Logos & Episteme

an international journal
of epistemology

Logos & Episteme

TABLE OF CONTENTS

RESEARCH ARTICLES

CAN I KNOW THAT ANYTHING EXISTS UNPERCEIVED?

Aaran BURNS

ABSTRACT: It is well known that G.E Moore brought about a revival of Realism with his classic "The Refutation of Idealism." Three decades later W.T. Stace wrote an unfortunately less famous paper, "The Refutation of Realism." In that paper, Stace claims that "we do not know that a single entity exists unperceived." This paper provides an interpretation of Stace's argument and maintains that it has yet to be adequately addressed by contemporary epistemology.

KEYWORDS: W.T. Stace, realism, knowledge, scepticism

I understand by a sceptical argument one which argues that we do not know or have no reason to believe something which most people take fore-granted. In W.T Stace's article, "A Refutation of Realism,"[1] he puts forward a sceptical argument for the conclusion that "*we do not know that a single entity exists unperceived.*"[2] In this paper I reconstruct his argument, distinguish it from other sceptical arguments which have been more thoroughly discussed and demonstrate that no adequete refutation of that argument has been offered to date. Sections 1 and 2 interpret Stace's goals and argument. Section 3 distinguishes Stace's argument from sceptical arguments that are more frequently discussed. Section 4 considers replies which were given to Stace, arguing that none of them is satisfactory. Section 5 considers contemporary epistemological ideas, arguing that none of them can be made into a cogent criticism of Stace's argument. Stace's argument thus constitutes a sceptical argument which philosophers have not yet satisfactorily addressed.

1. Stace's Goal

Stace resolves to provide a refutation of Realism, by which he understands the following thesis:

---

[1] W.T. Stace, "The Refutation of Realism" (1934), in *Philosophical Skepticism,* eds. Charles Landesman and Roblin Meeks (Malden: Blackwell, 2003), 114-124.
[2] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116.

> *Realism.* Some entities sometimes exist without being perceived by any finite mind.[3]

The word 'finite,' here is crucial for Stace because he thinks that without that word, Realism implies that some entities exist without being perceived by an infinite mind – God, and it is not clear that all of those who accept Realism would accept that.[4] There may be Theistic philosophers who think of themselves as Realists and yet would shy away from the idea that there are any objects that are not perceived by God, since that might be taken to imply that "*some entities exist of which God is ignorant*,"[5] and that would conflict with God's omniscience. But the inclusion of the word 'finite' also builds a lot into Realism that is paradigmatic of Idealism. Realism, so understood, is entailed by Berkeley's Idealism. We must, therefore, distinguish two kinds of Idealism. One sort says that nothing exists unperceived by finite minds. Call this Subjective Idealism. The other says that nothing exists unperceived by *some* mind, where this includes a postulated infinite mind which perceives the whole universe at all times. Call this Absolute Idealism. Absolute Idealism has most frequently been defended by either the argument that the concept of an unperceived entity is incoherent or else that a thing which exists unperceived is inconceivable. Berkeley's master argument was an argument of this kind. Subjective Idealism is the result of the sort of argument we are presently elaborating on behalf of Stace.

In any case, Stace thinks we can leave God out of the discussion and so we shall. Stace next focusses on a particular entity:

> In front of me is a piece of paper. I assume that the Realist believes that this piece of paper will continue to exist when it is put away in my desk for the night and when no finite mind is experiencing it. He may also believe that it will continue to exist even if God is not experiencing it. But he must at least assert that it exists when no finite mind is experiencing it...and therefore to refute that proposition will be to refute Realism.[6]

So much for Stace's goal. He wants to refute Realism as I have defined it above. He proposes to do so by focussing on the example of the piece of paper in front of him, and if he can show that the paper does not exist when unperceived by any finite mind, he will have refuted Realism. But Stace admits that he has no way

---

[3] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 115.
[4] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 115.
[5] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 115.
[6] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 115.

to prove that the paper does not exist unperceived.[7] For all he knows, his piece of paper might exist unperceived. Instead, he will raise an epistemological objection to Realism:

> I shall inquire how we could possibly know that unexperienced entities exist, even if, as a matter of fact, they do exist. And I shall show that there is no possible way that we could know this and that therefore we do *not* know it.[8]

That is:

(1) We do not know that Realism is true.[9]

He compares the epistemic situation of Realism to that of the proposition that there is a unicorn on Mars:

> I cannot prove that there is no unicorn on Mars. But… there is not the slightest reason to suppose that there is one…[10]

2. Stace's Argument

Stace begins the argument for (1) by returning to the piece of paper in front of him. Suppose that he is, at this moment, experiencing it. At this moment, he knows that it exists. But how can he know that it existed last night when it was in his desk while he was a sleep and when no-one was experiencing it?[11] One might think that the difficulty arises even if we allow that someone was experiencing the paper, so long as it was not Stace. The question before us is, how can *Stace* know that the paper existed when it was in his desk and he was asleep? It does not seem to matter whether we allow that I was in Stace's office, looking at the paper, while he was asleep. But notice that in such a situation, Stace could come to know that the paper still existed last night by virtue of my being a trustworthy source and telling him that I saw the paper in his desk at that time. However, if no-one experienced the paper last night when it was tucked away in Stace's desk, then Stace cannot come to know through testimony that the paper existed then; and if Stace cannot know it by testimony, how can he know it?

---

[7] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 115.

[8] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116.

[9] He also argues that we have "*not the slightest reason for believing that they do exist*" (Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116), but I leave this aside for now.

[10] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116.

[11] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116.

Stace endorses the Empiricist claim that there are only two sources of human knowledge about the sensible world – sense perception and inference:

(2) The only sources of human knowledge about the sensible world are sense perception and inference.[12]

Stace argues that neither source can be used to arrive at knowledge of the unperceived existence of the paper. He dismisses sense perception in just a few lines:

I obviously cannot know by perception the existence of the paper when no-one is experiencing it. For that would be self-contradictory. It would amount to asserting that I can experience the unexperienced.[13]

This argument is compelling, but some care is needed to spell it out. It is not quite right to say simply that I cannot experience the un-experienced. There are objects which are presently un-experienced which I could experience. I have never experienced the underside of my sofa, and presumably no one is presently experiencing it. It is therefore un-experienced at this moment, T1. I could, if I chose, lift the sofa and look underneath and thereby experience it at a later time, T2. Hence, I can experience objects which are presently un-experienced. Of course, once I am experiencing them, they are no longer un-experienced. What Stace is getting at is that I cannot experience something *at the same time* as it is un-experienced. The significance of this is difficult to state clearly. Consider the paper in Stace's desk while he is asleep. At that time, it has the property of unperceived existence.[14] What I cannot do is perceive that property. I cannot perceive the property of unperceived existence, in the paper or in any other object, because in the very act of perceiving the paper I make the paper such that it no longer has the property of unperceived existence.

