rate, and she is having it treated early. So, yes, she has pragmatic reasons for belief, but she also has epistemic reasons too. In that case, even if she believes for pragmatic reasons, she is still epistemically warranted in believing as she does. Consider the same situation, but

[33] Sarah Stroud, "Epistemic Partiality in Friendship," *Ethics* 116 (2006): 498-524.

where the survival rate is 10%. Again, yes, she has pragmatic reasons for belief, but she also has epistemic reasons that bear on what she should believe, namely, that she should believe that she won't overcome her illness. If she believes that she will, perhaps to be explained by pragmatic considerations, her belief is epistemically unwarranted. Of course, sometimes the evidence is inconclusive, as Pascal believed when he formulated the Wager. However, even in this case, one has epistemic reasons that bear on what to believe, namely, that the evidence is inconclusive, so the reasons warrant suspension of judgment. So, it looks as though we can individuate our beliefs into two categories – those that are epistemically warranted and those that are epistemically unwarranted – and compare from here other non-epistemic reasons that bear on what one should believe.

We now have a taxonomy that enables us to fully address the second broad aim of this paper. To state this taxonomy explicitly, begin by noting that in §2, every instance of testimonial insult stems from the non-belief of the hearer for a reason that negatively reflects on the credibility of the speaker. These doxastic responses can then either be epistemically warranted or epistemically unwarranted. They are epistemically warranted if and only if they sufficiently respond to the epistemic reasons that count in favour of non-belief. They are epistemically unwarranted when they do not sufficiently respond to such reasons. We have, then, instances of non-belief that lead to testimonial insult that are warranted, and instances that are not warranted. Our taxonomy would then be as follows:



Now, a reminder that my second broad aim in this paper is to explore the place of reasons for belief arising from testimonial insult alongside epistemic reasons for belief in order to identify what sort of functional role they occupy. To address this aim, let's begin on the right-hand side of the taxonomy with cases of epistemically unwarranted testimonial insult.

4.2 Unwarranted Insult

A quintessential example of unwarranted insult is Miranda Fricker's notion of testimonial injustice. In these cases, negative stereotypes can embody prejudices that work against the speaker in a way that leads the hearer to make "an unduly deflated judgement of the speaker's credibility, perhaps missing out on knowledge as a result."[34] As an actual case in point, take those societies in which the testimony of women is disregarded out of hand by men because of a prejudice that deflates their credibility as testifiers. These cases meet Fricker's description and, as Fricker notes, also constitute a testimonial insult.[35] As we saw in §3, there are norms that appear to give moral reasons against insulting people through our non-belief. In this particular case, other norms will be in play too, such as those relating to justice and fairness. Does it follow, then, that testimonial insult gives us a reason to believe speakers in instances of testimonial injustice? I believe that the answer to this is 'yes,' but with the important qualification that there are always other sufficient reasons to believe speakers in these instances, which arise from epistemic, rather than moral considerations.[36] Let me explain why.

Consider the kinds of cases we're looking at as they map onto the taxonomy: they are epistemically *unwarranted*. This is what makes epistemic injustice a case in point. As Fricker describes it, the hearer's judgement 'unduly' deflates the speaker's credibility. This undue judgment is undue in an epistemic sense. We are saying that there are sufficient epistemic reasons for the hearer to believe the

[34] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 17.

[35] Fricker, *Epistemic Injustice*, 44. Although testimonial injustice and testimonial insult appear to be similar, they are not the same phenomena. Testimonial injustices arise due to the hearer's prejudiced judgments of the speaker in virtue of the speaker's social identity. I expect, therefore, that all instances of testimonial injustice will be insults. However, not all testimonial insults arise due to the hearer's prejudiced judgments, and so not all testimonial insults are testimonial injustices.

[36] It might be objected that in cases of testimonial injustice the distinction between epistemic and moral reasons breaks down, such that it's simply moral requirement that people be responsive to truth. Whilst I accept that this may be the case, I have two points in response. First, the reasons don't have to be conflated in this way; I think that, conceptually speaking, we can always distinguish epistemic from moral reasons, even in testimonial injustice, although I grant that this is somewhat unnatural. Second, the distinction won't break down in less morally charged cases that aren't inflected by issues of injustice, and so for those cases at least, the distinction between the reasons needs to be retained, and the distinction is helpful for weighing the reasons together. Thanks to an anonymous referee for this objection.

speaker. However, the hearer does not believe the speaker, and so fails to respond sufficiently to the testimony given. This is because there is something defective in the hearer. The hearer has no epistemic reasons that warrant her deflating the credibility of the speaker, and yet she does, and in virtue of this, her doxastic outcome – disbelief, or at best, suspension of judgement – is unwarranted. What this means is that in these cases, the hearer in the exchange has sufficient epistemic reasons to believe the speaker, and without other pro-tanto reasons outweighing these epistemic reasons, then we might argue that, epistemically speaking, she *ought* to be believe the speaker. To fail to do so would be a failure of epistemic competence by failing to respond sufficiently to the epistemic reasons one has for belief. So, when we ask whether there are moral reasons that bear on the hearer's doxastic response, the answer may be *yes*, but if we then ask whether she should base her decision over whether or not to believe the speaker on these reasons, then the answer is that *she does not need to* because she has sufficient epistemic reasons to do so. Basing one's action on an aggregation of both moral and epistemic reasons is not necessary when both kinds of reasons are sufficient. What we would have in that case would be an overdetermination of reasons.

My argument here might be more clearly seen in a more general context. Suppose someone has sufficient moral reason to volunteer at the soup kitchen this weekend, but that also, she will enjoy doing so because her friend is also planning to volunteer. So, she has two sufficient reasons to volunteer at the soup kitchen. She could base her decision to volunteer on both reasons, but she needn't: each reason is a sufficient basis for action, and so she has an overdetermination of reasons.[37]

Someone might wish to argue, however, that some reasons are a better basis for action than others, and that I should pursue this route to prop up my argument. For instance, it might be morally better for me to volunteer for moral reasons, rather than the reason that I want to spend time with a friend, and so it might be argued that the former, rather than the latter, is a better reason for action and should be the basis of my decision to volunteer. Comparably, in an epistemic sense, it might be thought impossible, or at best extremely difficult to base a belief on non-epistemic reasons.[38] Surely, then, this fact modifies the moral reasons arising from testimonial insult by either disabling them, or making them much less appealing as a reason for belief compared with epistemic reasons. The epistemic

[37] Thanks to an anonymous referee for this example.

[38] Shah, "A New Argument."

reasons are better because they are more possible or likely reasons for belief. In that case, when I have both sufficient moral and epistemic reasons for belief, I should base my belief on the better, epistemic reason. This may be correct, and Shah and others who reject the possibility of non-epistemic reasons for belief may be right in what they say. However, undermining moral reasons for belief in this way is both a separate issue, and distinct from the conclusion I am looking to defend. What I am defending is the following conditional: *even if it is possible* to base a belief on non-epistemic reasons, in the case of unwarranted testimonial insult the arising moral reasons for belief do not need to be the basis of our doxastic response to testimony; there are always alternatives in the form of epistemic reasons for belief. So, the position I defend for unwarranted insult is consistent with the theoretical existence of moral reasons for belief, but one that is practically consistent with rationally ignoring such reasons. This middle route has not to my knowledge been previously defended, and does not rely on the deflation of non-epistemic reasons.

The conditional conclusion I am defending follows from *any* case on the right-hand side of the taxonomy of testimonial insult. The reason for this is, simply, that all cases on that side are epistemically unwarranted, and hence, there will always be sufficient epistemic reason to change one's doxastic attitudes from unwarranted non-belief, to warranted belief. The moral reasons I have considered thus far simply don't need to feature in our reasons for belief. Moral considerations in cases of epistemically unwarranted testimonial insult are non-required optional extras.

4.3 Warranted Insult

Let's now move to the other side of the taxonomy to consider cases of epistemically warranted non-belief. These are cases in which one's doxastic response to testimony is either disbelief or suspension of judgment. The reasons one has for not believing the testimony will be epistemic, but in addition, I will only consider those cases in which the non-belief embodies an insult, i.e. when the testimony is not believed for reasons that negatively reflect on the speaker's credibility. One kind of example that meets this definition is the Boy Who Cried Wolf. What we saw earlier, though, was that rather than insults being a reason to believe the Boy, insults actually gave further reasons to retain one's non-belief. This was because such insults function as a valuable corrective to the liar's behaviour, which has a greater outcome all things considered.

In §2 I maintained that, contrary to Anscombe,[39] warranted non-belief can manifest an insult. If I am wrong then the ensuing discussion is unnecessary. Perhaps all cases are like the aforementioned Boy Who Cried Wolf and there really are no reasons for belief coming from insult along this side of the taxonomy. Since I suspect that view is mistaken, I will offer one line of example that I feel fits the picture of warranted non-belief that constitutes a testimonial insult.

What cases, then, from the left-hand side of the taxonomy do appear affected by moral considerations stemming from testimonial insult? One obvious candidate are cases of interpersonal relationship. The spouse example from §3 looks like a case in point. Suppose the spouse, who is acting as the hearer, has sufficient epistemic reasons to believe that his spouse was fairly treated in being fired from the job. When his spouse reports that she was treated *unfairly*, we could imagine, for the sake of the example, that even this testimony, which is itself an epistemic reason to believe, is not weighty enough to warrant the hearer in changing his attitudes from non-belief to belief. Perhaps this is because he thinks that his spouse is being untruthful. In that case, he testimonially insults his spouse by negatively judging her credibility as a speaker. The implications of this could be profoundly negative. The offence it can cause may drive a wedge between the two spouses, leading to the breakdown of trust. If the first spouse had simply believed differently, he could have avoided such negative consequences. And a similar story could be told of other kinds of interpersonal relationship too.

Might it be possible, though, to avoid this consequence through other means than simply believing the spouse? On further reflection on this sort of case, it looks like what the speaker is asking of the hearer is for *support* in the sense that the hearer *agrees* with her on a matter of importance. Certainly, by believing her we can agree with her in this matter. But, it could be argued, we can also agree with her by *accepting* what she says, even when we don't believe her. Accepting testimony involves taking the proposition you have been told as a premise in your practical reasoning. As such, even when you don't believe p, you act as if p by adopting a policy of going along with p in some or all of your deliberations.[40] The one spouse can then agree with the other by acting as though she has been served an injustice through his actions, even if he doesn't believe this. Therefore, although

[39] Anscombe, "What is it to Believe."

[40] L. Jonathan Cohen, *An Essay on Belief and Acceptance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 4.

the lack of belief may embody an insult, one can make up for this with one's actions.

Is there any reason for thinking that this isn't sufficient for agreeing with another person? The problem is that the one spouse, when accepting-but-not-believing the testimony of the other, is involved in a clear case of insincerity. Of course, he is doing so in order to cloak his disbelief so as not to insult his spouse, but suppose she found out that he actually disbelieves her testimony. It seems highly implausible that his spouse would take his acceptance as a form of agreement. What she wants from him is for him to *believe* her, not to *pretend to believe* her. The latter involves a sort of well-meaning deception where the testifier does not get agreement, whereas the former is a genuine form of agreement, and one that would prevent a testimonial insult.

There may, of course, be forms of support that do not require agreement, and which I can be involved in through non-doxastic acceptance, or non-doxastic trust, that will suffice to offset any insult that arises from my non-belief. For one example, I can support someone in her attempts to become a better person without trusting that person, as when I mentor someone with a criminal background to help her settle into society. I may not believe her when she says she is committed to reform, but the insult this may cause can be offset by my acting contrary to what I believe. This show of faith on my part could go some way to compensate for any offence that my non-belief can cause. Moreover, there are kinds of trust that do not appear to require belief. For example, with 'therapeutic trust' one trusts someone 'with the aim of bringing about trustworthiness,'[41] as when a mother trusts her daughter to look after the house for the weekend.[42] The mother needn't actually believe the daughter when she tells her that the house will be well looked after in order to exhibit this trust. She might simply accept what the daughter says by acting as though what she says is true.

In these instances of support, my actions can offset any testimonial insult. However, in other cases, such as those requiring agreement, non-doxastic acceptance or trust will not be sufficient. What is required of me is *belief*. Here,

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[41] Karen Jones, "Trust and Terror," in *Moral Psychology; Feminist Ethics and Social Theory*, eds. Peggy Desautels and Margaret Urban Walker (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004), 5.

[42] Similarly, Karen Frost-Arnold claims that "one might choose to [therapeutically] trust in order to encourage, inspire, or motivate someone to live up to one's vision of the kind of person she could be" ("The Cognitive Attitude of Rational Trust," *Synthese* 191 (2014): 1960).

the moral reasons for belief arising from testimonial insult make for important considerations, and do genuinely count in favour of belief.

Where does this leave the moral reasons we have for belief that appear to come from testimonial insult that we saw in §3? On the unwarranted side of the taxonomy, epistemic reasons are sufficient to warrant belief, and so moral reasons are not required. On the warranted side, first, epistemic reasons are sufficient to retain non-belief in cases where the speaker deserves to be not believed, so again, moral reasons are not required. Second, in some cases, moral reasons for belief do not need to be the basis of our believing a piece of testimony since some actions are sufficient to offset the insult. In other cases, though, particularly those concerning our most important interpersonal relationships, moral reasons for belief play an important, albeit pro-tanto role in guiding what to believe. We can conclude, then, that even though testimonial insult gives us reasons that count in favour of belief, in many or most cases, one does not need to base one's belief on these reasons. Instead, in many cases, one will always have either sufficient epistemic reasons, or sufficient reasons that count in favour of action, and believing or acting on these can be the means by which we avoid or supress the insult, and hence can be a sufficient response to the moral reasons given by testimonial insult. There are, though, some important exceptions to this claim, particularly those in which we are required to agree with someone in whom we have a close relationship.

5. Conclusion

In the current debate over reasons for belief, the claim that there can be pragmatic reasons that count in favour of belief remains controversial, despite there being some hope for the position.[43] In this paper I have supported the existence of pragmatic reasons for belief. However, I have also side-stepped their practical influence by claiming that in many cases such reasons need not bear consequence when it comes to determining what our doxastic response should be towards testimony. There are several ways to object to moral reasons for belief, and this looks to me to be an unexplored strategy for deprioritising pragmatic reasons for belief, and in effect, centring discussion on epistemic reasons. It would be interesting to see where this strategy could be employed further in the current lively debate over reasons for belief.

[43] Andrew Reisner, "Weighing Pragmatic and Evidential Reasons for Belief," *Philosophical Studies* 138 (2008): 7–27; Andrew Reisner, "Pragmatic Reasons for Belief," in *The Oxford Handbook of Reasons and Normativity*, ed. Daniel Star (Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

LAKATOSIAN PARTICULARISM

Howard SANKEY

ABSTRACT: This paper explores a particularist element in the theory of method of Imre Lakatos, who appealed to the value-judgements of élite scientists in the appraisal of competing theories of method. The role played by such value-judgements is strongly reminiscent of the epistemological particularism of Roderick Chisholm. Despite the existence of a clear parallel between the particularist approaches of both authors, it is argued that Lakatos's approach is subject to a weakness that does not affect the approach of Chisholm.