This leaves Stace with inference. If he is to know that the paper exists when it is unperceived in his desk, he will have to legitimately infer this from some known premises. Stace is quite sceptical about this possibility:

How can I possibly pass by inference from the particular fact of the existence of the paper now, when I am experiencing it, to the quite different particular fact of the existence of the paper yesterday or tomorrow, when neither I nor any other

---

[12] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116.
[13] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 116.
[14] Existence is not a property, but unperceived existence surely is. It does add to the description of a thing to say that it exists unperceived.

mind is experiencing it?[15]

Stace points out that to prove (2), he need not argue that no such inference is possible.[16] Unless Realists can actually produce the inference, Stace's point that we do not, at current know that Realism is true, will be vindicated.

Stace is not content with this alone, and resolves to prove that the required inference cannot be had. He first considers enumerative induction in which what is observed to be true of a seemingly representative sample of Xs is inferred to be likely true of so far unobserved Xs. The problem he sees is that since we have never observed the property of unperceived existence even a single time, there is no sample from which we can infer that future instances exist. "*Induction is generalization from observed facts, but there is not a single case of an unexperienced existence having been observed on which could be based the generalization that entities continue to exist when no one is experiencing them.*"[17] Thus:

(3) There is no cogent inductive inference to unperceived existence.

With enumerative induction ruled out, Stace passes directly to deduction. Deductive inference, Stace says, "*depends on the principle of consistency.*"[18] What he means by this is that if P → Q, we can only prove Q on the assumption that P. Deductive inferences require starting premises and if there is no reason to accept the starting premises, the best a deductive argument can reveal is that the premises and the denial of the conclusion are mutually inconsistent. Yet, this by itself cannot tell us whether the conclusion is true or the premises false.

In consequence, if it is to be maintained that a deductive argument can be given which shows that Realism is true, or specifically that Stace's paper exists unperceived in his desk, it must be the case that the following are logically inconsistent:

(4) The paper exists whilst being experienced by Stace.

(5) The paper does not exist when no one is experiencing it.

It must be the case that (4) →¬(5), or that (5) →¬(4). Stace insists that there is no inconsistency between (4) and (5) and says in support of his claim that "*If I*

---

[15] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 117.
[16] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 117.
[17] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 117.
[18] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 117.

believe that nothing whatever exists or ever did or will exist, except my own personal sense-data...there is absolutely nothing internally inconsistent about it."[19]

Stace here assumes that because he can imagine a state of affairs in which (4) and (5), it must be logically possible that (4) and (5) obtain together. This does not follow, but it is plausible that one's ability to imagine a world in which P, so long as one is sufficiently attentive and detailed about what the possible world in question is like, is as good a reason as we ever get to suppose that P is logically possible, other than knowing that P actually obtains. If Stace is right that it is logically possible that (4) and (5) both obtain, then there can be no deductive argument that Stace's paper exists unperceived in his desk. Hence:

(6) There is no valid deductive inference to unperceived existence.

Stace concludes that "*by no reasoning at all*"[20] can he infer the unperceived existence of his paper.

Having proven that neither sense perception nor inference can allow Stace to know that his paper exists unperceived, Stace concludes that he cannot possibly know that that the paper exists unperceived and so he does not know that it does. Since Stace cannot know that his paper exists unperceived, no one knows that any object exists unperceived.

This is how Stace presents his objection to Realism. We may reconstruct the argument as follows:

Stace's Argument
Emp. I can only know about the sensible world by perceiving it or by inferring from what I perceive.
NoPer. I cannot perceive the property of unperceived existence.
NoInf. I cannot reliably infer the property of unperceived existence.

I do not know that anything exists unperceived.[21]

---

[19] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 118.
[20] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 118.
[21] Let U be the proposition that something exists when unperceived; K be "knows that," S be any subject; P is the property of "having perceived" and I is the property of "having inferred" or "being able to infer." *Emp, NoPer* and *NoInf* entail the conclusion:

$$[[K(S, U) \rightarrow [P(S,U) \vee I(S,U)]] \text{ (Emp)}$$
$$\neg P(S,U) \text{ (NoPer)}$$
$$\neg I(S,U) \text{ (No Inf)}$$
$$\text{Therefore, } \neg K(S,U)$$

Stace says nothing in defense of Emp, but I take it to be a claim to which most of us are initially attracted. What other sources might there be? It might be that there is a priori knowledge of some sort, but very few philosophers would be prepared to maintain that such knowledge was about the sensible world, as opposed to about logic, mathematics and, maybe, some areas of philosophy.

NoPer is supported by Stace's argument that the property of unperceived existence cannot be perceived because that is a contradictory task.

NoInf I take to be the most controversial premise. Stace makes a strong case for the claim that I cannot reliably infer unperceived existence by enumerative induction or deduction, but this only entails *NoInf* on the assumption that those two are the only reliable forms of inference. Stace fails to notice a form of inference which is discussed much more explicitly than it was in his day – inference to the best explanation. It might be that the unperceived existence of the piece of paper I placed in the drawer is the best explanation of various things which I do know. *Perhaps* that is right, but there are still several problems. First, no-one has to my knowledge articulated that argument in any detail. Second, partly owing to the first issue, it is not at all obvious that unperceived existence really would be the best explanation of, say, all of the things which we do perceive, as opposed to some sort of Berkeleyan Idealism, Subjective Idealism, a computer simulation hypothesis or some other hypothesis. Many philosophers have been pessimistic about the explanatory credentials of the external world hypothesis as opposed to these alternatives[22] and it is not clear how these assessments would change, if at all, when the issue is unperceived existence as opposed to the external world. Lastly, reliance on inference to the best explanation to escape the paradox commits us to the claim that inference to the best explanation is truth conductive, and it is far from clear how *this* could itself be known if it is true at all. A satisfying solution to the paradox which appeals to inference to the best explanation must explain in detail what the criteria are for 'best' explanation; how unperceived existence really is the best explanation as opposed to some competitors; how it could be known that inference to the best explanation is truth-conductive without presupposing that anything exists unperceived. This has not yet been done.