KEYWORDS: Imre Lakatos, methodology of scientific research programmes, value-judgements, Roderick Chisholm, particularism

1. Introduction

According to the epistemological particularist, general reflection about the nature of knowledge is subject to the constraint of judgement about specific instances of knowledge. A theory about the nature of knowledge must conform with judgements about specific cases of knowledge which have been identified as such prior to the development of an epistemological theory. On the assumption that particular items of knowledge are positively identified as such, a particularist approach to epistemology is typically anti-sceptical in character. For it is the task of epistemological theory to accord with judgements about particular cases of knowledge rather than to exclude them as failing to be items of knowledge.

Work in the theory of scientific method often proceeds in isolation from general epistemology. But on occasion there is convergence. In the development of his theory of scientific method, Imre Lakatos employed an approach to the meta-methodological appraisal of theories of method that is distinctively particularist in character. In order to adjudicate between competing theories of scientific method, Lakatos proposed that appeal should be made to the value-judgements of élite scientists about past episodes in the history of science. Such judgements about particular episodes in the history of science would serve as touchstones in the evaluation of opposing theories of method.

My aim in this paper is to explore the particularist element that is found in Lakatos's theory of method. In section 2, I will analyse the role played by the value

judgements of the scientific élite in the context of Lakatos' methodology of scientific research programmes. In section 3, I will present the particularist approach to epistemology as proposed by Roderick Chisholm. In section 4, I will draw a parallel between the approaches of Lakatos and Chisholm, and argue that, despite the parallel, Lakatos's approach is subject to a weakness not found in Chisholm's approach.

2. Lakatos and the Value Judgements of the Scientific Élite

T.S. Kuhn's influential book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions,* played a key role in the historical turn in the philosophy of science.[1] *Structure* attracted a far greater audience in academic circles and the broader public than is usual in the history and philosophy of science. But within the philosophy of science reaction to the book was decidedly critical.

Philosophers reacted negatively to Kuhn for two main reasons. The first reason was the perceived relativism of Kuhn's account of science due to the variability of methodological standards and lack of neutral observation between incommensurable paradigms. The second was the irrationalism of Kuhn's apparent suggestion that choice between paradigms may not be made on rational grounds, as implied by his talk of religious conversion and gestalt shift.[2]

In response to Kuhn and other advocates of the historical approach, philosophers sought to defend the rationality and objectivity of science in a variety of ways. One form which this response took was the development of alternative models of scientific theory-change which granted a substantive role to method and rationality in the process of theory-choice. As a specific case in point, Lakatos proposed his methodology of scientific research programmes as a model of scientific theory change which would overcome the perceived flaws of Kuhn's model.

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[1] Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

[2] For examples of the early critical reaction to Kuhn, see Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, eds. Imre Lakatos and Alan E. Musgrave (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 91-196, e.g. 90; Karl Popper, "Normal Science and its Dangers," in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, 51-58, especially 56; and Israel Scheffler, *Science and Subjectivity* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1967), 19.

Lakatos understood the choice between paradigms by scientists in a Kuhnian revolution to be an irrational one that may not be based on any "super-paradigmatic" standards. In proposing his own model of theory-change, Lakatos sought to provide an account on which scientists make a rational choice based on a methodological standard. By contrast with Kuhn's idea of a paradigm, Lakatos proposed that scientists adopt research programmes, characterized by a hard core of inviolate theoretical principles within a protective belt of revisable auxiliary hypotheses. Lakatos defined a notion of progress on which each stage of a research programme predicts at least some novel facts ('theoretical progress'), at least some of which are empirically corroborated ('empirical progress'). He then proposed that scientists are rational to choose a progressive over a non-progressive ('degenerating') research programme. In this way, Lakatos provided a methodological criterion, progressiveness, on which a scientist's choice of research programme may be rationally based.

Lakatos recognized that his methodology of scientific research programmes was one of several alternative theories of scientific method. This raised the question of how a theory of scientific method is to be appraised.[3] Lakatos's proposal was that theories of scientific method might be used as the basis for a rational reconstruction of selected episodes in the history of science: "all methodologies function as historiographical (or meta-historical) theories (or research programmes) and can be criticized by criticizing the rational historical reconstructions to which they lead."[4] If a theory of method reveals episodes considered to be rational as rational, while classifying episodes taken not to be rational as non-rational, then that may be taken to count as evidence in support of the theory of method. By contrast, if a theory of method fails to appropriately classify a selected episode, that counts as evidence against the theory of method.

[3] Given the Popperian context in which Lakatos worked, the question of how a theory of method is to be appraised takes on a specific form. Popper held that methods have the status of conventions (see Karl Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1959), 53). But he never made clear how to evaluate a theory of method which has the status of a convention. It is hard to see, for example, how to empirically test a theory of method, given its conventional status. As convention, a theory of method is not a statement of empirical fact, so may not be evaluated as such. (For further discussion, see Robert Nola, "The Status of Popper's Theory of Scientific Method," *British Journal for the Philosophy of Science* 38, 4: 441-480.)

[4] Imre Lakatos, "History of Science and its Rational Reconstructions", in *The Methodology of Scientific Research Programmes: Philosophical Papers Volume I*, eds. John Worrall and Gregory Currie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 102-138, 122.

More generally, if one theory of method appropriately classifies a greater number of selected episodes than does another theory of method, this constitutes evidence that the former theory of method is superior to the latter. There is, of course, no suggestion that all episodes in the history of science are to be accounted for on a rational basis, "since even the greatest scientists make false steps."[5]

On what basis are the touchstone episodes in the history of science to be selected? It is in answer to this question that Lakatos appeals to the "value judgements of the scientific élite."[6] The episodes which are to be used in the appraisal of theories of method are those which are recognized as instances of good science by leading members of the scientific community. Lakatos introduces this idea by noting that Popper's own criterion of demarcation was designed to accord with the belief that while Newton and Einstein had produced great scientific achievements, astrology, Freudian psychoanalysis and Marxism were pseudoscientific. Rather than start off with a methodological proposal, the starting-point is to be particular cases of good science. The methodological proposal is to be tailored to fit the particular cases. As Lakatos goes on to explain:

> While there has been little agreement concerning a *universal* criterion of the scientific character of theories, there has been considerable agreement over the last two centuries concerning *single* achievements. While there has been no *general* agreement concerning a theory of scientific rationality, there has been considerable agreement concerning whether a particular single step in the game was scientific or crankish, or whether a particular gambit was played correctly or not.[7]

In this way, it is judgements made about specific cases from the history of science that are to serve as guide in the evaluation of methodological proposals. It is

[5] Lakatos, "History of Science," 134. For Lakatos, historical episodes which are unable to be explained on a rational basis by a theory of method are to be explained in external rather than internal terms. Theories of method differ with respect to how much of the history of science is relegated to external factors. One advantage claimed by Lakatos for the methodology of scientific research programmes is that it is able to explain a greater proportion of the history of science in internalist terms than competing theories of method, such as inductivism, conventionalism or falsificationism.

[6] Lakatos's terminology is not perfectly consistent. He speaks variously of "accepted 'basic value judgement' of the scientific élite" ("History of Science," 124), "the 'basic' appraisals of the scientific élite" (125), "particular 'normative basic judgment" (131), "'basic judgments' of leading scientists" (132), as well as employing several variations of these forms of words.

[7] Lakatos, "History of Science," 124.

judgements to the effect that one or another past scientific theory or achievement constituted an instance of good (or bad) science that are to be used as evidence in the evaluation of competing theories of scientific method.

Lakatos is thinking of specific judgements about particular cases. The judgements are evaluative in nature. They involve an assessment of whether a particular instance of science is an example of good or bad science. For this reason, Lakatos speaks of the judgements as "value judgements," "normative judgements," and as "appraisals." The objects of appraisal are particular instances of science. In the main, Lakatos's examples are theories such as Einstein's or Newton's physical theories. However, it does seem clear that he could easily have taken experiments or specific choices of theory on the basis of evidence as examples as well. As for whose judgement is to count, Lakatos does not go into this in detail, though he speaks of "élite scientists" as well as "leading scientists."

There is, as Larry Laudan has noted, a potential circularity with this approach.[8] For how, exactly, is one to determine who is a leading or an élite scientist? The problem is not so much how to distinguish élite from run-of-the-mill scientists, but of how to identify scientists in the first place. On the assumption that scientists employ scientific methods, one might seek to identify the scientists by identifying those who employ scientific methods. But surely one must be able to identify scientists without drawing on methodological considerations in making the identification. It would be inappropriate to identify scientists by determining which individuals employ scientific methods, and then identifying them as scientists because of their use of such methods. It would be inappropriate because the whole point of the exercise is to develop a theory of method based on an independent selection of cases of good (and bad) science. The theory of method is to fit cases of good science and exclude cases of bad science where these have been independently classified as such by the élite scientists. But if one appeals to the methods of science in the identification of scientists, then one already has a grip on the methods of science prior to the identification of the scientists. If this were the case, then selection by scientists of cases of exemplary science could not serve the function of independently identifying cases of good science prior to the development of a theory of scientific method.

[8] Larry Laudan, "Some Problems Facing Intuitionist Meta-Methodologies," *Synthese* 67, 1 (1986): 115-129, 117.

3. Chisholm's Epistemological Particularism

The emphasis by Lakatos on particular cases of good science is strongly reminiscent of the particularist approach to epistemology famously associated with Roderick Chisholm.[9] Chisholm develops his approach in relation to a problem of circularity that is closely analogous to the problem that we have just seen to arise for Lakatos with respect to the identification of scientists. For Chisholm, the problem is basically the problem of the criterion bequeathed to us by the ancient Pyrrhonian sceptics.[10] How does one arrive at an epistemic criterion which may be employed to identify items of knowledge? To determine whether a proposed criterion correctly picks out items of knowledge, one must be able to determine whether the purported items of knowledge selected by the criterion are indeed items of knowledge. If one were able to identify items of knowledge in advance of arriving at an epistemic criterion, then one might evaluate a proposed criterion by determining whether it correctly identifies the items of knowledge as such. But how does one identify items of knowledge prior to having an epistemic criterion? If one already has an epistemic criterion, then one might use the criterion to identify the items of knowledge as items of knowledge. But if one does not already have an epistemic criterion, then it is not clear how to identify a purported item of knowledge as an item of knowledge. The problem is how to arrive at an epistemic criterion without already being able to identify items of knowledge prior to adopting an epistemic criterion.

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[9] See Roderick Chisholm, *The Problem of the Criterion: The Aquinas Lecture 1973* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 1973). For the most part, Lakatos's discussion is strongly particularist. However, in the final pages of his "History of Science" (136-137), Lakatos contrasts the statute law of the philosopher with the case law of the scientist, suggesting that there may be circumstances in which the statute law may take precedence over the case law. Laudan notes that it is hard to reconcile this with the role that Lakatos accords to scientists' judgements about particular cases ("Some Problems," 124). I find the remarks too compressed to determine whether they constitute a significant departure from Lakatos's more explicit reliance on a particularist approach.

[10] The problem of the criterion is usually put in terms of the choice between infinite regress, circularity and dogmatic halting-point that arises when one attempts to justify any proposed epistemic criterion. Chisholm employs an alternative formulation of the problem, the *diallelus* or wheel, which involves the reciprocal relationship between epistemic criteria and actual items of knowledge.

Chisholm proposes his epistemological particularist approach in response to the problem of the criterion. He frames the discussion in terms of two pairs of questions:

> (A) " *What* do we know? What is the *extent* of our knowledge?"
> (B) "How are we to decide *whether* we know? What are the *criteria* of knowledge?"[11]

If one could answer the first pair of questions, then one would be able to arrive at an answer to the second pair by inspecting actual items of knowledge for clues as to how knowledge is arrived at. Conversely, if we had an answer to the second pair of questions, one would be able to arrive at an answer to the first pair by employing a criterion to identify items of knowledge. In this way, an answer to either of the pairs of questions presupposes an answer to the other pair. It is not possible to answer one pair of questions without first answering the other.

There are, according to Chisholm, three distinct ways of responding to the peculiar reciprocal relationship that obtains between the above two pairs of questions.[12] One response is that of the sceptic, "You cannot know what, if anything, you know, and there is no possible way for you to decide in any particular case."[13] But Chisholm notes that the response of the sceptic is not the only possible response. There are two other options apart from scepticism. One option is that of the position that Chisholm describes as the position of "methodism." The methodist response is to answer the second pair of questions first by simply adopting an epistemic criterion. Because the methodist adopts the criterion without any constraint being imposed by existing items of knowledge, the criterion must be chosen in what will ultimately prove to be an arbitrary manner. The remaining option is that of the particularist, who answers the first pair of questions first by singling out individual items of knowledge. The particularist only turns to the question of the criteria of knowledge after particular items of

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[11] Chisholm, *Problem of the Criterion*, 12.

[12] Chisholm does not mention a fourth possible approach, that of the Goodman-Rawls model of reflective equilibrium. It is not, however, entirely clear whether the reflective equilibrium is distinct from the particularist approach. Noah Lemos takes particularism to be compatible with the method of reflective equilibrium (see Lemos, *Common Sense: A Contemporary Defense* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 6), while John Greco argues that there is tension between the two approaches (Greco, "Review of Noah Lemos *Common Sense: A contemporary Defense*", *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 2005/07/05).

[13] Chisholm, *Problem of the Criterion*, 14

knowledge have first been identified. Based on an inspection of the particular items of knowledge, it is possible to arrive at criteria which tell us "what it is for a belief to be epistemologically respectable."[14]

Of the three possible responses to the problem of the criterion, Chisholm favours the response of the particularist. In effect, his approach amounts to a proposal about the correct procedure to follow in doing epistemology. One should start by identifying particular cases of knowledge. Typically, these will be straightforward and uncontroversial items of knowledge, such as G. E. Moore's example of knowing he has two hands. Only once one has identified items of knowledge, should one turn to the theoretical task of developing criteria of knowledge. Epistemic criteria are designed to reflect the epistemically distinctive features of actual items of knowledge which are identified prior to epistemological reflection. A full-blown epistemological theory is to be developed on the basis of sustained consideration of the broad range of knowledge that we actually do possess.

It remains the case, however, that particularism is only one of the three possible responses to the problem of the criterion. Chisholm was well-aware of this. He explicitly considers the problem that arises from the fact that he proposes to develop an epistemological theory on the basis of the prior identification of particular items of knowledge. Both the sceptic and the methodist will take exception to this approach. The sceptic will raise doubts about the epistemic status of individual items of knowledge. The methodist will object to starting with items of knowledge rather than criteria. Here Chisholm's response may seem somewhat disarming. "What few philosophers have had the courage to recognize," he says, "is this: we can deal with the problem only by begging the question."[15] To attempt to reason with the methodist or the sceptic is to step "back on the wheel" (the *diallelus*) again. To avoid this, there is no choice but to simply beg the question, and carry on in particularist fashion.

4. A Parallel Between the Approaches

To return to Lakatos, the question is whether Chisholm's approach may be of assistance in relation to the circularity that threatens Lakatos's appeal to the value judgements of the scientific élite. As we have seen, the problem for Lakatos is how

[14] Chisholm, *Problem of the Criterion*, 24.
[15] Chisholm, *Problem of the Criterion*, 37.

to identify scientists without drawing on methodological considerations in identifying the scientists. If the identification of scientists is informed by methodological considerations, then the appeal to the value judgement of élite scientists would fail to have the independence that is needed for such judgement to serve as independent arbiter in the choice between competing methodological views. The question now is whether Chisholm's point that the particularist must simply beg the question against the sceptic and the methodist might be put to use in support of the Lakatosian attempt to employ scientists' value judgements as an independent court of appeal.

There is a clear parallel between Chisholm's epistemological particularism and Lakatos's appeal to scientists' value judgements about particular scientific achievements. In both cases, judgements about particular instances (e.g. particular items of knowledge or scientific achievements) do normative epistemological work. In Chisholm's case, particular items of knowledge are first selected and then inspected to identify epistemically relevant properties which may serve as the basis of epistemic criteria. In Lakatos's case, scientific achievements are employed in the evaluation of competing theories of method. But, despite this substantive commonality, there is an important difference which renders the Chisholm-style response ineffective in the context of the choice between competing methodologies that Lakatos's approach was designed to deal with. The difference relates to the dialectical context within which the two approaches are situated.

As we have seen, Chisholm holds that the particularist has no alternative but to beg the question against the sceptic and the methodist. Rather than engage in argument with the opposing views, the particularist must simply assume that we are in possession of genuine items of knowledge. For Chisholm, proper procedure in epistemology is to identify a range of particular instances of knowledge, and to build an epistemological theory on the basis of an analysis of the epistemically relevant features of the selected items of knowledge. This approach begs the question against the sceptical denial of knowledge, as well as against the methodist for whom epistemic criteria take precedence over particular cases of knowledge. But, despite begging the question against the opposing views, there remains a significant sense in which the fact that the question is begged fails to incur any argumentative disadvantage in the specific context of debate. The reason is that the particularist position is, at base, the epistemological position of common sense. Thus, there is a sense in which the particularist position is the default epistemological position, which ought to be endorsed even though it may beg the

question against the sceptic and the methodist. No doubt there will be some of a sceptical or Cartesian persuasion who may profess to harbor doubts about items of knowledge identified by the particularist. But, equally, there will be those of a naturalistic or Moorean frame of mind for whom any sceptical argument is to be rejected simply because it conflicts with the dictates of ordinary common sense or with the findings of the sciences. As for the methodist, the idea that choice of criteria may be completely unconstrained by particular cases of knowledge gives rise to an objectionable arbitrariness in choice of epistemic criteria. In sum, the fact that the particularist must beg the question is a small price to pay for endorsing the position that common sense recommends.

By contrast, the Lakatosian appeal to the value judgement of élite scientists is situated in a different argumentative context. For Lakatos, the particular scientific achievements or historical episodes selected by the élite scientists are to be employed in comparative appraisal of competing theories about the nature of scientific method. It is entirely possible that proponents of alternative theories of method may disagree about which episodes in the history of science are to be taken as instances of good (or bad) science. For example, an inductivist might point to cases of empirical confirmation of a theory while a falsificationist might be impressed by the dramatic refutation of a theory. A conventionalist might appeal to the simplicity of a theory while the Lakatosian might see the progressiveness of a research programme as the mark of superior science. It is because of this potential for disagreement that it is crucial for Lakatos's meta-methodological project that it be possible to identify the scientists to whose value judgements appeal is made in a way that does not draw upon a theory of scientific method. The identification of scientists must be undertaken in a way that is quite independent of considerations of a methodological nature. Otherwise, the judgements of scientists would be unable to play the role of neutral arbiter which Lakatos's approach requires.

For Lakatos, particular scientific achievements play an adjudicative role in the comparative appraisal of competing methodologies. Because of this, it is simply not possible for the Lakatosian approach to beg the question in the way that the Chisholm-style particularist may do. It is crucial to the Lakatosian project that the scientific achievements selected by élite scientists be able to function in an entirely independent manner in the comparative appraisal of competing theories of scientific method. There is no sense in which one of the competing theories of scientific method can lay claim to having the status of the default position embedded in common sense, and that it ought therefore to be accepted even if

doing so results in begging the question. For if the question is begged in the Lakatosian context, then the selection of touchstone cases from the history of science simply fails to the play the neutral role which it is required to do. In sum, it seems clear that the Lakatosian approach to meta-methodological evaluation of theories of scientific method is irreparably compromised by the problem of how to identify scientists without reliance on methodological considerations.

DISCUSSION NOTES/DEBATE

EXPLANATORY VIRTUES ARE INDICATIVE OF TRUTH

Kevin McCAIN

ABSTRACT: In a recent issue of this journal, Miloud Belkoniene challenges explanationist accounts of evidential support in two ways. First, he alleges that there are cases that show explanatory virtues are not linked to the truth of hypotheses. Second, he maintains that attempts to show that explanatoriness is relevant to evidential support because it adds to the resiliency (stability) of probability functions fail. I contest both of Belkoniene's claims.

KEYWORDS: evidentialism, explanationism, explanatory virtues, evidential probability

Providing an accurate account of evidential support is a central concern in epistemology. After all, evidentialist and non-evidentialist epistemologists agree that at least sometimes the evidence at hand supports believing a particular proposition. Hence, all epistemologists have a stake in answering the question, "What does it take for a body of evidence to support believing a proposition?" Explanationists answer this question by appealing to explanatory relations. Roughly, explanationism is the claim that evidential support comes down to a proposition being part of the best explanation of the relevant evidence.

Recently, Miloud Belkoniene has argued that the explanationist account of evidential support faces serious difficulties.[1] He claims that in order for explanationism to be correct the sort of explanatory virtues that make an explanation the best must be indicative of the truth of that explanation. However, Belkoniene insists there are cases that demonstrate that explanatory virtues are not linked to the truth in this way. He takes things a step further by arguing that not only does explanationism fail as a full account of evidential support, but also attempts to show that explanatoriness is an essential feature of the evidential support relation are mistaken as well.

[1] Miloud Belkoniene, "What Are Explanatory Virtues Indicative Of?" *Logos & Episteme* 8, 2 (2017): 179-193.

Fortunately for explanationists, Belkoniene's arguments are unsound. That being said, the points that Belkoniene raises are still worth carefully thinking about and deserve a clear response. Furthermore, they are helpful as they move the debate concerning explanationism forward and aid in clarifying the explanationist's position.

1. An Explanationist Account of Evidential Support

In order to evaluate Belkoniene's case against explanationism's prospects as an account of evidential support, it will be helpful to have a concrete example of an explanationist theory on hand. Since Belkoniene uses my *Explanationism* as his target explanationist view, it is worth briefly describing it here.

> *Explanationism*: A person, S, with evidence *e* at time *t* is justified in believing *p* at *t* if and only if at *t* S has considered *p*, and:
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> (i) *p* is part of the best (sufficiently good) explanation available to S at *t* for why S has *e*
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> or
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> (ii) *p* is available to S as an explanatory consequence of the best (sufficiently good) explanation available to S at *t* for why S has *e*.[2]

[2] This is essentially the account of evidential support that I spell out in Kevin McCain, "Explanationism: Defended on All Sides," *Logos & Episteme* 6, 3 (2015): 333-349, 339. There are two notable differences between the formulation I have here and what I present in that article. First, here I make explicit in the formulation of *Explanationism* that it is not just that *p* is part of the best explanation, or an explanatory consequence of that explanation, but also that the best explanation must be "sufficiently good." This is a point that I clarified in a footnote of "Explanationism: Defended" as well as in Kevin McCain, "Undaunted Explanationism," *Logos & Episteme,* (2017) 8, 1: 117-127. Unfortunately, this qualification seems to have been overlooked by some. Second, in "Explanationism: Defended" I refer to this as "Ex-EJ 2.0" rather than *Explanationism*. That being said, this is the account of evidential support I have defended as a key component of my complete theory of epistemic justification, *Explanationist Evidentialism*. *Explanationist Evidentialism* is explained more fully in Kevin McCain, *Evidentialism and Epistemic Justification* (New York: Routledge, 2014). For further discussion and defense of this account of evidential support also see Kevin McCain, "Explanationist Evidentialism," *Episteme*, (2013) 10: 299-315, Kevin McCain, "Evidentialism, Explanationism, and Beliefs about the Future," *Erkenntnis*, (2014) 79: 99-109, Kevin McCain, *The Nature of Scientific Knowledge: An Explanatory Approach* (Switzerland: Springer, 2016), and Kevin McCain, "Explanationist Aid for Phenomenal Conservatism," *Synthese* (forthcoming).

Although there are various points about *Explanationism* that warrant further discussion and elaboration, for the present purpose we can limit ourselves to two. First, S's evidence, *e*, refers to the total evidence that S has at the time. Second, the qualification that the best explanation must be *sufficiently good* in order for *p* to be justified is especially important. After all, sometimes the best just isn't good enough. Admittedly, it is difficult to say exactly when an explanation surpasses the threshold for being sufficiently good, but there are some clear cases. For example, if there are one thousand equally important pieces of evidence and the best explanation, of which *p* is a part, only explains one of those pieces of evidence, that's not good enough to be justified in believing that *p.* Conversely, if the best explanation that *p* is part of explains all of the relevant evidence in a simple way without conflicting with background evidence, then that is sufficiently good to justify believing that *p*.[3] It will be helpful to keep both of these points in mind as we examine Belkoniene's attack on *Explanationism*.

2. Explanationism and Evidential Probability

Belkoniene's first challenge picks up on a recent debate between Ryan Byerly, Kraig Martin, and me with the two of them on one side and me on the other.[4] In the course of this debate Byerly & Martin allege that there are cases where a particular hypothesis is clearly the best explanation of the evidence, and yet intuitively one would be unjustified in believing the hypothesis. As a result, they claim that *Explanationism* is false—*Explanationism* says that believing a particular proposition is justified because it is the best explanation of the evidence, but believing that proposition is clearly not justified.

[3] For further discussion of the need for this restriction see "Explanationism: Defended." Also, see the literature on inference to the best explanation for a similar sort of restriction—in particular, see Peter Lipton, *Inference to the Best Explanation 2nd Edition* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[4] There have been several exchanges in this debate. Things began with my "Explanationist Evidentialism" and T. Ryan Byerly, "Explanationism and Justified Beliefs About the Future," *Erkenntnis* 78 (2013): 229-243. I responded to Byerly in "Beliefs about the Future" and *Evidentialism and Epistemic Justification*. These responses were followed by additional objections in T. Ryan Byerly and Kraig Martin, "Problems for Explanationism on Both Sides," *Erkenntnis* 80 (2014): 773-791. I replied to these objections in "Explanationism: Defended", which led to further objections in T. Ryan Byerly and Kraig Martin, "Explanationism, Super-Explanationism, Eclectic Explanationism: Persistent Problems on Both Sides," *Logos & Episteme*, 7 (2016): 201-2013. I have addressed Byerly & Martin's most recent concerns in "Undaunted."

Belkoniene sides with Byerly & Martin arguing that a recent response of mine fails to adequately address the concern they raise with their *SALLY* case.[5] Consequently, he claims that Byerly & Martin's case demonstrates that "explanatory virtues and… evidential probability can come apart and that therefore, explanatory virtues cannot be taken to be indicative of the truth."[6] Hence, Belkoniene concludes that *Explanationism* fails as an account of evidential support.

Since Belkoniene's attack on *Explanationism* rests on the strength of Byerly & Martin's case, it is worth quoting their description of the case in its entirety.

> *SALLY:* Imagine that Sally is the lead detective on an investigation of a burglary. She typically uses an eight-step investigative procedure for crimes of this sort and this procedure involves gathering and analyzing multiple kinds of evidence – physical evidences, forensic evidences, testimonial evidences, psychological evidences, circumstantial evidences, and so on. Sally is now mid-way through her investigative procedure, having completed four of the eight steps. She has gathered and analyzed the appropriate evidence for these four steps, but has not yet gathered or analyzed evidence that may or may not arise during the final four steps. The list of suspects with which Sally began has been narrowed, and there is one very promising suspect in particular named Jeremy. In fact, the claim (call this the Jeremy hypothesis) is the best explanation available to Sally for all of the evidence she currently has obtained through the first four steps. There are multiple witnesses locating someone who fits Jeremy's description at the scene of the crime at the time at which it was committed. Some drug paraphernalia like that which Jeremy commonly uses to feed his drug habit was found at the scene of the crime. Jeremy seems to display a sense of satisfaction or gladness about the robbery. His bank account reflects a deposit shortly after the incident. Other current suspects, while not ruled out, do not fit the evidence Sally currently has anywhere nearly as well as Jeremy does. The Jeremy hypothesis is the best available explanation for the evidence Sally currently has and it is a very good explanation of that evidence.
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> But Sally isn't justified in believing the Jeremy hypothesis. For, she has good reason to think that there may very well be relevant evidence concerning the burglary that she does not currently have. After all, there have been many times in the past where, after completing step four of her investigation, things took a dramatic swing. It has not at all been uncommon that at these later stages in the process, an alternative suspect emerges who fits the data even better than previous suspects. Thus, while the Jeremy hypothesis is the best available

[5] This is my label for their case.

[6] Belkoniene, "Explanatory Virtues," 187.

> explanation of the evidence Sally currently has, and while it is even a very good explanation of that evidence, Sally is not justified in believing this hypothesis. Believing the Jeremy hypothesis would be premature. The correct explanation for Sally's data may very well not be available at present, and she has good reason to think this.[7]

The problem for *Explanationism* here is supposed to be that it is clear that the Jeremy hypothesis is the best explanation of Sally's evidence, but believing that Jeremy committed the crime is unjustified. As a result, *Explanationism* claims that the evidence supports believing a proposition when it doesn't.

In response to Byerly & Martin's case I originally argued that the Jeremy hypothesis is not in fact the best explanation of Sally's *total* evidence.[8] Rather, I explained that the best explanation of her total evidence is that some other, as yet unknown, suspect committed the crime. Belkoniene doesn't find this response convincing, and he raises concerns similar to those that Byerly & Martin raise in their response to me on this point.[9] As I've argued elsewhere, these concerns are misplaced.[10]

Since I have addressed the sorts of concerns that Belkoniene and Byerly & Martin raise about my response to *SALLY* in another article, I won't rehash that discussion here. Instead, I'll focus on a response that is open to the explanationist that requires a weaker claim than what I make in my most recent reply to Byerly & Martin. In my response to Byerly & Martin I argued that the Jeremy hypothesis isn't the best explanation of Sally's evidence because <Some, as yet unknown, suspect committed the burglary> better explains the total evidence. The explanationist doesn't have to argue for this claim, however. All the explanationist needs to show is that the Jeremy hypothesis isn't *sufficiently good* to warrant Sally's believing it. So, the explanationist can grant, as Belkoniene and Byerly & Martin insist, that the Jeremy hypothesis is the best explanation of Sally's evidence without generating a problem for *Explanationism*. As noted above, *Explanationism* includes the important qualification that the best explanation must be *sufficiently good* before its truth can be inferred. The Jeremy hypothesis, even if it's the best explanation, isn't sufficiently good.