---

[22] William Alston, *The Reliability of Sense Perception* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), Matthew Gifford, "Skepticism and Elegance: Problems for the Abductivist Reply to Cartesian Skepticism," *Philosophical Studies* 164, 3 (2013): 685-704, Ram Neta, "Skepticism, Abductivism, and the Explanatory Gap," *Philosophical Perspectives* 14, 1 (2004): 296-325, Enc Berent, "Is Realism Really the Best Hypothesis?" *Journal of Philosophy* 87, 11 (1990): 667-668.

3. Unperceived Existence and the External World

Stace's Argument is one against our knowing that anything exists unperceived. Several other sceptical arguments are against our knowing that there is an external world. For example, the following argument has been much discussed:

> *The Underdetermination Argument*
>
> (7) For all S, *p*, *q*, if S's evidence does not favor *p* over some incompatible hypothesis *q* then S does not know that *p*.
>
> (8) My evidence does not favour the proposition that I am sitting at my desk over the incompatible hypothesis that I am dreaming.
> _____
> (9) I do not know that I am sitting at my desk.[23]

Stace's Argument is distinct from this argument since Stace's argument does not include any premise about evidence favouring hypotheses, nor does it contain any reference to well known sceptical scenarios. For the same reason, Stace's Argument is distinct from the Closure Argument,[24] since that argument requires the premise that "knowledge" is closed under known entailment. Stace's Argument does not require any premises about the meaning of "knowledge;" its first premise is one about the *sources* of knowledge.

There is also at least an apparent difference in the conclusions of Stace's argument and these others. Stace's argument aims at the conclusion that we cannot know that anything exists unperceived, whilst the Underdetermination and Closure arguments aim at the conclusion that we cannot know that there is an external world. Yet, most contemporary discussions of these arguments say almost nothing about what is meant by "External World," contenting themselves with a few examples. "This is a hand" and "I am sitting at my desk" are typically regarded as propositions about the external world. G.E Moore once characterized things in the "External World" as things which occupy space which satisfy these two criteria:

> (10) could exist without anyone perceiving them.
>
> (11) could be perceived by more than one person, in contrast with sense experiences, pains and similar phenomena.[25]

---

[23] Jonathan Vogel, "Skeptical Arguments," *Philosophical Issues* 14, 1 (2004): 426–455.

[24] Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2001), 172-217.

[25] George Edward Moore, "Proof of an External World," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 25,

Moore contrasts things in the external world with things in the internal world which, according to Moore, do not occupy space and cannot exist unless they are perceived. Ram Neta remarks that this is *"as close as anyone in the contemporary discussion of skepticism about the external world has got to characterizing them."*[26]

If this is what is meant by "external world," then Stace's Argument has a different conclusion than Underdetermination and Closure arguments. Those arguments, on this interpretation, aim at showing that we cannot know that there is anything which *could* exist without anyone perceiving it, where "could" is understood in terms of logical possibility. Stace's argument aims at showing that we cannot know that there is anything which *does* exist without anyone perceiving it.

In this way, the form of Scepticism defended by Stace's Argument is logically posterior to the Scepticism which is defended in Closure and Underdetermination Arguments. After it is explained how we know that there is an external world – that there is anything which could exist unperceived, the sceptic moves to the claim that we do not know that anything does exist unperceived.

That the argument is logically posterior to the more widely discussed forms of sceptical argument does not take anything away from Stace's Argument. It does not make it any less interesting than Underdetermination or Closure Arguments. I certainly believe that there are many things which d*o actually exist* when unperceived by me. I do not merely believe that it is logically possible that the rest of my apartment still exists even though I am presently facing the wall. I believe that the rest of my apartment does exist behind me. More generally, I do not merely believe that there could be things outside of my immediate experience. I believe that there surely are such things – that there is a whole world which goes on even whilst I am experiencing only a minute fraction of it. If Stace is right, however, I do not know any of this.

---

5 (1939): 273-300.

[26] Ram Neta, "External World Skepticism," in *Skepticism: From Antiquity to the Present*, eds. Machuca and Reed, 635.

4. Stace Replies to Realists

I turn now to consider ways in which the argument might be criticized. I consider first suggestions from Stace's contemporaries and Stace's replies. Then I move on to some contemporary ideas.

After laying out his argument, Stace considers a reply by Perry which accuses the Idealist of inferring from the fact that we do not know of the existence of unobserved entities, that there are no unobserved entities.[27] The critic charges that this is a fallacious inference, but Stace retorts that this does absolutely nothing to show that Realism is true. It is fallacious to argue that because we have never seen a unicorn on Mars that therefore there is no unicorn, but this does nothing to prove that there is one.

He next discusses an argument due to Lovejoy:

> The same uniform causal sequences of natural events which may be observed within experience appear to go on in the same manner when not experienced. You build a fire in your grate of a certain quantity of coal, of a certain chemical composition. Whenever you remain in the room there occurs a typical succession of sensible phenomena according to an approximately regular schedule of clock time; in, say, half an hour, the coal is half consumed; at the end of the hour the grate contains only ashes. If you build a fire of the same quantity of the same material under the same conditions, leave the room, and return after any given time has elapsed, you get approximately the same sense-experiences as you would have had at the corresponding moment if you had remained in the room. You infer, therefore, that the fire has been burning as usual during your absence, and that being perceived is not a necessary condition for the occurrence of the process.[28]

Stace thinks that Lovejoy has begged the question by assuming that "*the law of causality continues to operate in the universe when no one is observing it.*"[29] It is not clear to me that Lovejoy does this. Lovejoy describes what would happen over an hour if I were to light the fire and stay in the room. Then he describes what would happen if I were to light the fire and leave the room, returning an hour later. He then writes that I can infer that the fire has been burning during my absence. Stace criticises Lovejoy because, just like the case of unobserved objects, no one has ever observed an unobserved process either. Moreover, for the same

---

[27] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 118.
[28] Arthur Lovejoy, *The Revolt Against Dualism* (Illinois: Open Court, 1929), 268.
[29] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 119.

reasons as we rehearsed in the case of unobserved objects, no inference can be made from what we observe to the existence of unobserved processes. Stace concludes:

> There is absolutely no evidence (sense-experience) to show that the fire went on burning during your absence, nor is any inference possible. Any supposed inference will obviously be based on our belief that the law of causation operates continuously through time whether observed or unobserved. But this is one of the very things which has to be proved.[30]

Why does any inference have to be based on the law of causation? Did Lovejoy not just provide an inference which makes no appeal to the law of causation? It at least does not do so explicitly, and Stace does nothing to make the appeal explicit. Stace rightly says that there is no logical inconsistency in the fire existing when you observe it, ceasing to exist when you stop, and then ashes existing at a later time when you return and this rules out a deductive inference all together.[31] It seems to me that Stace is thinking of Lovejoy's argument as an inductive one. He is thinking that Lovejoy wants to use the case where I observe the fire for its whole duration as part of a sample of similar observations from which I can generalise that fires behave that way generally, even unobserved ones. Understood this way, Stace is right. We can only make an inductive argument like that on the assumption that the law of causation constrains what will happen to the fire when I leave, since that law would dictate that the fire continue burning as opposed to disappear. Stace rightly points out, that the fact that the law of causation operates when unobserved, is part of what needs to be proven if Realism is to be proven.[32]

---

[30] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 120.

[31] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 120.

[32] What forces Stace to construe Lovejoy's argument as inductive is that he does not recognise inference to the best explanation as a legitimate form of inference. If he did, he could construe Lovejoy's argument as the suggestion that the fire's continued unobserved burning is the best explanation of (i) the observations made if we watch the fire for the whole hour and (ii) the fact that the initial observation made and the final observation made if we start the fire and come back in an hour are almost exactly the same as the corresponding observations if we watch for the whole hour. The prospects of an argument of this sort are worth investigating, but Stace never construes Lovejoy thus. As a result, Lovejoy's argument is seen as inductive and dismissed as fallacious.

Next, Stace considers the objection G.E. Moore raised in "The Refutation of Idealism,"[33] an objection well known for reviving Realism in philosophy. The objection emphasises that there is a distinction between the object of my perception and my awareness of that object. I am presently looking at what I call a 'hand.' The object of my perception is the 'hand,' but my awareness of it is something distinct. If I look instead at my laptop, the object of my perception is the laptop, but the two perceptions – of my hand and my laptop – also have something in common which we call awareness. I am aware of the laptop in perception, and aware of the hand in perception. Moore uses the example of a perception of green and distinguishes there between the awareness of green and green itself. Since green is not the same thing as awareness of green, it is possible that the green (or the hand or the laptop) exists without the awareness.

In fairness to Moore, these reflections were aimed at Idealists who held that it was *necessarily* true that nothing exists unperceived. Against that view, it was sufficient to point out that the object of perception is logically distinct from the awareness of it, and so the former might possibly exist without the latter. Stace's reply to Moore is just to abandon the necessity claim. He says that while it is true that the object of perception is distinct from the awareness of it, it might be a contingent fact that the two never come apart.[34] It might be a contingent fact that greenness, laptops and hands only exist in conjunction with the awareness of them and cease to exist when the awareness of them ceases. In fact, Stace says, this is just what the evidence suggests, "*since we never have evidence that green exists except when some mind is aware of green.*"[35]

From this discussion of Realist arguments, Stace concludes that all of the arguments commonly thought to support Realism are fallacies.[36] He ends by discussing the suggestion that belief in unperceived existence is a 'primitive and instinctive belief.' He has no respect for primitive beliefs, saying of them that they are simply beliefs we have held for a long time,[37] and that having held a belief for a long time is no reason to suppose that it is true. Stace doubts the existence of instinctive beliefs at all, because it seems to imply that at some stage in our evolutionary history, we just acquired, spontaneously – not as a result of

---

[33] George Edward Moore, "The Refutation of Idealism," *Mind* 12, 48 (1903): 433-453.

[34] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 121.

[35] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 121.

[36] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 121.

[37] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 121.

perception, but completely out of the blue – the belief that things exist unperceived. Even supposing that this did happen, Stace thinks the mere fact that a belief was acquired in this way is no reason to think that it is true. In fact, he thinks that the appeal to instinct is a desperate "*admission of the bankruptcy of Realism.*"[38]

5. Other Possible Solutions

I turn now to discuss contemporary epistemological theories. These theories have usually been aimed at Underdetermination, Closure or other sceptical arguments. They have never, to my knowledge, been offered as a response to Stace's Argument. Nonetheless, if I can show that none of the most popular epistemological ideas provides any clear and powerful criticism of Stace's argument, the case will be made that Stace's argument deserves renewed attention.

Externalism

Stace frequently objects to Realism on the grounds that there is no reason to believe it. This might be thought to import an Internalist assumption to the effect that knowing that P requires being aware of a reason for believing that P. Whether Stace would have accepted this definition of 'knowledge' I am unsure – I am still less sure whether he would have thought this was the 'ordinary' meaning – but it does not matter, because Stace's argument arises even given an Externalist definition of 'knowledge.' Follow Goldman[39] in saying that S knows that P if and only if S believes that P, it is true that P and S's belief that P was produced by a reliable process. Stace's Argument remains. *Emp* can be interpreted as making the claim that the only human *reliable processes* of belief formation about the sensible world are sense perception and inference from sense perception, and this is every bit as plausible as it would be given a different, more Internalist definition.

Concerning *NoPer*. It is still a contradiction to suppose that we could perceive the property of unperceived existence, and on the assumption that sense perception is only a reliable cause for beliefs about things perceived, *NoPer* stands. Concerning *NoInf*, the argument for it can easily be interpreted as an argument against the possibility of a reliable inference.

---

[38] Stace, "The Refutation of Realism," 123.

[39] Alvin Goldman, *Epistemology and Cognition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

Aaran Burns

Contextualism

Contextualism I understand to be the thesis that the standards for truly saying of someone that they have 'knowledge' vary depending on the context. In some contexts, a set of speakers can rightly require S to meet higher standards in order to be correctly considered as 'knowing' than another set of speakers requires of S in a different context.[40] Suppose that is true. I cannot see how it helps with Stace's argument. Stace's argument involves the claim that there is no reliable source *at all* for the belief in unperceived existence. It is not just that the belief fails to be certain, or fails to meet some highly demanding standard. Rather, the problem is that the belief apparently fails to meet even the weakest standard of reliability you might plausibly suggest. Hence, if Emp, NonPer and NonInf are true, there is no context at all in which it is true to say that anyone knows that anything exists unperceived.