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[7] Byerly and Martin, "Problems for Explanationism," 783.

[8] McCain, "Explanationism: Defended."

[9] See Byerly and Martin, "Explanationism, Super-explanationism."

[10] McCain, "Undaunted."

It's worth spelling out this response more fully. Recall, in Byerly & Martin's case Sally has two bodies of evidence. She has E (the evidence from the first four steps of her investigation) and E* (the evidence concerning how her investigative process has worked out in the past). It is stipulated that the Jeremy hypothesis is the best explanation of E. However, even if we add to this that it is a very good explanation of E, it doesn't follow that the Jeremy hypothesis is a sufficiently good explanation of Sally's *total evidence* to warrant believing it. After all, the Jeremy hypothesis doesn't explain E*. In fact, the Jeremy hypothesis along with other parts of the best explanation of E seems to be directly in conflict with the best explanation of E*. Part of the best explanation of E* is that the most likely suspect at step 4 of Sally's process didn't commit the crime. This is inconsistent with the conjunction of the Jeremy hypothesis and <Jeremy is the most likely suspect at step 4 of Sally's process>, which is also part of the best explanation of E. So, the Jeremy hypothesis not only fails to explain all of Sally's evidence, but it is also inconsistent with the best explanation of a large portion of that evidence.

To make this point clearer, consider a similar situation.[11] You see an object. This object looks like a dog, barks like a dog, walks like a dog, and so on. Presumably, in this situation the best explanation of your evidence is that what you see is a dog. Nonetheless, this explanation may not be sufficiently good to warrant your believing that what you see is a dog when additional information is added. For instance, if you know that you are near a factory that produces large quantities of robotic dogs that are nearly indistinguishable from real dogs, you are currently in the middle of an area that is vigilantly patrolled to ensure that there are no dogs in it, and so on; the "dog hypothesis" is no longer all that good of an explanation. Although the dog hypothesis best explains a significant portion of your evidence, its failure to fit with the totality of your evidence makes it a poor explanation overall. In such a case, *Explanationism* doesn't license your believing that you see a dog because that explanation isn't sufficiently good, even if it's the best explanation. Similarly, in *SALLY* the Jeremy hypothesis is the best explanation of E, but its failure to fit with Sally's *total evidence* renders it insufficiently good to justify believing it. Thus, *Explanationism* doesn't commit one to claiming that Sally should believe that Jeremy committed the crime in this case. Consequently, *SALLY* fails to provide reason to think that explanatory virtues and evidential probability come apart in the way that Belkoniene suggests.

[11] The example that follows is similar to the "duck" example I present in "Undaunted."

3. Explanationism and Stability

After pressing his first line of attack on *Explanationism*, Belkoniene considers whether explanatory virtues might play an essential role in evidential support even if *Explanationism* is false. A major thread of this second challenge involves objecting to a claim of Ted Poston and mine that "explanatory considerations can render a probability function more resilient."[12] Drawing on the work of James Joyce, we distinguish between the *balance* of evidence and the *weight* of evidence.[13] In terms of evidential probabilities, the balance of evidence is the probability of p given the evidence; the weight of evidence is how resilient/stable the probability function Pr ($p|E$) is in the light of new evidence. For example, (Case 1) if you have flipped a coin 10 times and your evidence suggests it is fair, the Pr (*heads on the next toss*$|E$) is .5. Similarly, (Case 2) if you have flipped a coin 10,000 times and your evidence suggests it is fair, the Pr (*heads on the next toss*$|E$) is .5. In both cases the *balance* of evidence is the same—Pr (*heads on the next toss*$|E$) is .5. However, the *weight* of evidence is significantly different in these two cases. If you were to flip the coin 10 additional times and it came up tails every time, what probability should you assign to heads on the next toss? In Case 2, you should still assign a probability very close to .5, but in Case 1 you should assign a probability that is significantly lower. This is because although the balance of evidence is the same in both cases, the weight of evidence is much stronger in Case 2 than Case 1. As a result, the probability function in Case 1 is significantly less resilient/stable than it is in Case 2. Hence, there is an important dimension of evidential support that is left out if we only focus on how probable a body of evidence makes a proposition.

Poston and I argue that one way that explanatory virtues can contribute to evidential support is in terms of increasing resiliency/stability.[14] We make use of an example to support this claim.

> *URN*: Sally and Tom have been informed that there are 1,000 x-spheres in an opaque urn. Sally and Tom have the same background evidence except for this

[12] Kevin McCain and Ted Poston, "Why Explanatoriness is Evidentially Relevant," *Thought*, (2014) 3: 145-153, 149.

[13] James Joyce, "How Probabilities Reflect Evidence," *Philosophical Perspectives* (2005) 19: 153-178.

[14] This is part of our response to William Roche and Elliott Sober, "Explanatoriness is Evidentially Irrelevant, or Inference to the Best Explanation Meets Bayesian Confirmation Theory," *Analysis* 73 (2013): 659-668.

> difference: Sally knows that blue and red x-spheres must be stored in exactly equal numbers because the atomic structure of x-spheres is such that if there are more (or less) blue x-spheres than red, the atoms of all of the x-spheres will spontaneously decay resulting in an enormous explosion. Sally and Tom observe a random drawing of ten x-spheres without replacement, five blue and five red. The x-spheres are replaced in the urn.[15]

In this case Sally and Tom should both assign a probability of 0.5 to the next x-sphere randomly drawn being blue. However, Sally's probability assignment is more resilient/stable in the face of future misleading information. For instance, Sally's assignment of a probability of 0.5 that the next x-sphere randomly drawn will be blue should remain the same even given an unlikely run of drawing 10 blue x-spheres in a row. Whereas Tom's probability assignment for the next x-sphere randomly drawn being blue should significantly change after the new (misleading) information provided by the run of drawing 10 blue x-spheres in a row. Thus, the explanatory difference between Sally and Tom makes an evidential difference. Explanatory virtues make Sally's probability function more resilient/stable than Tom's.

Belkoniene disagrees with us on this point. Rather, he claims that Roche & Sober are correct in responding that *URN* fails to demonstrate that explanatoriness increases resiliency/stability.[16] I won't discuss the flaws with the Roche & Sober response that Belkoniene endorses here for two reasons. First, Ted Poston and I have already explained where that response goes wrong elsewhere.[17] Second, and more importantly, Belkoniene doesn't base his attack solely on the Roche & Sober response. He instead offers an example of his own designed to cause problems for our position. For these reasons I will limit my focus here to addressing the concerns raised by Belkoniene's example.

Here is Belkoniene's *Sally Case**:

> Sally investigates a burglary based on the same procedure as in the original [SALLY] case. During the burglary, a safe has been opened by someone who knew the safe's code. A very promising suspect is Sam who is an employee of the company where the burglary took place and who potentially had access to the

[15] McCain and Poston, "Evidentially Relevant," 149.

[16] See William Roche and Elliott Sober, "Explanatoriness and Evidence: A Reply to McCain and Poston," *Thought* (2014) 3: 193-199.

[17] Kevin McCain and Ted Poston, "The Evidential Impact of Explanatory Considerations," in *Best Explanations: New Essays on Inference to the Best Explanation*, eds. Kevin McCain and Ted Poston (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017): 121-129.

> safe's code. As in the original case, the Sam hypothesis can explain other pieces of evidence that Sally gathered during her investigation and hence is the best explanation available to Sally as to why she has the evidence she does mid-way through her investigation procedure. However, unlike the original case, it is Sally's first ever investigation and therefore, given her total evidence, the probability of the Sam hypothesis is quite high as Sally has no reason to suspect that a better explanation for her evidence is yet unavailable to her.[18]

Given the situation, Belkoniene assumes that Sally is justified in giving the "Sam hypothesis" a high probability of .8. Then he questions whether her probability for the Sam hypothesis should remain this high after she learns that because of a hacking incident 100 people in addition to Sam had access to the safe's code. Belkoniene points out that since Sally doesn't know anything about these 100 other people, it is plausible that the Sam hypothesis is still the best explanation of the evidence. Nevertheless, "the probability that Sally is justified to assign to the proposition 'Sam committed the burglary' once she has learnt the new hacking information is considerably lower than it was before."[19] He claims that this is problematic for the view that Poston and I defend because although the Sam hypothesis is the best explanation, "its evidential probability is not stable under conditionalization on the propositions compatible with its truth."[20] As a result, Belkoniene concludes that explanatory virtues do not play an essential role in evidential support because they fail to render evidential probabilities stable.

What Belkoniene says about *Sally Case** is very plausible. In fact, I agree with just about everything he says. Initially, Sally should assign a high probability to the Sam hypothesis. But, once she learns of the 100 other suspects, she should definitely assign a much lower probability to this hypothesis. There are, however, two points where I disagree with Belkoniene.

The first point of disagreement is that it is not clear to me that the Sam hypothesis can plausibly remain the best explanation of the evidence in this case. I think that more details are needed before the plausibility of this can be determined.[21] But, this isn't central to Belkoniene's argument, so I won't press the point.

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[18] Belkoniene, "Explanatory Virtues," 192.

[19] Belkoniene, "Explanatory Virtues," 193.

[20] Belkoniene, "Explanatory Virtues," 193.

[21] I also think that even if the Sam hypothesis remains the best explanation it is exceedingly likely that it fails to satisfy the "sufficiently good" requirement necessary to make believing it justified.

The second point of disagreement is that I don't think there is a problem for explanationists here. As noted above, Poston and I claim, "explanatory considerations can render a probability function *more* resilient."[22] We don't claim that in all cases explanatory considerations will render a probability function completely stable. The issue is whether they affect the resiliency/stability of probability functions.

Explanatory considerations do affect resiliency/stability. To see this, consider a variation of Belkoniene's case.

> *Simon*: Everything is like the *Sally Case** except for two features. First, rather than the Sam hypothesis, Sally only has Simon as a suspect (she knows nothing of Sam). Second, the Simon hypothesis is the only explanation that Sally has available, but is inferior to the Sam hypothesis in the *Sally Case**.

Now, when Sally learns of the 100 other suspects in *Simon* she should significantly lower her probability that the Simon hypothesis is true. So, *Simon* and *Sally Case** are pretty similar. But, it seems that they are not identical. It is plausible that Sally's probability for the Simon hypothesis should be more strongly affected than her probability for the Sam hypothesis when she learns about the other suspects. This is not to say that she shouldn't significantly lower her probability in both hypotheses, she should. Instead, this is to say that the quality of the explanation that Sally has makes a difference to how much she should change her probability assignment. The explanatory virtues of the Sam hypothesis make a difference to the resiliency of the probability that Sally assigns to that hypothesis. That is all that is required for explanatory virtues to play this key role in evidential support.

Of course, Belkoniene might insist that Sally's probability functions for the Sam hypothesis and the Simon hypothesis are equally stable/unstable. However, it seems plausible that they are not equal in this way. Hence, to avoid simply begging the question against the explanationist, an argument would be needed for thinking that these probability functions are equally volatile. Until such an argument is generated, not a likely prospect, the explanationist can rest easy on this front as well.

In sum, Belkoniene's arguments help to move important explanationist debates forward, and examining them helps to clarify explanationism and what can

[22] McCain and Poston, "Evidentially Relevant," 149.

be said in favor of it. Yet, they ultimately fail to undermine explanationism or its commitment to the idea that explanatory virtues are indicative of truth.[23]

[23] Thanks to Kevin Lee and Ted Poston for helpful comments on earlier drafts.

GETTIER CASES, MENTAL STATES, AND BEST EXPLANATIONS: ANOTHER REPLY TO ATKINS

Moti MIZRAHI

ABSTRACT: I have argued that Gettier cases are misleading because, even though they appear to be cases of knowledge failure, they are in fact cases of semantic failure. Atkins has responded to my original paper and I have replied to his response. He has then responded again to insist that he has the so-called "Gettier intuition." But he now admits that intuitions are only defeasible, not conclusive, evidence for and/or against philosophical theories. I address the implications of Atkins' admission in this paper and I again show that his attempts to revise Gettier's original cases such that they do not involve semantic failures are unsuccessful.

KEYWORDS: ambiguous designator, analysis of knowledge, Gettier cases, intuition mongering, justified true belief, semantic reference, speaker's reference

1. Introduction

Philip Atkins has replied[1] to my reply[2] to his reply[3] to my original paper.[4] At bottom, Atkins' latest reply consists in insisting that he has the so-called "Gettier intuition," i.e., the seeming that *S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case. As he puts it:

> Gettier cases standardly elicit the intuition that the relevant agent lacks knowledge even though the agent has a justified true belief. If this intuition is accurate, then Gettier cases are genuine counterexamples to the JTB analysis.[5]

And when he discusses his revised Gettier cases, Atkins again appeals to intuition when he writes, "It *seems* that Smith fails to know" (emphasis added), and

[1] Philip Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right: Reply to Mizrahi," *Logos & Episteme* 3 (2017): 347-357.
[2] Moti Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading: A Reply to Atkins," *Logos & Episteme* 8 (2017): 129-139.
[3] Philip Atkins, "Are Gettier Cases Misleading?" *Logos & Episteme* 7 (2016): 379-384.
[4] Moti Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," *Logos & Episteme* 7 (2016): 31-44.
[5] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 347.

"*Intuitively*, Smith fails to know [that there is someone who is getting a job and handsome]" (emphasis added).[6] That, by the way, counts as intuition mongering. That is to say, to insist that you have the intuition that *p* in the face of an interlocutor who clearly does not find *p* intuitive is to engage in mere intuition mongering.[7] At any rate, as far as I can tell, Atkins' argument against my diagnosis of Gettier cases as misleading has changed in a significant way. In this reply, then, I will address this argument. Before I do so, however, I will address what I take to be a few problems with his interpretation of the argument from Gettier cases against the Justified True Belief (JTB) analysis of knowledge and the so-called "Gettier intuition."

2. Gettier Cases as Counterexamples

The argument from Gettier cases against the analysis of knowledge in terms of Justified True Belief (JTB) is usually stated as follows:

1. If knowledge is JTB, then *S* knows that *p* in a Gettier case.
2. It is not the case that *S* knows that *p* in a Gettier case.
3. Therefore, it is not the case that knowledge is JTB.[8]

This argument is often said to amount to a "refutation" of the JTB analysis of knowledge[9] because it is an argument that employs the method of counterexample. The "method of counterexample is a *proof* procedure" (emphasis added),[10] which "provides *conclusive* verdicts—proofs—of invalidity" (emphasis added).[11] For this reason, even though saying that Gettier "provided counterexamples to the JTB analysis [...] *seems* somewhat different from saying that Gettier provided a

[6] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 352.

[7] Moti Mizrahi, "On Appeals to Intuition: A Reply to Muñoz-Suárez," *The Reasoner* 9 (2015): 12-13.

[8] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 31.

[9] See, e.g., Timothy Williamson, "Knowledge First Epistemology," in *The Routledge Companion to Epistemology*, eds. Sven Bernecker and Duncan Pritchard (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 208-218.

[10] Witold Marciszewski, "The Method of Counterexample," in *Dictionary of Logic*, ed. Witold Marciszewski (Dordrecht: Springer, 1981), 70-73.

[11] Carlos A. Oller, "Teaching Sound Principles about Invalidity," in *Tools for Teaching Logic*, eds. Patrick Blackburn, Hans Van Ditmarsch, Maria Manzano, and Fernando Soler-Toscano (Heidelberg: Springer, 2011), 178-182.

'conclusive proof'" (emphasis added)[12] to Atkins, this is yet another case in which appearances are deceiving (in addition to Gettier cases). Contrary to Atkins' seeming in this regard, arguments that employ the method of counterexample are supposed to be conclusive proofs. Of course, even if they are supposed to be conclusive refutations, such arguments can still fail to conclusively *refute* their target, especially when appeals to intuitions are involved.[13]

Accordingly, to say that Gettier cases are supposed to be counterexamples to the JTB analysis of knowledge is to say that Gettier cases are supposed to *refute* the JTB analysis of knowledge. In other words, they are supposed to demonstrate *conclusively* that the JTB analysis of knowledge is wrong. Now, if my argument is cogent,[14] then Gettier cases can demonstrate no such thing. This is because Gettier cases are misleading, for they merely appear to be cases of knowledge failure, but in fact, they are cases of semantic failure.

3. Knowledge is a Mental State

Contrary to what Atkins tries to suggest in his recent reply, the semantic failure in Gettier cases is not something mysterious that occurs when terms "supposedly undergo a shift in reference."[15] What Atkins fails to take into consideration here is that knowledge (more precisely, knowing that *p*) is a mental state.[16] Once we remind ourselves that, as far as the analysis of knowledge is concerned, knowledge (i.e., knowing that *p*) and belief (i.e., believing that *p*) are mental states, it becomes clear how the same term can be used by a subject to refer to different things. For example, I can use 'Trump' to talk about Donald Trump now and then use 'Trump' to talk about Donald Trump Jr. I can also use different terms to refer to the same individual. For example, I can use 'Trump' to talk about Donald Trump, but I can also use 'Mogul' to talk about Donald Trump, as Secret Service agents do. *Pace* Atkins,[17] there is nothing metaphysically mysterious about this as long as we *keep in mind* that we are talking about *what goes on in a subject's mind*, which is what

[12] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 349.

[13] Moti Mizrahi, "Don't Believe the Hype: Why Should Philosophical Theories Yield to Intuitions?" *Teorema: International Journal of Philosophy* 34 (2015): 141-158.

[14] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 31-44.

[15] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 356.

[16] Jennifer Nagel, "Knowledge as a Mental State," *Oxford Studies in Epistemology* 4 (2013): 275-310.

[17] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 356.

we should be talking about as far as Gettier cases are concerned, given that knowledge and belief are mental states.

Accordingly, if I come to believe that Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago, on the basis of a headline in my newsfeed that reads "Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago," and I use 'Mogul' to talk about the real estate mogul Richard LeFrak, and so 'Mogul' designates Richard LeFrak *in my mind*, but it turns out that he has not left Mar-a-Lago, whereas Donald Trump has left Mar-a-Lago, then 'Mogul' in <Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago> is referentially ambiguous between Richard LeFrak and Donald Trump in this context. Now, since I use 'Mogul' to talk about Richard LeFrak, not Donald Trump, I have failed to refer to the mogul that actually makes <Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago> true, since the mogul that actually makes the content of my belief true is Donald Trump, not Richard LeFrak. Given that knowledge and belief are mental states, *in my mind*, 'Mogul' refers to Richard LeFrak, not Donald Trump, since I use 'Mogul' to talk about Richard LeFrak, not Donald Trump. Subjectively, then, my belief that Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago is about Richard LeFrak. In other words, the speaker's reference of 'Mogul' is Richard LeFrak when I *believe* (mental state) that Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago. Objectively, however, the semantic reference of 'Mogul' is Donald Trump because Donald Trump is the mogul that actually makes <Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago> true, given that it is Donald Trump that has left Mar-a-Lago, not Richard LeFrak.

If I am right about this, then anyone who might have the intuition that I do not know that Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago, even if the content <Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago> might be considered *objectively* (i.e., with the semantic referent of 'Mogul' being Donald Trump) true and justified, has this intuition not because knowledge is not JTB, but because the case is misleading. When I believe that Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago, *in my mind*, 'Mogul' refers to Richard LeFrak, not Donald Trump, because I use 'Mogul' to talk about the former, not the latter. This, however, is a semantic failure, i.e., failure to refer to the semantic referent of 'Mogul', which is the mogul that actually makes <Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago> true (namely, Donald Trump, in this case), not an epistemic failure, i.e., failure to know that Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago. In other words, what I *believe* (in terms of speaker's reference) does not match the facts, whereas what is *objectively* true (in terms of semantic reference) is *not* what I believe. The terms 'the man' and 'coins' in Gettier's Case I,[18] 'Jones' in Gettier's Case II,[19] 'sheep' in the sheep in the

[18] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 34.

[19] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 35-36.

meadow case,[20] 'barn' in the fake barn case,[21] 'the time' in the stopped clock case,[22] and 'someone'[23] and 'handsome'[24] in Atkins' revision of Gettier's Case I are all referentially ambiguous in much the same way that 'Mogul' is referentially ambiguous here.

In his latest reply, Atkins insists that 'handsome' is not referentially ambiguous. He simply asserts without argument that "it is unreasonable to insist that there is a divergence between the speaker's referent of 'handsome' and the semantic referent of 'handsome'."[25] It is not clear to me why Atkins finds it so unreasonable to say that 'handsome' is referentially ambiguous. Unless Atkins thinks that there is some universal HANDSOMENESS that all attractive men (including Jones) participate in or instantiate, and that whenever we use 'handsome' we refer to that universal HANDSOMENESS, it is quite reasonable to say that Jones' physical features (e.g., blue eyes, dark hair, athletic build, etc.) make him handsome, whereas another man's physical features make that man handsome. In that case, when Smith comes to believe that Jones is handsome, he has Jones' physical features *in mind*, for the evidence available to him is about Jones' physical attributes (i.e., he looks at Jones and comes to believe that Johns is handsome), not some other man (or even himself, since Atkins stipulates that Smith doesn't know he is also handsome).[26] On the other hand, the physical features that actually make <There is someone who is getting a job and handsome> true are Smith's, by existential instantiation, not Jones', just as the mogul that actually makes <Mogul has left Mar-a-Lago> true is Donald Trump, not Richard LeFrak.[27]

With respect to Gettier's second case, Atkins also insists that "Smith has both past Jones and present Jones in mind, and that his evidence is about both past Jones and present Jones, seeing as how past Jones and present Jones *are the same person*" (emphasis in original).[28] Atkins seems to think that what is true about a

[20] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 37.
[21] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 38.
[22] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 39-40.
[23] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading," 134-138.
[24] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading," 135.
[25] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 352.
[26] Atkins, "Are Gettier Cases Misleading?" 381.
[27] In "Are Gettier Cases Misleading?" Atkins admits that "there is some sense in which Smith has Jones in mind when inferring [There is someone who is both getting a job and handsome] (383). For some unknown reason, however, he dismisses that as irrelevant.
[28] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 356.

person at a particular point in time must be true about that person at all times. To see how absurd that would be, consider the following. Eric stole a candy bar from a convenience store when he was 8 years old. From this, it follows that Eric is a thief. Now fast-forward 30 years and Eric is now 38 years old. By Atkins' lights, it is still true that Eric is a thief. Suppose that Eric is from Florida where petty theft is a second-degree misdemeanor. This means that Eric could face up to two years in prison. On Atkins' assumption that what is true of your past self must be true of your present self as well, then, we would have to conclude that Eric should face a two-year prison sentence for stealing a candy bar when he was 8 years old.

Of course, truths about people are *not* eternal and what is true about your past self may no longer be true now (or will no longer be true about your future self). As I put it in my previous reply to Atkins:

> this sort of thing happens all the time; something could be true about a person at one point in time and then stop being true at a later point in time. The proposition 'George W. Bush is the President of the United States' was true from 2001 until 2009, but it was not true before 2001 and it is not true at present. The proposition 'Barack Obama is the President of the United States' is true now, but it will no longer be true after January 20, 2017.[29]

The same thing happens in Gettier's Case II. When Smith comes to believe that Jones owns a Ford, he has *past* Jones in mind because his evidence consists of what he *remembers* about (past) Jones. That is, Smith wishes to talk about the person who "has at *all times in the past* within *Smith's memory* owned a Ford" (emphasis added).[30] As I have pointed out in my reply to Atkins, Gettier's use of temporal phrases, such as 'at all times in the past' and 'at present', is not accidental here.[31] Since that time in the past, Jones ceased being a Ford owner, and so what was true about Jones *in the past* is no longer true about Jones *at the present*. Indeed, it looks like Atkins admits that when he writes:

> Perhaps it is the case that 'Jones' initially designates *past* Jones and then comes to designate *present* Jones. This is perhaps why Mizrahi writes in his conclusion that "Smith has *past* Jones in mind, for Smith's evidence is about *past* Jones, not about *present* Jones."[32]

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[29] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading," 136.

[30] Edmund L. Gettier, "Is Justified True Belief Knowledge?" *Analysis* 23 (1963): 121-123.

[31] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading," 136.

[32] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 356.

In that case, Atkins is simply being uncharitable here when he attempts to make this simple point about how a subject uses a term to refer to the same person at different times appear metaphysically mysterious. Be that as it may, there is nothing metaphysically mysterious about this and Atkins' talk about whether there is "one individual" or "two separate individuals" is a red herring.[33] If anyone is engaging in extravagant ontology here, it is Atkins. For, as mentioned above, his insistence that 'handsome' is not referentially ambiguous in the context of his revision of Gettier's Case II makes sense only if it is assumed that there is some universal HANDSOMENESS that all handsome men participate in or instantiate.

For these reasons, I have described the semantic failure (i.e., failing to refer to *x*) in Gettier cases in terms of what goes on in the subject's head or mind. For example:

> We can see this ambiguity in Kripke's case as well. It might seem as if the epistemic facts of Kripke's case are clear: the two people believe that Jones is raking the leaves but they don't know that Jones is raking the leaves. However, I submit that the epistemic facts of the case are not as clear as they might seem precisely because 'Jones' is an ambiguous designator in this case. The people who mistake Smith for Jones wish to talk about Jones, and so they use 'Jones'. Their belief that Jones is raking the leaves is thus [referentially] ambiguous between two Interpretations:
>
> 1. Semantic reference: Jones (= Smith) is raking the leaves.
> 2. Speaker's reference: Jones (= Jones) is raking the leaves.
>
> By stipulation, (2) is false, since the people in the case mistake Smith for Jones and Jones is not in fact raking the leaves. On (2), then, the two people in Kripke's case simply have a false belief. On the other hand, (1) is not actually what the people in the case believe, since they wish to talk about Jones and they use 'Jones' to talk about what they see, which is Smith raking the leaves. To put it crudely, on (1), *what goes on in their heads* does not match the facts of the case. Given this ambiguity, then, the case, like Gettier cases in general, is misleading (emphasis added).[34]

If this is correct, then subjects' beliefs in Gettier cases are ambiguous between the following two interpretations:

> *Objective interpretation* (in terms of semantic reference): For example, the semantic referent of 'Jones' in <Jones is raking the leaves> is the person that

[33] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 356.

[34] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Misleading," 43-44.

> actually makes <Jones is raking the leaves> true; otherwise, <Jones is raking the leaves> would not be true.
>
> *Subjective interpretation* (in terms of speaker's reference): For example, the speaker's referent of 'Jones' in <Jones is raking the leaves> is what the two people in Kripke's case *have in mind* when they *believe* that Jones is raking the leaves, which is Smith, not Jones himself, who is the person that actually makes <Jones is raking the leaves> true.[35]

Whether Kripke intended his distinction between speaker's reference and semantic reference to have this consequence vis-a-vis Gettier cases is beside the point. The important point for present purposes is that, given that knowledge and belief are mental states, it is quite common for one to use a term to refer to something that does not in fact make one's belief about that thing true. Again, this is a semantic failure (i.e., failure to refer to *x*) rather than an epistemic failure (i.e., failure to know that *p*).

Contrary to what Atkins seems to think,[36] we cannot simply ignore the truth conditions of the candidates for knowledge in Gettier cases. After all, according to the JTB analysis of knowledge, one of the necessary conditions for knowledge is *truth*. In order to determine whether *S* knows that *p* in a Gettier case, then, we have to determine whether *p* is true or not. In other words, we have to determine what makes *p* true in a Gettier case. The problem with Gettier cases, however, is that the truth conditions of the candidates for knowledge lend themselves to two different interpretations: an objective interpretation in terms of the semantic referents of the key terms in the content of the relevant belief and a subjective interpretation in terms of the speaker's referents of the key terms in the content of the relevant belief. For this reason, Gettier cases are misleading, since that which lends itself to more than one interpretation is ambiguous, and this "means that we should not assign much, if any, evidential weight to the so-called 'Gettier intuition', i.e., the intuition that *S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case."[37]

4. What Best Explains the So-Called "Gettier Intuition"?

Speaking of the evidential weight of intuitions, what I find interesting about Atkins' latest reply is his acknowledgement that intuitions are not conclusive evidence for or against philosophical theories. As he puts it: "My own modest view

[35] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading," 133.
[36] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 353.
[37] Mizrahi, "Why Gettier Cases are Still Misleading," 131.

is that one's intuitions count as *good* evidence for or against philosophical theories, but they are also *defeasible*, as all forms of evidence are defeasible" (emphasis added).[38] Given that the "method of counterexample is a *proof* procedure" (emphasis added),[39] which "provides *conclusive* verdicts—proofs—of invalidity" (emphasis added),[40] Atkins' admission that intuitions are defeasible, not conclusive, evidence amounts to abandoning the argument from Gettier cases against the JTB analysis of knowledge outlined in Section 2. For that argument is supposed to amount to a conclusive refutation by counterexamples of the JTB analysis of knowledge, i.e., a deductively valid argument against JTB, whereas arguments that are based on defeasible premises are not meant to be deductively valid arguments.[41] And that argument's premises are based on intuitions, which Atkins now admits are defeasible, not conclusive, evidence. After all, the only reason to think that premise (2) is true is that it seems to some who consider Gettier cases that *S* doesn't know that *p* in such a case. As I have argued elsewhere,[42] an argument that employs the method of counterexample but relies on appeals to intuition would amount to a conclusive refutation only if our intuitions in response to hypothetical cases about knowledge (such as Gettier cases) perfectly track truths about knowledge, justification, and the like. Since we have no reason to think that our intuitions about knowledge, justification, and the like, perfectly track truths about these concepts, Atkins is correct in saying that intuitions about hypothetical cases involving these concepts do not amount to conclusive evidence for or against philosophical theories about these concepts.