Closure Denial

A number of philosophers have tried to deal with sceptical arguments by denying that 'knowledge' is closed under known entailment.[41] Such a solution is no help here because Stace's Paradox does not presuppose closure for 'knowledge.' In fact, it does not presuppose any contentious theory about the semantics of 'knowledge.'

Disjunctivism

Disjunctivism is the doctrine that the mental state involved in a case of veridical perception is different from the mental state involved in a hallucination, even when the two states are subjectively indistinguishable for the person who has them.[42] This has been thought to help rebut sceptical arguments which try to convince us into accepting a veil of perception between ourselves and the world, only to conclude that we are stuck behind the veil and knowledge of the world is impossible. Whether or not Disjunctivism is true and whether or not it helps us at all concerning the arguments to which it is addressed, it is of no help with Stace's argument. It might be that the mental state that I am in in a veridical case of

---

[40] Stewart Cohen, "Contextualism and Skepticism," *Philosophical Issues* 10, 1 (2000): 94-107.

[41] Nozick, *Philosophical explanations*, 172-217.

[42] Duncan Pritchard, "McDowellian Neo-Mooreanism," in *Disjunctivism: Perception, Action, and Knowledge,* eds. Adrian Haddock and Fiona Macpherson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 283-310.

perception is different to the mental state I am in when I am hallucinating, but Stace's argument makes no reference to hallucination or even to the possibility of errors in sense perception.

Phenomenal Conservatism

Michael Huemer advocates a doctrine he calls Phenomenal Conservatism:

> (12) If it seems to S that p, then, in the absence of defeaters, S thereby has at least some degree of justification for believing that p.[43]

Many objections have been raised against Huemer's position. For the sake of argument I am prepared to grant him all of the contentious ground. Let us assume, for now, that there are such things as "seemings" as is required by Huemer's epistemological principle. Let us assume that such seemings exist in ordinary cases of sense perception, memory and even moral and rational intuition, as Huemer claims. Let us even assume that these seemings really are sufficient for the justification of the propositions which seem to the subject to be true. Granting all of this, Phenomenal Conservatism of the sort which would address Stace's argument would amount to a rejection of Empiricism. It would postulate a distinct faculty which gives us information about the world even when we are not experiencing it. It would claim that we can have seemings about the world while we are not experiencing it, and that would be what allows us to know – or at least have some justification to believe - that things exist while unperceived.

The problem is that phenomenologically, I severely doubt that there are any relevant seemings. Consider again the case in which I have put a piece of paper in the drawer for the night. When I introspect, I might be able to find a memory seeming – I seem to remember putting a piece of paper in the drawer. Yet, this seeming does not justify the proposition that there is a piece of paper when noone is experiencing it. I might be able to find current sensory seemings to the effect that there is a laptop in front of me. Yet, again these seemings do not justify the relevant proposition. I have, lastly, a strong inclination to believe that the piece of paper exists even though no-one is perceiving it, but a strong inclination to believe that P is not a seeming in Huemer's sense – since for Huemer, seemings are sui

---

[43] Michael Huemer, "Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74, 1 (2007): 30.

generis *experiences.*[44] In this sense of "seeming," I cannot find a seeming that the piece of paper still exists while unperceived.

Moreover, if there were such seemings it would be inexplicable why we ever need to go and look if anything is where we believe it to be. I could simply rely on my seemings to tell me, for example, how many cars are parked outside of my house, even though I am at present too far away from the road to see. Of course, I cannot do this, and the fact that I cannot suggests that there are no such seemings. I am sure that the Phenomenal Conservative could find some explanation of the fact that I cannot rely on my seemings in such a case. He could claim, for example, that I only get seemings about the currently unperceived when I satisfy some further condition, C, where the absence of C explains why it is that I cannot rely on seemings to figure out how many cars are parked outside. This explanation will inevitably by ad hoc, and the simplest explanation of the fact that I cannot rely on special seemings to tell how many cars are outside of my house without looking is that there are no such seemings, and to find out what exists in a region outside of my immediate experience, I must rely on sense perception.

Note that I am not here denying the existence of seemings tout court. I have already conceded for the sake of argument that there are seemings in all of the areas Phenomenal Conservatives have typically postulated them. I am denying, however, that there are any *relevant* seemings which pertain to parts of the world presently unperceived by the subject.

6. Conclusion

I have shown here that Stace's argument in "The Refutation of Realism" may be reconstructed to form a powerful sceptical argument. I distinguished it from the more widely discussed sceptical arguments and demonstrated how a variety of potential criticisms are of no force. I did not try to criticize the argument myself, but I did suggest that inference to the best explanation was the most obvious place to look, although much work would have to be done to make that solution work. As far as I can see, unless such a proposal can be worked out, Stace's Refutation of Realism succeeds in showing that there is no way to know that anything exists unperceived.

---

[44] Huemer, "Compassionate Phenomenal Conservatism," 30-55.

THE SEEMING ACCOUNT OF
SELF-EVIDENCE: AN ALTERNATIVE
TO AUDIAN ACCOUNT

Hossein DABBAGH

ABSTRACT: In this paper, I argue against the epistemology of some contemporary moral intuitionists who believe that the notion of self-evidence is more important than that of intuition. Quite the contrary, I think the notion of intuition is more basic if intuitions are construed as intellectual seemings. First, I will start with elaborating Robert Audi's account of self-evidence. Next, I criticise his account on the basis of the idea of "adequate understanding." I shall then present my alternative account of self-evidence which is based on the seeming account of intuition. Finally, I show how the seeming account of self-evidence can make the moral intuitionist epistemology more tenable.

KEYWORDS: intuition, seemings, self-evidence, Robert Audi, intuitionist epistemology, George Bealer

1. The Concept of Self-evidence

Robert Audi refines and categorises the idea of self-evidence, as he wants to shape his own view of moral intuitionism, which he has dubbed "ethical reflectionism."[1] Moral intuitionists like Audi believe that some propositions are self-evident if, and only if, an understanding of them is sufficient justification for believing them, and is sufficient to know the proposition, provided one believes them on the basis of one's understanding of them. He characterises self-evident propositions such that

(1) if one can sufficiently understand them, then in the light of that understanding one is justified in believing them, and

(2) if one believes them on the basis of that understanding, then one can know them.[2]

---

[1] Robert Audi, "Self-Evidence," *Philosophical Perspectives* 13 (1999): 205-228.