If by admitting that intuitions in response to Gettier cases are not conclusive evidence against JTB Atkins effectively abandons the argument from Gettier cases against JTB outlined in Section 2, then the question is what argument does he offer instead. In other words, I have argued that we should not assign much, if any, evidential weight to the so-called "Gettier intuition" because Gettier cases are misleading. Atkins claims that we should assign *some* evidential weight to the so-

[38] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 349. Atkins provides no argument for this "modest view."
[39] Marciszewski, "The Method of Counterexample," 70.
[40] Oller, "Teaching Sound Principles about Invalidity," 181.
[41] Robert Koons, "Defeasible Reasoning," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* ed. Edward N. Zalta (Winter 2017 Edition), https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/reasoning-defeasible/.
[42] Mizrahi, "Don't Believe the Hype," 141-158.

called "Gettier intuition." The question, then, is why we should. What is Atkins' argument against my diagnosis of Gettier cases as misleading?

At the end of his reply, Atkins provides a clue as to how he would answer to this question. He writes:

> It stands to reason that the considerations adduced by Mizrahi are not responsible for our intuitions about Gettier's second case. A much *better account of our intuitions* would be that knowledge is not justified true belief (emphasis added).[43]

As I understand it, Atkins is making an Inference to the Best Explanation (IBE) here. For him, the *explanandum* is the fact that some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" and the *explanans* is that knowledge is not JTB, which means that the content of the so-called "Gettier intuition," i.e., <*S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case>, is actually true. If this is correct, then this inference to the best explanation would run as follows:

1. Upon considering Gettier cases, some people have the intuition that *S* doesn't know that *p* in Gettier cases.
2. The best explanation for (1) is that knowledge is not JTB.
3. No other hypothesis explains (1) as well as the "knowledge is not JTB" hypothesis.
4. Therefore, knowledge is not JTB.

Of course, it is not enough to simply assert that one's hypothesis is the best explanation for some phenomenon. To properly evaluate an IBE, we need to compare the competing hypotheses in terms of criteria for selecting the best explanation among competing hypotheses.[44] In this case, the two competing hypotheses are Atkins' hypothesis that some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" when they consider Gettier cases because knowledge is not JTB, which means that the content of the so-called "Gettier intuition," namely, <*S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case> is true, and my hypothesis that some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" when they consider Gettier cases because the cases are misleading.

Now, the following are some common good-making criteria for explanations or criteria for selecting the best explanation among several competing hypotheses:

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[43] Atkins, "Getting Gettier Right," 357.

[44] Moti Mizrahi, "Essentialism: Metaphysical or Psychological?" *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 14 (2014): 65-72.

> *Unification*: As a general rule of thumb, choose the explanation that explains the most and leaves the least unexplained things.
>
> *Coherence*: As a general rule of thumb, choose the explanation that is consistent with background knowledge.
>
> *Simplicity*: As a general rule of thumb, choose the least complicated explanation, i.e. the one that posits the least causal sequences and entities, and that goes beyond the evidence the least.
>
> *Testability*: As a general rule of thumb, choose the explanation that yields independently testable predictions.[45]

To determine which hypothesis of the two competing hypotheses at hand is the best explanation for the fact that some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition," we need to evaluate each hypothesis in terms of the aforementioned selection criteria.

In terms of *unification*, it looks like both Atkins' hypothesis and mine, if true, would explain the fact that some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition." On Atkins' hypothesis, some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" because *they intuit what is true*, namely, that *S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case, and so knowledge is not JTB. On my hypothesis, some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" because Gettier cases are misleading, and so those who read a Gettier case objectively (in terms of semantic reference) report having the so-called "Gettier intuition," since on this reading, the content of the belief that is a candidate for knowledge in a Gettier case is true (although it is not the content of the belief the subject actually has in mind).

Unlike Atkins' hypothesis, however, my hypothesis explains not only why some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" but also why some people report no such intuition. For on my hypothesis, those who read a Gettier case subjectively (in terms of speaker's reference) will not report having the so-called "Gettier intuition," since on this reading, the content of the belief that is a candidate for knowledge in a Gettier case is not strictly true (which means that the truth condition of the JTB analysis of knowledge is not met). Consequently, my hypothesis explains the most and leaves the least unexplained facts, i.e., it explains both why some people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" and why

[45] Moti Mizrahi, "What's so Bad about Scientism? *Social Epistemology* 31 (2017): 351-367. For present purposes, this list will do. For a more comprehensive list of selection criteria, see James R. Beebe, "The Abductivist Reply to Skepticism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 79 (2009): 605-636.

some do not, whereas Atkins' hypothesis fails to explain why some people do not report having the so-called "Gettier intuition." For this reason, my hypothesis has more unification power than Atkins' hypothesis.

Moreover, Atkins' hypothesis has additional problems in terms of unification that my hypothesis does not. That is, Atkins' hypothesis raises more questions than it provides answers. As an explanation for the so-called "Gettier intuition," Atkins' hypothesis raises a host of metaphysical and epistemological questions about not only the nature of intuitions but also the nature of the concepts (such as knowledge) they supposedly track with great accuracy. What are intuitions? Where do they come from? What are the objects of intuitions? How do intuitions provide access to an unobservable reality of concepts like knowledge, justification, etc.? On the other hand, my hypothesis does not face these problems, since, if my hypothesis is true, then the so-called "Gettier intuition" is not an intuition at all. Rather, it is simply an interpretation we give to a misleading hypothetical case like a Gettier case. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere,[46] the philosophical method of considering hypothetical cases as "intuition pumps" probably leads to misinterpretations more often than not. For these reasons, my hypothesis has more unification power than Atkins' hypothesis.

In terms of *coherence*, it is somewhat difficult to say whether Atkins' hypothesis is consistent with background knowledge or not. In one sense, it is inconsistent with background knowledge if the legend about JTB has any truth to it. That is, "Legend has it that the 'traditional' or 'standard' view of knowledge is justified true belief (K = JTB) and that this traditional view reigned supreme for decades, centuries even."[47] Clearly, if the legend is true,[48] then Atkins' hypothesis, according to which K ≠ JTB, is inconsistent with background knowledge. In another sense, it is consistent with philosophers' use of the method of cases and appeals to intuition. As mentioned above, however, the method of cases has been subjected to criticism in recent years.[49]

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[46] Moti Mizrahi, "Does the Method of Cases Rest on a Mistake?" *Review of Philosophy and Psychology* 5 (2014): 183-197.

[47] John Turri, "In Gettier's Wake," *Epistemology: The Key Thinkers*, ed. Stephen Hetherington (New York: Continuum, 2012), 214-229.

[48] Cf. Julien Dutant, "The Legend of the Justified True Belief Analysis," *Philosophical Perspectives* 29 (2015): 95-145.

[49] In addition to my papers cited above, see also Avner Baz, "Recent Attempts to Defend the Philosophical Method of Cases and the Linguistic (Re)turn," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 92 (2016): 105-130.

On the other hand, my hypothesis is consistent with a vast, multidisciplinary literature on ambiguity in natural language. As Lee and Federmeier put it: "Ambiguity is a central feature of language at many processing levels; at the level of words, it is well documented that a single spelling or pronunciation is oftentimes associated with multiple meaning senses."[50] According to my hypothesis, there is an ambiguity in Gettier cases, which means that they lend themselves to two interpretations: an objective interpretation in terms of the semantic referents of the key terms in the content of the relevant belief and a subjective interpretation in terms of the speaker's referents of the key terms in the content of the relevant belief. For these reasons, my hypothesis is more coherent (i.e., consistent with background knowledge) than Atkins' hypothesis.

In terms of *simplicity*, Atkins' hypothesis is quite extravagant ontologically speaking. For his hypothesis to be true, there must not only be such things as intuitions but also a faculty (or perhaps several faculties) of intuition. Moreover, there must also be abstract objects of some kind that are the objects our intuitions somehow latch onto. As Katz puts it, "intuition is a faculty for acquiring knowledge about abstract objects."[51] On the other hand, there need be no such things as intuitions, faculties of intuition, or abstract objects other than language for my hypothesis to be true. For my hypothesis postulates the existence of no such things. It simply states that there is an ambiguity in hypothetical cases known as "Gettier cases" insofar as these cases lend themselves to two different interpretations. Unlike intuitions, faculties, and abstract objects, which are rather mysterious things, ambiguity is a familiar feature of natural language. For these reasons, my hypothesis is simpler than Atkins' hypothesis.

In terms of *testability*, experimental philosophers have conducted experimental surveys using Gettier cases as vignettes given to both professional philosophers and non-philosophers. The results of a recent large-scale, cross-cultural, and cross-linguistic study suggest that most people do report having the so-called "Gettier intuition," although whether they report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" or not is affected by age, personality, and reflectivity,[52] which

[50] Chia-lin Lee and Kara D. Federmeier, "In a Word: ERPs Reveal Important Lexical Variables for Visual Word Processing," in *The Handbook of the Neuropsychology of Language*, ed. Miriam Faust (Malden, MA: Wiley, 2012), 184-208.

[51] Jerold Katz, *Language and other Abstract Objects* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Littlefield, 1981), 194.

[52] Edouard Machery, Stephen Stich, David Rose, Mario Alai, Adriano Angelucci, Renatas

are factors that are supposedly irrelevant to the truth or falsity of the content of the so-called "Gettier intuition," namely, <*S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case>.[53] This means that Atkins' hypothesis and mine can be tested empirically, given that they are hypotheses about Gettier cases and people's responses to these cases. However, unlike Atkins' hypothesis, which predicts that people will report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" but does not predict that such reports will be influenced by factors, such as age, personality, and reflectivity, as well as contextual factors, such as framing,[54] my hypothesis predicts the influence of such extraneous factors on people's responses to Gettier cases. For studies in psycholinguistics show that the way people resolve ambiguity and select meaning is determined by context.[55] So the influence of contextual factors, e.g., framing effects,[56] on people's responses to Gettier cases is a prediction that my hypothesis, but not Atkins', makes successfully.

The crucial question, however, is whether Atkins' hypothesis and mine can be tested in an independent way, i.e., a way that is intuition-free. After all, the so-called "Gettier intuition" is precisely what our hypotheses are supposed to explain (or explain away) in the first place. Since the so-called "Gettier intuition" is the *explanandum*, we need independent evidence, i.e., evidence that is independent of people's intuitions, for or against the competing hypotheses in question. Is there an intuition-free way to test Atkins' hypothesis that many people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" because they *intuit* what is true (i.e., that K ≠ JTB)? I cannot think of one. After all, Atkins' hypothesis is that people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition" precisely because they *intuit* what is true, namely, that *S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case. (Of course, that doesn't necessarily mean there is no intuition-free way to test Atkins' hypothesis. Perhaps there is, even though I cannot think of any.)

Berniūnas, Emma E. Buchtel, Amita Chatterjee, Hyundeuk Cheon, In-Rae Cho, Daniel Cohnitz, Florian Cova, Viluis Dranseika, Ángeles Eraña Lagos, Laleh Ghadakpour, and Maurice Grinberg, "The Gettier Intuition from South America to Asia," *Journal of the Indian Council of Philosophical Research* 34 (2017): 517-541.

[53] Moti Mizrahi, "Three Arguments against the Expertise Defense," *Metaphilosophy* 46 (2015): 52-64.

[54] Wesley Buckwalter, "Gettier Made ESEE," *Philosophical Psychology* 27 (2014): 368-383.

[55] Gabriella Airenti and Alessio Plebe, "Context in Communication: A Cognitive View," *Frontiers in Psychology* 8 (2017): 6-8.

[56] Buckwalter, "Gettier Made ESEE," 368-383.

On the other hand, my hypothesis can be tested in a variety of independent ways. For example, studies in psycholinguistics suggest that verbal ability (i.e., vocabulary size) is predictive of sensitivity to referential ambiguity (of the sort I claim occurs in Gettier cases).[57] Accordingly, if my hypothesis is true, we would expect verbal ability to have an effect on whether people can pick up on the referential ambiguity in Gettier cases. In fact, there may already be evidence pointing in that direction. Machery et al. found that Bedouins from Israel were significantly less likely to share the so-called "Gettier intuition."[58] On my hypothesis, this fact makes sense, given that level of education is a reliable predictor of verbal ability, and that the socioeconomic status and level of education of the Bedouin population of Israel "tend to be amongst the lowest in the country."[59] Accordingly, if my hypothesis is true, then verbal ability would have an effect on whether one is sensitive to the objective interpretation of Gettier cases (in terms of semantic reference), the subjective interpretation of Gettier cases (in terms of speaker's reference), or to both.

To sum up, Atkins asserts without argument that "knowledge is not justified true belief" provides "a much better account of" the so-called "Gettier intuition" than my account of the semantic failure (referential ambiguity) in Gettier cases. When our competing accounts are evaluated in terms of criteria for selecting the best explanations among competing hypotheses, however, my account emerges as the better hypothesis. My hypothesis has more unification power, is more coherent, and is simpler than Atkins' hypothesis. Moreover, unlike Atkins' hypothesis, my hypothesis yields predictions that can be tested independently of intuitions.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that Atkins continues to engage in intuition mongering when he insists that he has the so-called "Gettier intuition" in the face of an

[57] See, e.g., M. A. Boudewyn, D. L. Long, M. J. Traxler, T. A. Lesh, S. Dave, G. R. Mangun, C. S. Carter, T. Y. Swaab, "Sensitivity to Referential Ambiguity in Discourse: The Role of Attention, Working Memory, and Verbal Ability," *Journal of Cognitive Neuroscience* 27 (2015): 2309-2323.
[58] Machery et al., "The Gettier Intuition from South America to Asia," 517-541.
[59] Miriam Amit and Fouze Abu Qouder, "Weaving Culture and Mathematics in the Classroom: The Case of Bedouin Ethnomathematics," in *Ethnomathematics and its Diverse Approaches for Mathematics Education*, eds. Milton Rosa, Lawrence Shirley, Maria Elena Gavarrete, and Wilfredo V. Alangui (Gewerbestrasse: Springer, 2017), 23-50.

interlocutor who clearly does not find it intuitive at all that *S* doesn't know that *p* in a Gettier case. As I have argued before, Gettier cases are misleading, since they merely appear to be cases of knowledge failure but in fact they are cases of semantic failure, and so we should not put much trust, if any, in what seems to be true about these cases, let alone draw any general conclusions from them about the nature of knowledge.

I have also shown that Atkins' attempts to revise Gettier's original cases such that they do not involve semantic failures are unsuccessful, since he fails to take into consideration the fact that knowledge is a mental state, that 'handsomeness' is referentially ambiguous in his revision of Gettier's Case I, and that what is true about one's' past self may no longer be true now (or will no longer be true about one's' future self).

Finally, I have argued that his admission that intuitions are defeasible, not conclusive, evidence for or against philosophical theories suggests that his argument against my diagnosis of Gettier cases as misleading is an IBE. It is a rather weak IBE, however, because Atkins simply asserts without argument that his hypothesis (i.e., that K ≠ JTB) is the best explanation for the fact that many people report having the so-called "Gettier intuition." When his hypothesis and mine are evaluated in terms of commonly accepted selection criteria, such as simplicity and testability, my hypothesis outperforms his on all counts.[60]

[60] I am grateful to Eugen Huzum for inviting me to reply to Philip Atkins.

EPISTEMIC TROUBLE FOR ENGINEERING 'WOMAN'

Mona SIMION

ABSTRACT: This paper puts forth a functionalist difficulty for Sally Haslanger's proposal for engineering our concept of 'woman.' It is argued that the project of bringing about better political function fulfillment cannot get off the ground in virtue of epistemic failure.

KEYWORDS: conceptual engineering, epistemic failure, representational function, gender, race

1. Introduction

Say that we wanted better ways of thinking about the world: could we replace our defective representational devices with better ones? Should we? Is this what philosophy is/should be all about? According to optimists about the conceptual engineering project,[1] the answer to all these questions is 'yes.' We should manufacture better concepts for ourselves: semantically better, epistemically better, and importantly, morally, socially and politically better.

Sally Haslanger is a notable optimist. According to her, we should look into the function of our concepts, and engineer them accordingly, i.e. so that they serve the relevant function well/better. According to Haslanger, our concept of 'woman' is one such concept, in need of work; the concept in use carries politically problematic connotations: historically, it came to be associated with social and political subordination. Haslanger proposes to engineer 'woman' such as to bring these connotations into clear view. The final political goal of this move is the

[1] See, e.g. Herman Cappelen, *Fixing Language* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); Kevin Scharp, *Replacing Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); Mona Simion and Chris Kelp, "Conceptual Engineering, Function-First," Manuscript (2018); Mona Simion, "The 'Should' in Conceptual Engineering," *Inquiry*, Online First (2017). For general pessimism about the conceptual engineering project, see Patrick Greenough, *Against Conceptual Engineering*, Manuscript (2018).

elimination of women: "[...] I believe it is part of the project of feminism to bring about a day when there are no more women."[2]

This paper puts forth a functionalist worry for Haslanger's project; more precisely, according to the view defended here, due to the epistemic normative specifics of the concept and its use, engineering 'woman' for political reasons, to the detriment of epistemic representational considerations, can't get off the ground.

In order to do this, I will first give a brief overview of Haslanger's proposal (#2). Second, I will look at the normative limitations of her functionalist conceptual engineering project (#3). Last but not least, I will voice the main worry of this paper and consider and dismiss a possible avenue for rescuing the Haslanger project.

2. Engineering 'Woman'

Haslanger's engineering project is a function-first project: the thought is that, instead of trying to analyze our concepts, we, philosophers, should rather ask ourselves: 'what functions do these concepts fulfill for us?' and craft better concepts accordingly, i.e., remodel our representational devices so as to better fulfill said functions:

> […W]e begin by considering more fully the pragmatics of our talk employing the terms in question. What is the point of having these concepts? What cognitive or practical task do they (or should they) enable us to accomplish? Are they effective tools to accomplish our (legitimate) purposes; if not, what concepts would serve these purposes better?[3]

In the case of gender and race concepts, according to Haslanger, we should be focusing on two important functions of these concepts – one epistemic function, pertaining to fruitfulness in critical feminist/race inquiry, and, relatedly, the political function, concerning social dynamics they serve – and craft more useful concepts, accordingly. That is not to say that the representational function of these concepts is to be disregarded: rather, questions pertaining to their extension will only inform the project rather than act as an overriding consideration:

[2] Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) Are They? (What) Do We Want Them To Be?" *Noûs* 34 (1) (2000): 46.

[3] Haslanger, "Gender and Race," 33.

> [C]onsider what work we want these concepts to do for us; why do we need them at all? The responsibility is ours to define them for our purposes. In doing so we will want to be responsive to some aspects of ordinary usage - and to aspects of both the connotation and extension of the terms. However, neither ordinary usage nor empirical investigation is overriding, […] the world by itself can't tell us what gender is, or what race is; it is up to us to decide what in the world, if anything, they are.[4]

Haslanger further proposes that we explicitly include the hierarchical social connotations in our gender concepts. Accordingly, on her view, we should revise our concept of woman as follows:

> S *is a woman* iff$_{df}$ S is systematically subordinated along some dimension - economic, political, legal, social, etc. and S is marked as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction.[5]

Bringing the implicit hierarchical connotations carried by gender concepts at center stage is thought to result in both epistemic and political gain. Epistemically, Haslanger argues, feminist critical theory stands to gain from sharply identifying the target of its inquiry: women as subordinate social entities. Politically, the ambition is that, once negative connotations are made explicit, in time, we will 'get rid of women:' "I'm asking us to understand ourselves and those around us as deeply molded by injustice and to draw the appropriate prescriptive inference. This, I hope, will contribute to empowering critical social agents."[6]

3. Functions, Norms and Goods

This section argues that the representational function of the concept of 'woman,' in virtue of being its main function, will, contra Haslanger, override considerations pertaining to fruitfulness in feminist inquiry and political benefits. If that is the case, the project will have difficulties getting off the ground.

To see this, note that concepts, much like beliefs, are representational devices, their main function is an epistemic one: the main function of our concept of 'chair' is to pick out chairs. Our concepts are mainly there to help us come know the world around us. Compatibly with this, concepts may, and very plausibly often do, serve a variety of different functions, be they non-representational epistemic

[4] Haslanger, "Gender and Race," 33.
[5] Haslanger, "Gender and Race," 39.
[6] Haslanger, "Gender and Race," 39.

functions, or functions of more practical sort, such as moral, social or political functions.

Representational devices are hardly isolated among functional items in virtue of their multi-functionality: take the heart. Plausibly, its main function is pumping blood in the circulatory system. It is a biological function. Compatibly with this, though, the heart also serves an epistemic function of informing us with regard to the general health of the cardio-vascular system. It serves this function in two ways: at a more rudimentary level, it does so by making a ticking sound. At a more scientific level, it does so by drawing EKG charts.

When all goes well, functional traits reliably enough fulfill their main function by functioning normally in normal conditions.[7] When all goes well, your heart will reliably pump blood in your circulatory system by ticking, in normal conditions (e.g., when in the chest, when connected to the circulatory system etc; in what follows, I will take the 'normal conditions' proviso as read). A properly functioning heart will be a heart that's ticking. Proper functioning for hearts is defined in terms of its main function of pumping blood. Conversely, a heart that fails to function properly will be malfunctioning.

Note, importantly, that your heart will count as malfunctioning even if, while not functioning normally when it comes to fulfilling its main biological function of pumping blood – not ticking – it does, nevertheless, reliably fulfill its secondary, epistemic function: a heart that fails to pump blood but keeps drawing charts on EKGs is still a malfunctioning heart. In fact, we come to know it is malfunctioning by means of the EKG reading.

This is due to the fact that secondary functions normatively 'ride' on main functions: functional items have secondary functions in virtue of their main function, as it were. The heart only has the epistemic function it has to begin with – the function of drawing EKG charts – in virtue of having its main biological function of pumping blood.

Consider, also, artifacts: take knives. The main function of knives is to cut. As such, a properly functioning knife is a sharp knife: a knife that, in normal conditions, reliably fulfills its function: it cuts. Compatibly with that, knifes can fulfill aesthetic functions, for instance: they can be particularly pretty, displayed in museums etc. Note, though, that a blunt but pretty knife is still a malfunctioning knife, in virtue of failing to reliably enough fulfill its main function when in

[7] See e.g. Peter J. Graham, "Epistemic Entitlement," *Nous*, 46(3) (2012): 449-482; Ruth Millikan, *Language, Thought and Other Biological Categories* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

normal conditions. This is because its secondary, aesthetic function normatively 'rides' on its primary function – cutting.

Representational devices follow suit; take beliefs: when properly functioning, beliefs reliably represent the world in normal conditions. Beliefs, of course, can, and plausibly do, have a variety of secondary functions too. One important such function is practical, or biological: helping us survive. Now, these two functions usually work hand in hand: my beliefs about food and predators accurately represent the world, and thereby I stay alive. This need not be the case, though: there are cases where irrational optimism is best for staying alive. In such cases, false beliefs about, for instance, one's state of health, are good for survival: they serve beliefs' biological function well. Nevertheless, practical reasons are not good reasons for belief: wishful thinking is bad believing. In an important sense, if I believe that Berlin is the capital of France because you offered me a large sum of money to do so, my belief forming capacities are not properly functioning. The reason for this, again, is because the secondary, biological function of belief normatively 'rides' on its primary, epistemic function: belief is supposed to insure survival *by* proper representation. In fact, the only reason why wishful thinking 'works' to begin with is because it mimics epistemically proper believing: it 'pretends,' as it were, to be true.

In line with other functional devices, then, in virtue of their main, representational epistemic function, concepts will be properly functioning when responsive to epistemic reasons pertaining to properly representing the world, and malfunctioning when merely responsive to other types – practical, moral, political – reasons. Concepts will function properly when they will reliably pick out what they are meant to pick out in the world. The concept of 'chair' will function well when it will reliably pick out chairs. Conversely, if it fails to do so, no matter what practical, moral, esthetic etc. benefits it brings, the concept 'chair' is malfunctioning.

Also, function talk is value charged: there is a sense in which a malfunctioning functional trait is a bad trait of its kind. To put the distinction that concerns us in value-theoretic terms, there is such a thing as attributive goodness,[8] and then there is such a thing as 'goodness for.' A heart is a good heart (attributively, that is, a good token of its type) when it functions properly, i.e. when it pumps blood in your circulatory system by ticking. Compatibly with that, a bad heart (i.e., a bad token of its type) can be good for a variety of things: in the

[8] Peter T. Geach, "Good and Evil," *Analysis* 17 (1956): 33–42.

example above, the bad heart is good for epistemic tasks: it draws charts on the EKG, thereby informing your doctor of the state of your health.

Similarly, a good knife is a sharp knife, and a good belief is a true (or knowledgeable) belief; all this, independently of what other secondary functions bad hearts, knifes and beliefs might serve. Last but not least, concepts will be good concepts qua concepts when they are representationally, epistemically good. A concept that fails representationally will be a bad concept.

4. The Worry

To see why all the above constitutes a problem for Haslanger's project, note that, plausibly enough, not all women fit the proposed definition of the concept 'woman.' Not all women, that is, are systematically subordinated along some dimension – economic, political, legal, social, etc. – and marked as a target for this treatment by observed or imagined bodily features presumed to be evidence of a female's biological role in reproduction. Some women are lucky. Also, fortunately, as generations pass, subordination happens less and less at systemic level. Or, to say the least, claiming that all women fall under this definition would surely be a fairly bold empirical claim to make.

If that is the case, though, it seems to follow that the newly refurbished concept Haslanger proposes will likely fail to serve its representational epistemic function: it will fail to pick out a number of, well, intuitively, women. Lucky women will not be women if this engineering project goes through.

Haslanger is well aware of this worry, and happy to endorse the consequences:

> I'm happy to admit that there could be females who aren't women in the sense I've defined, but these individuals […] are not counterexamples to the analysis. The analysis is intended to capture a meaningful political category for critical feminist efforts, and non-oppressed females do not fall within that category - though they may be interesting for other reasons! […] On the account I've offered, it is true that certain females don't count as ªrealº women; choose what facts are significant on the basis of explicit and considered values. [But f]or the purposes of a critical feminist inquiry, oppression is a significant fact around which we should organize our theoretical categories.[9]

The thought, then, is that, even though we loose representationally, we gain in two other, more important ways: first, from an epistemic perspective, the

[9] Haslanger, "Gender and Race," 46.

Haslanger 'woman' is more useful for our feminist inquiry. Secondly, politically speaking, by raising awareness, it is more likely to help in bringing about a world without 'women' in the Haslanger sense.

By now, one problem with this view should have become clear: whatever other functions the concept of 'woman' might serve – epistemic, moral, social, political etc. –, its main function, like with any representational device is to represent the world. The main function of 'woman' is to pick out women.

In line with all functional items, a concept of 'woman' that fails to fulfill its main, epistemic representational function reliably is malfunctioning. Furthermore, in virtue of being malfunctioning, it is not a good concept qua concept – i.e., a good token of its type. If Haslanger's 'woman' fails to be a good concept qua concept, plausibly, it will not be a better concept than its predecessor. If so, Haslanger's project will fail to qualify as an ameliorative project: it will not have engineered better ways for us to think about the world.

Furthermore, note that any other functions the concept of 'woman' might have normatively ride on its main function: the only reason why the concept of 'woman' has any political significance, to begin with, is because it picks out women reliably. Were it to fail to do so, it would likely also fail to have much in the way of political impact. If that is the case, Haslanger is wrong to think that we are free to revise our concept as we please, for political gain: the concept's political function rides on its epistemic, representational good functioning. Contra Haslanger, questions pertaining to the concept's extension will not merely inform the engineering project, they need to act as an overriding consideration. If one engineers 'woman' for political gain, and thereby the concept loses its representational epistemic function, it also looses its political significance.

One way to protect the Haslanger project from this worry would be to go context-bound: it is not fair play, the defender of the Haslanger view could argue, to ask whether we should take on a new concept, and for what reasons, without specifying what use-context we're asking about. Take 'chair' again: if the context of interest is related to home furniture, then it might be quite obvious that representational epistemic goals take primacy. If it's policy making, then it might be equally obvious that practical goals take primacy: if we can save a small country by calling tables chairs for the purpose of policy making, we should definitely do so. It need not be that if we change concepts in one context, then we have to change them in all others:

The problem with going contextualist, however, is that it is not clear that the worry does not reappear at the level of a particular context. Think back to the (arguably) parallel case of belief: it might be that, for the purposes of one context or another, it is better to believe what one is prudentially justified to believe. For instance, in the case of patients with very serious conditions, there is empirical research strongly suggesting that wishful thinking can prolong life expectancy. Still, there remains an intuitively important sense in which beliefs formed as a result of wishful thinking are defective beliefs. The functionalist picture serves to explain this. Similarly, it is not clear that using 'chair' to talk about tables will be a proper, non-defective way to refer, rather than a defective but useful way. To see the plausibility of the latter, think of failed attempts at semantic engineering in totalitarian regimes: the people of Turkmenistan might reliably call the forth month of the year by the dictator's mother's name, on pain of imprisonment, in all official contexts. This, however, fails to qualify as successful engineering for the concept of April.

5. Conclusion

I have argued on functionalist grounds that the project of engineering 'woman' such as to include a subordinate status in its definition will have difficulties getting off the ground due to epistemic failure. The main function of the concept of 'woman' is to pick out women. If it fails to do so, it will also fail to better fulfill its secondary functions, whatever they may be.