[2] Robert Audi, "Ethical Reflectionism," *The Monist* 76 (1993): 303; Robert Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," in *Moral Knowledge? New Readings in Moral Epistemology*, eds. Walter Sinnott-Armstrong and Mark Timmons (Oxford: Oxford University

Of course, one might know that p even if one does not know that p is self-evident. In other words, "[w]e do not need to know that p is self-evident to know that p on the basis of an understanding of it."[3] Thus, for the sake of clarity, we can distinguish between

    (a)   knowing a self-evident proposition

and

    (b)   knowing that this proposition is self-evident.

Apprehending the *truth* of a self-evident proposition is one thing, but apprehending its *self-evidence* is another thing. It is the understanding of the truth of a self-evident proposition that is all a moral intuitionist needs to claim.[4] Because one might know some self-evident propositions but might not know that they are self-evident. However, it is not true that (a) and (b) are not connected at all, for to know that a proposition is self-evident one needs at least to know the self-evident proposition in question based on adequate understanding.

To illustrate, consider young children who know certain simple self-evident mathematical propositions, but do not even have the concept of self-evidence at all. Similarly, we can have rational and reasonable beliefs even if we do not have any beliefs about reasons. Parfit, for example, observes that

> Young children respond rationally to certain reasons or apparent reasons, though they do not yet have the concept of a reason.[5]

When we refer to an adequate understanding of a self-evident proposition, provided one believes that proposition, this does not entail that one *necessarily must* believe it. Self-evident propositions are knowable on the basis of a sufficient understanding of them. But understanding does not necessarily cause one to

---

Press, 1996), 114; Robert Audi, "Moderate Intuitionism and the Epistemology of Moral Judgment," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 1 (1998): 20-22; Robert Audi, "Moral Knowledge and Ethical Pluralism," in *The Blackwell Guide to Epistemology*, eds. John Greco and Ernest Sosa (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1999), 283; Robert Audi, *Epistemology: A Contemporary Introduction to the Theory of Knowledge* (London: Routledge, 1998), 95.

[3] Philip Stratton-Lake, "Introduction," in *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations*, ed. Philip Stratton-Lake (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 20. See also Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 106-107.

[4] Audi, "Ethical Reflectionism," 286; Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 107-108.

[5] Derek Parfit, *On What Matters*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 118.

believe them. To understand a proposition entails "being able to apply it to (and withhold its application from) an apparently wide range of cases, and being able to see some of its logical implications."[6] If one does not have an ability to draw at least one inference *from* the proposition in question, one probably does not really understand the proposition.

In Audi's view, since self-evident propositions are those propositions one can justifiably believe on the basis of adequately understanding them alone, Audi's view makes it sound like self-evident propositions must be all *a priori* truths.[7] This is because on the one hand, for justifiably believing in self-evident propositions we merely need adequate understanding. On the other hand, this condition is what we need for justifiably believing *a priori* truths. Audi, for example, notes that this proposition is self-evident: "The mother-in-law of my father's son-in-law is my mother." If one has an adequate grasp of this proposition, one can know it to be *true*, provided that one believes it on the basis of this understanding. For self-evident propositions are such that we can know them to be *true* on the basis of understanding them adequately, and need not to be known on the basis of any other things beyond a grasp of the proposition itself. Audi claims that such knowledge is *non-inferential*.

According to Audi, we can distinguish the notion of self-evidence into two types, from two aspects in terms of understanding. First, we have "hard" self-evident and "soft" self-evident propositions. Second, we have "immediately" self-evident and "mediately" self-evident ones.[8] A hard self-evident proposition is

> (1) strongly axiomatic, in the sense that there is no other proposition which is better justified than it, (2) immediately understandable, in the sense that it does not need reflection to be understood, (3) indefeasibly justified and (4) cognitively compelling, in the sense that if one understands it one cannot resist believing it.[9]

---

[6] Audi, "Moderate Intuitionism and the Epistemology of Moral Judgment," 22.

[7] There is a further question whether all *a priori* propositions are self-evident. I will discuss this issue later.

[8] Audi, "Moderate Intuitionism and the Epistemology of Moral Judgment," 22, 24; Audi, "Ethical Reflectionism," 303; Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 284; Robert Audi, *The Good in the Right: A Theory of Intuition and Intrinsic Value* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 48-54.

[9] Audi, "Moderate Intuitionism and the Epistemology of Moral Judgment," 24; Audi, *The Good in the Right,* 53.

However, Audi believes that a soft self-evident proposition has none of these features. Soft self-evidence, Audi thinks, can hold for all Rossian *pro tanto* duties.[10] Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that Audi is committed to an exhaustive dichotomy between hard and soft self-evidence. Perhaps there is a continuum from completely soft (none of (1)-(4)) to completely hard (all of (1)-(4)). If so, then a proposition that has some but not all of (1)-(4) can still be a hardish proposition.

Audi believes that hard self-evident propositions are often found in logic and mathematics. So, comparing self-evident moral propositions such as *pro tanto* principles to mathematical propositions is an epistemological mistake, which some classic moral intuitionists, e.g. Ross, committed. Audi thinks that "moderate intuitionism" does not commit this mistake. He writes, for example, "I believe that the kind of self-evidence to which a moderate intuitionism is committed lies quite far at the soft end."[11]

Although most "hard" self-evident propositions such as many mathematical and logical propositions are justified non-inferentially, there are at least some hard self-evident propositions, e.g. "every integer greater than one, either is prime itself or is the product of prime numbers", that *can* be justified inferentially. Likewise, "soft" self-evident propositions *can* be justified inferentially. "Hard" self-evident propositions are often accepted at first sight, but "soft" self-evident propositions need reflection in order to be persuasive.[12] Of course, reflection and mental maturity are matters of degree, but this does not entail that the justification that emerges after further reflection *must* be inferential.[13]

Being a self-evident proposition does not entail that it is obvious to everyone. Some self-evident propositions may need lots of reflection to believe. However, there are some self-evident propositions that can be accepted easily without any effort. Of course, people might not believe a self-evident proposition if

---

[10] Audi, "Moderate Intuitionism and the Epistemology of Moral Judgment," 24.

[11] *Ibid*.

[12] Audi, "Ethical Reflectionism," 303; Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 115.