REVIEWS

Claude Panaccio, *Mental Language: From Plato to William of Ockham*. Translated by Joshua P. Hochschild and Meredith K. Ziebart. Series: Texts and Studies in Medieval Philosophy (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017)

Reviewed by Gaston G. LeNotre

The editor of Fordham University's *Texts and Studies in Medieval Philosophy* praises Panaccio's 1999 monograph as "more actual than ever" and with a superb translation provides a proof of concept: "Mental Language" translates the original title ("*Discours Intérieur*") and expresses the same concept. In one sense, the work is actual because *The Language of Thought* (1975) by the late Jerry A. Fodor, whom Panaccio refers to by name over thirty times, was reformulated by Fodor into *LOT 2: The Language of Thought Revisited* (2008). Fodor's thesis is ahistorical, but Panaccio wants to show "striking" historical resemblances (2). In another sense, the translation is actual because "quite a lot of research" has been done in the history of the idea of a mental language since Panaccio's original work (229). The book's ten chapters are divided into three parts: "The Sources" (chs. 1-4), "Thirteenth-Century Controversies" (chs. 5-8), and "The *Via Moderna*" (chs. 9-10). Panaccio then responds to new research in a fresh thirty page postscript. I shall summarize and briefly assess these chapters along with Panaccio's postcript.

Chapter one begins "The Sources" and covers Plato and Aristotle. Panaccio cites passages from *Theaetetus* (190a), *Sophist* (264a), and the *Philebus* (38c-e) that state thinking is the *logos* one has with oneself and truth and falsity apply to this silent conversation. But the chapter overlooks Parmenides, Heraclitus, and the fifth century Greek meaning of *logos* as "account, agreement, opinion, thought, argument, reason, cause."[1] In this abbreviated context, Panaccio offers what he considers "the most plausible interpretation" that Plato transposes "a *linguistic* model for the characterization and comprehension of cognitive phenomena" (14, 19). Panaccio does not explain why Plato's pedagogical mode indicates a logical priority. Instead, Aristotle's idea of mental language is deemed a "radical" departure in which inner speech (*esô logos*) that is constrained by the formal logic of the *Organon* precedes external speech (20).

Chapter two covers Greek thought from the Stoics to John Damascene. Panaccio describes what he offers as "nothing more here than a review [*mise en ordre*] of a given number of texts, assembled by more than a century of

[1] Richard D. McKirahan, *Philosophy Before Socrates* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1994), 133.

scholarship" (29). The Postcript extends this review. Sextus Empiricus and Porphyry discuss whether and how *logos* distinguishes human beings from animals. The *logos* at issue is that of internal speech (*logos endiathetos*) as opposed to external speech (*logos prophorikos*), which parrots have. Building off of C. Chiesa's scholarship, Panaccio maintains that there is no reason to think Stoics themselves originated the distinction. Rather, Philo of Alexandria first manifests this distinction with a *logos endiathetos* that parallels the *Logos* immanent in the universe, and John of Damascene transmits this Greek tradition to the first Latin scholastics.

Chapter three covers the Greek and Latin Church fathers. The Johannine teaching, "In the beginning was the *Logos*, and the *Logos* was with God, and the *Logos* was God" (Jn. 1:1), initiates a movement that took the *logos endiathetos* as an "ontological model" to explain the divinity of the *Logos* against the Gnostics and the Arians. Tertullian explains the *Logos* in the Trinity, for example, as both "interior to and distinct from that which produces it" (67). In line with Stoic, Christian, and Neoplatonic sources, Augustine applies Trinitarian theology to a "comprehensive and skillfully crafted spiritualist psychology" in which the word of the heart (*verbum cordis*) is generated by the mind (74). Chapter four covers Aristotelians from Porphyry to the Latin Avicenna. For Porphyry, "interior discourse is a quality of the soul" that can correspond to either "an act of *dianoia*" or to a "dispositional state" (83). For Boethius, interior discourse is composed of simple or complex concepts signified by external words. For Avicenna, reason cannot compose concepts without uttering imagined words to accompany them, and logic rectifies reason's interior locution.

Chapter five begins the second part of the book ("Thirteenth-Century Controversies") by proceeding from the eleventh century to the middle of the thirteenth. Panaccio shows how Anselm identifies Augustine's mental word with Aristotle's *similitudines* of the *Perihermeneias* (translated by Boethius) and how the Anselmian triad inspires many a thirteenth century author (Alexander of Hales, Bonaventure) to invoke three kinds of utterances: exterior speech composed of sensible signs, "the representation of these signs in the mind", and the mental word (105). Albert the Great reconciles this "whirlwind of triads" (114) by different authorities identifying, for example, Damascene's *logos endiathetos* with the *verbum imaginationis*, an interpretation that Thomas Aquinas accepts (*ST* 1.34.1) and that Panaccio challenges.

Chapter six discusses the views of Thomas, "the most influential theorist" in the thirteenth century of the "mental word" ("*verbe mentale*", 122). Panaccio summarizes six Thomistic theses on the nature of the inner word distinct from the intelligible species as 1) a likeness ("representation") of the known exterior thing, 2) the significate of the corresponding exterior word, 3) the terminus of an operation of the possible intellect, 4) a strictly intelligible being (*esse intelligible tantum*), 5) the "primary object of intellection" through which the external thing is known, 6) and equivalent to one of two intellectual products: a definition ("rational animal") or an enunciation (121-128). The third, fourth, and the fifth theses caused the most debate. Panaccio narrates the controversy started by Peter of Olivi over the putative worry that Thomas's mental word (similar to an "idol") does not confer "direct access to the known thing" (130) necessitating the conclusion by William of Ware that the mental word must be "identical with the act of intellection" (135).

Chapter seven extends the controversies of the previous chapter under the "celebrated" though problematic definition of sign given in Augustine's *De dialectica* and *De doctrina christiana*: "a thing which causes us to think of something beyond the impression the thing itself makes upon the senses" (142). Panaccio highlights William of Auvergne as someone who departs from Augustine and Aristotle by positing intelligible signs, that is, concepts in the mind of the thing it represents (143). William denies a thick sense of assimilation of the thing known, Panaccio explains, because "to think of heat does not really warm my mind" (144). Our author does not explain how someone (like Thomas) can hold to a thick view of assimilation of things in intellectual being without keeping properties of the thing's natural being (e.g. *DV* 2.15 ad 5).

Panaccio points to where Thomas states, "signification and manifestation belong more properly to the interior than to the exterior word" (*DV* 4.1 ad 7), but Panaccio thinks "these kinds of expressions are rare" (147). He rather consigns Thomas to a strict and loose sense of sign. In the strict sense (*sens stricte*), we use sensible signs because our discursive knowledge has its origin in sense-objects; in the loose sense (*sens relâchée*), as Thomas states, "we call anything a sign which being known, leads to the knowledge of something else" (*DV* 9.4 ad 4). But "*communiter*" here means generally (as it does in *DP* 9.4), not loosely. I suggest that it would be clearer to state that Thomas maintains Augustine's authority on signs considered *narrowly* (i.e. in reference to external words) as sensible but that he broadens the notion of sign considered *generally* as intelligible. We might add

that Poinsot interprets Thomas this way calling the latter a "formal sign."[2] The chapter continues with the solutions of Scotus and Ockham that the concept in the mind is the "first natural sign" of an exterior thing (152) and finishes with a rich excursion into angelic communication.

Chapter eight ("What is logic about?") completes the section on thirteenth century controversies with a return to unresolved issues from chapter one. Panaccio argues that the stated subject of the science of logic shifted from discourse (*sermo*) to second intentions, not simply because of Islamic influences, but through the exigency of founding a science on something universal and necessary. So logic primarily concerns "intellectual activity and its products" (161). Since mental propositions can be true or false, Panaccio argues, they must also "display a compositional structure similar to that of spoken sentences" (162). Aquinas only systematizes this structure "in principle"; Roger Bacon points to a deeper "order of interior discourse" that includes subject, predicate, and accidental parts (164); and Scotus treats the *enunciatio in mente* as composed of nouns and verbs**.** But, according to Panaccio, only William of Ockham ensures the independence of *oratio mentalis* from spoken language. This chapter ends with a dense synopsis of different positions about interior discourse as the object of logic: for Richard Campsall, "propositions are composed of imagined words"; for Walter Burley, "the mind in its judgments *intellectually* combines exterior things themselves rather than their representations" (171) thereby eliminating "any awkward intermediary" (175).

Chapter nine begins "*The Via Moderna*" with Ockham. Panaccio explains that Ockham's nominalist refusal to posit universals avoids two "pitfalls" (*écueils meurtriers*) of linguistic relativism and skepticism (181). It avoids the former through mental language and the latter through a systematically "fine-grained analysis of epistemic processes" such as supposition (183). According Panaccio, Ockham "switched allegiance regarding the ontological status of the concept" as *ficta* and *idolum* to primarily an *actus* of understanding when he became aware that the act of intellection could be seen as a sign and "play all desired semantic roles" (187). By being a sign, an act of understanding acquires the properties of signification and supposition. Conceptual thought "appears as a complex compositional system" (191) endowed with grammatical categories of noun and

[2] John Poinsot, *Tractatus de Signis: The Semiotic of John Poinsot*, 1st ed., trans. and eds. John Deely and Ralph A. Powell (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 2.1.225:16-25. On Thomas's mental word as formal sign, 2.2.249:12-21.

verb and logical categories of categorematic/syncategorematic and absolute/ connotative terms. Ockham's sophisticated theory of mental language thus seems to void any need for extramental universals.

The tenth and final chapter covers "Reactions" to Ockham's thought. At least one English Dominican named Hugh Lawton refused the notion of a mental language altogether. Another named William Crathorn considered mental language "an interiorization of spoken or written language" (200). For Robert Holcot, Crathorn's view implies there could not be a universal church: Greeks and Latins ignorant of each other's language would hold separate creeds. According to Panaccio, the Dominican controversy fizzled into a "victory for Ockhamism" (202). We learn that Franciscans such as Walter Chatton, Adam Wodeham, and Pseudo-Campsall, while also using the property of terms to analyze mental propositions, still raise many questions or objections. These concerns include the status of syncategorematic terms, participles, grammatical accidents, connotative terms, simple supposition, and the significates of mental propositions. The chapter ends with differing interpretations of some influential nominalists. Gregory of Rimini accepts that the mental proposition is an act of intellection but "stripped of internal composition structure" (209); John Buridan refines Ockham's theory with technical notions such as *appelatio rationis* that obliquely references the soul's speech act (e.g. "believes that").

In the Postscript (2014) to the English language edition, our author responds to recent scholarship. On the originality of the Stoics, Panaccio responds to A. Kamesar, M. Achard, and P.-H. Poirier. On Augustine and Boethius, Panaccio welcomes the findings of I. Koch, M. Sirridge, and T. Suto. On Abelard, Panaccio admits, "I have badly neglected the twelfth century as a whole" (236), welcoming the scholarship by L. Valenta, but disagreeing with P. King's estimate on Abelard (as holding the "first full-fledged theory of mental language") because the semantical properties of Abelard's complex concepts are not "a *function* of the semantical properties of their simpler parts" (238). On Aquinas, Panaccio reaffirms his own position in response to J. O'Callaghan, D. Perler, and H. Goris. The scholarship of C. Marmo convinces our author, however, that Giles of Rome's approach to mental language "might provide a bridge between the Thomistic conception and the Ockhamist one" (247). On Ockham, Panaccio rebuts E. Hagedorn's "well argued and challenging piece," which claims that—unlike Fodor's mental language—Ockham's mental language need not be complex. Panaccio

responds that Hagedorn's proof texts are early, comparatively brief, and open ended.

In all, Panaccio persuasively argues that Ockham's mental language is "quite comparable in spirit with Jerry Fodor's approach" (250). Panaccio draws a common thread of the "same problem" of composition skirted by Plato and Aristotle, developed by Aquinas and Scotus, and finally resolved through the compositional semantics of Ockham and Buridan. The problem as Panaccio states it is, "how are the logical and alethic properties of mental judgments dependent on the properties of certain smaller units?" (20). The proposed solution is through grammar, logic, and semantics.

The overriding claim is that mental language is independent of conventional language, but Panaccio does not respond to the peculiar objection: why does the grammar of mental language so much resemble Latin grammar?[3] Nor does Panaccio respond to one major direct criticism that comparing supposition to reference may mislead the uninformed reader, for there is arguably "no medieval theory concerning the determination of what terms stand for in a proposition."[4] Panaccio nevertheless presumes and baldly states that supposition is "nothing other than a theory of reference" (221). Finally, Panaccio's repeated reliance on (weak) representationalism as a way to describe ancient and medieval theories of knowing strikes the reader as anachronistic. For example, Thomas's discussions of intellectual identity (*In Meta*. 12.8.2539–2540; *In DA* 3.3; *SCG* 1.53) does not describe the intellect's relation to extramental objects but rather a metaphysics of intellection, that is, the kind of actualization needed for an intellect to produce acts of understanding.[5]

Panaccio could surely respond to these criticisms. Indeed, his scholarly hand navigates us through many objections about mental language on both textual and analytical grounds. Scholars can only be indebted to Panaccio for extending the original narrowly circumscribed intention of the book beyond the period leading up to William of Ockham into an indispensable and encyclopedic history of the

[3] Peter Geach, *Mental Acts: Their Content and Their Objects* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1957), 101-106.

[4] Catarina Dutilh Novaes, *Formalizing Medieval Logical Theories:* Suppositio, Consequentiae*, and* Obligationes (Leiden: Springer, 2007), 20-21.

[5] Therese Scarpelli Cory, "Knowing as Being? A Metaphysical Reading of the Identity of Intellect and Intelligibles in Aquinas," *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 91 (2017): 333-351.

idea of mental language. I look forward to similar publications by Fordham University's Center for Medieval Studies.

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7. Author's CV

A short CV including the author`s affiliation and professional postal and email address must be sent in a separate file. All special acknowledgements on behalf of the authors must not appear in the submitted text and should be sent in the separate file. When the manuscript is accepted for publication in the journal, the special acknowledgement will be included in a footnote on the first page of the paper.

8. Review Process

The reason for these requests is that all articles which pass the editorial review, with the exception of articles from the invited contributors, will be subject to a strict double anonymous-review process. Therefore the authors should avoid in their manuscripts any mention to their previous work or use an impersonal or neutral form when referring to it.

The submissions will be sent to at least two reviewers recognized as specialists in their topics. The editors will take the necessary measures to assure that no conflict of interest is involved in the review process.

The review process is intended to be as quick as possible and to take no more than three months. Authors not receiving any answer during the mentioned period are kindly asked to get in contact with the editors.

The authors will be notified by the editors via e-mail about the acceptance or rejection of their papers.

The editors reserve their right to ask the authors to revise their papers and the right to require reformatting of accepted manuscripts if they do not meet the norms of the journal.

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