[13] For further details on self-evidence, see Laurence BonJour, *In Defense of Pure Reason: A Rationalistic Account of A Priori Justification* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). Also, for the issue of self-evidence and rational disagreement, see Robert Audi, "Intuition, Inference, and Rational Disagreement in Ethics," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 11, 5 (2008): 488-491. As a criticism of Audi's epistemological intuitionism particularly on self-evidence, see Klemens Kappel, "Challenges to Audi's Ethical Intuitionism," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5, 4 (2002): 391-413.

they do not understand it. And some people cannot know a self-evident proposition because they believe it on the basis of inadequate understanding.[14]

Furthermore, an immediately self-evident proposition is, Audi says, "readily understood by normal adults," in the sense that its truth is immediately obvious or clear upon the understanding. Mediately self-evident propositions, however, are endorsed or accepted "only through reflection on them."[15] For example, a proposition like "the bachelor is an unmarried man" is an immediately self-evident proposition. Audi himself uses the phrase "luminously self-evident" when he wants to talk about very clear propositions which do not need reflection to accept them.[16] However, consider for instance the self-evident proposition introduced by Audi as a self-evident proposition which is not obvious and needs further reflection to find its truth or falsity: "if there have never been any siblings, there have never been any first cousins."[17] Whenever propositions are self-evidently true (no matter whether the self-evidence is immediate and hard, or soft and mediate), they are knowable non-inferentially, or, as Audi says, "[i]f they are even mediately self-evident, they may be taken to be knowable non-inferentially."[18]

Nevertheless, one might be sceptical of how Audi's discussion of reflection generally is supposed to work. Although there are some moral self-evident propositions mediated through reflection, we need to be clear about what the consequence of this claim is. How is it possible that one reflects on a self-evident proposition but still remains non-inferentially justified?

In order to explain how moral self-evident propositions mediated through reflections work, we should discuss what it means when we say that moral self-evident propositions might have both inferential and non-inferential justification. Although Audi does not use this terminology, in the next section, I introduce a distinction between two concepts, i.e. "self-evident truth" and "self-evident justification," to give a plausible explanation of how reflection might work in Audi's framework. This distinction, I believe, helps us to have a better understanding of the contemporary moral intuitionist epistemology.

---

[14] Audi, "Ethical Reflectionism," 303.
[15] Audi, "Moderate Intuitionism and the Epistemology of Moral Judgment," 22.
[16] Audi, *The Good in the Right,* 31.
[17] Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 114.
[18] Audi, *The Good in the Right,* 23.

1.1. Self-Evidently Justified vs. Self-Evidently True

Immediately self-evident propositions like "all vixens are female" do not need a high level of understanding for justification, according to Audi's version of self-evidence. We easily and immediately accept and believe the proposition "all vixens are female" (if we know the meaning of vixen). Immediately self-evident propositions, of which we can realise the truth instantly, are "self-evidently true" to us. These self-evident propositions are presented to us as true and we do not need any further reflection to believe them.

On the other hand, although there are some immediately self-evident propositions which are self-evidently true, and everybody can understand and accept their truth at first sight, there are also some mediately self-evident propositions which might not be known easily and need further reflection to be understood adequately. Such further reflection might involve drawing inferences from the proposition so as to better understand it. But this does not entail that they *cannot* be non-inferentially justified. Because one might know some self-evident propositions non-inferentially but might know that they are self-evident inferentially.

Mediately self-evident propositions do need further reflection. Reflection is needed to have an adequate understanding of the proposition. The truth or falsity of this sort of proposition is not known before reflection and at first sight. It is possible that a proposition that one considers to be self-evidently true may turn out not to be true, as we see after more and more reflection.[19]

Nevertheless, to reject a proposition based on reflection does not imply that the proposition was not initially intuitive or non-inferential. As an example, in Copernican physics, there are some axioms or postulates that were thought to be self-evident. The scientific community then saw the emergence of Newtonian or Einsteinian physics, which has some parallel self-evident axioms.[20] This illustrates the possibility that an *apparently* self-evident proposition may be shown to be incorrect after further reflection by other scholars in one scientific society.

---

[19] Philip Stratton-Lake, "Pleasure and Reflection in Ross," in *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations* ed. Stratton-Lake, 113-136.

[20] As another example, the Ptolemaic model of the solar system as being geocentric was "self-evident" but was later overturned by the Copernican model of the solar system, a heliocentric model. Neither classical mechanics nor relativity disprove Copernican heliocentric model. Rather heliocentricity disproves the Ptolemaic model.

Similarly, this could happen in the area of morality when we discover that some *apparently* self-evident moral propositions are not true.[21]

Since it is hard to accept mediately self-evident propositions at first sight, one can think that these propositions are not self-evident. We might need further reflection to understand them adequately as self-evident. The more we reflect on a proposition, the better we find out whether it is self-evident or not. However, to know (justify) that some mediately self-evident propositions are actually self-evident, some further inferences might be needed. Thus, since some inferences might be needed to know that some mediately self-evident propositions are actually self-evident, it is better to call mediately self-evident propositions "self-evidently justified."

2. Evaluating and Developing Audian Self-Evidence

Sidgwick tried to establish a systematic account of self-evidence, i.e. to elaborate what it is for a proposition to be self-evident. He mentioned at least three conditions for self-evident propositions: (1) the proposition must be a clear and precise proposition; (2) reflection needs to ascertain the proposition's self-evidence; (3) self-evident propositions must be consistent. Sidgwick believes that these conditions are for "a significant proposition, apparently self-evident, in the highest degree of certainty attainable."[22] Parfit clarifies Sidgwick's view about self-evidence in this way:

> When Sidgwick calls our knowledge of some normative truths *intuitive*, he is not referring to any special faculty. Sidgwick means that we can recognize the truth of some normative beliefs by considering only the content of these beliefs, or *what* we are believing. These beliefs do not need to be inferred from other beliefs. Sidgwick also calls some of these beliefs *self-evident*. In using this word, Sidgwick

---

[21] I said "apparently self-evident moral propositions" here because in Audi's view a proposition cannot really be self-evident without being true. If Audi's account of self-evident is correct, a self-evident proposition cannot turn out to be false. An *apparently* self-evident one can, however. Compare this with the claim made by Hooker, who wrote that a proposition can seem to be self-evidently true and yet turn out to be false. See Brad Hooker, "Intuitions and Moral Theorizing," in *Ethical Intuitionism: Re-evaluations*, ed. Stratton-Lake, 161-183. Audi's account of self-evidence has some shortcomings, I believe. I will explain my criticisms later.

[22] Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, 7th edition (London: Macmillan, 1967 [1874]), 211-212, 342-388. Sidgwick also says that self-evident propositions must be agreed upon or at least agreed upon by experts, but he does not explain why experts should have any special weight here.

does not mean that such beliefs are infallible. These beliefs, he claims, may need careful reflection, and they may be false. Such beliefs may merely seem to be self-evident. These beliefs may also be *indubitable*, or *intrinsically credible*. Such credibility is a matter of degree.[23]

Now recall Audi's account of self-evident propositions. In almost the same way, he believes that self-evident propositions are propositions, the *sufficient understanding* of which provides *sufficient justification* for believing and knowing them; or a proposition is self-evident when it is a *truth*, such that a sufficient understanding of it satisfies the two conditions below.[24] Audi's description of self-evidence, then, becomes

Audian Self-evidence: A self-evident proposition is a truth such that

(a) In virtue of having an adequate understanding of the proposition, one is justified in believing it.

(b) If one believes the proposition on the basis of an adequate understanding of it, then one knows it.

Some critics such as Tropman believe that Audi's account of self-evidence does not explicitly make room for particular self-evident propositions.[25] This is because Audi himself admits that his view rules out the self-evident particular moral truths.[26] Audi grants that moral intuitionists need only claim for the *general* self-evident moral principles or "generic intuitionism."[27] In Tropman's view, while Audi's notion of self-evidence helps us to see how *general* moral truths such as Rossian principles of *pro tanto* duty are evident to us in themselves, his account does not care about the self-evidence of *particular* moral truths, such as those moral truths in *concrete* cases. Yet, in what sense are particular propositions self-evident if not in Audi's sense?

Tropman would argue that we could still have particular self-evident propositions in Audi's sense like general ones, although his account does not

---

[23] Parfit, *On What Matters*, Vol. 2, 490.

[24] Robert Audi, "Conclusion," in *The New Intuitionism*, ed. Jill Graper Hernandez (London: Continuum, 2011), 174; Russ Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 247.

[25] Elizabeth Tropman, "Renewing Moral Intuitionism," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 6, 4 (2009): 450.

[26] Audi, *The Good in the Right,* 69; Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 109.

[27] Audi, *The Good in the Right,* 55, 49; Audi, "Conclusion," 172.

explicitly entail that. In her view, we can develop Audi's account to cover a non-inferential real-world-particular knowledge of moral facts. For example, consider a particular propositional belief such as "the lie my brother told yesterday was *pro tanto* wrong." Tropman believes that we can learn substantive moral facts about the action in question solely by reflecting on the conceptual meaning of "my brother's action." A particular act of lying is self-evidently wrong because knowledge of self-evident truths depends totally on the conceptual meaning of the constituents. So, the proposition can be qualified as self-evidently true.

Furthermore, we can argue that if the general principle, say, lying is wrong, is self-evident, then it will be self-evident that any particular act of lying would be wrong. If the general proposition is self-evident, why cannot the particular instance be? For example, if it is self-evident that the fact that an act counts as a lie is a *pro tanto* reason not to do the act, then how could it not also be self-evident that the fact that this particular act counts as a lie is a *pro tanto* reason not to do the act? Hence, once again Tropman would maintain, Audian self-evidence should take into consideration a non-inferential real-world-particular knowledge of moral facts.

However, one might object that this kind of arguing can be problematic in some cases. It is true that in some moral cases if there can be self-evident general propositions, then there can be self-evident particular ones too. For instance, if it is *pro tanto* wrong to rape someone for pleasure, it is also self-evidently wrong that Jack rapes Jill. However, this cannot be true in any case of, say, mathematics or geometry. For example, if it is self-evident that any triangle's angles sum up to 180 degrees, then it is not self-evident that this triangle's angles sum up to 180 degrees. The reason for this is that it is not self-evident that "this is a triangle," rather it is something we establish by looking at the object, not by *a priori* reflection. Nonetheless, one can respond to this objection that, as far as conditional propositions can be self-evident, a proposition such as "if this is a triangle, its angles sum to 180," looks like an intuition about a particular self-evident in geometry. In fact, by having established that this is a triangle we can know straight off that this triangle has 180 degrees.

Whether or not my argument or Tropman's argument for particular self-evident moral knowledge can work, we certainly can think of different moral particular self-evident propositions in our daily life. It seems obvious that a particular truth may be adequately understood, so it may be known on the basis of that sufficient understanding. For example, in the case of my brother's lie or a

proposition such as "my friend killed her husband for fun," we can have a morally relevant particular self-evident proposition by reflecting on the nature of a lie or killing. Following some classic intuitionists who take into account particular self-evidence, we can take a broad view about particular self-evident propositions in terms of adequate understanding.

For example, Clarke and Prichard, as two classic intuitionists, tended to seek self-evident propositions more often in concrete and particular cases.[28] They thought that individuals just see some specific (obligatory) actions. In fact, although these philosophers discussed the idea of self-evidence, they suggested that we can think of something like *intuitive perception* of moral facts when we are faced with particular concrete moral cases.

Ross also seemed to believe that *pro tanto* duties in concrete situations could be self-evident. He thought that the first thing that came to mind was the particular *pro tanto* self-evident duties in concrete cases.[29] Consider for example this passage from Ross:

> [W]e see the *prima facie* rightness of an act which would be the fulfillment of a *particular* promise, and of another which would be the fulfillment of another promise… What comes first in time is the apprehension of the self-evident *prima facie* rightness of an *individual* act of a *particular* type. From this we come by reflection to apprehend the self-evident *general* principle of *prima facie* duty (emphasis added).[30]

Ross thought that the self-evidence of *pro tanto* rightness or wrongness of a *particular* action comes to our apprehension, even if we do not recognise the relevant *general* moral principle.[31] However, by reflecting on different similar and dissimilar particular actions we can form self-evident general principles. For Ross,

---

[28] Samuel Clarke, "Discourse on Natural Religion," in *The British Moralists 1650-1800*, I. ed. D. D. Raphael (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1706 [1969]), 226; Harold A. Prichard, *Moral Writings*, ed. J. MacAdam (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 28. This claim might be complex in Prichard. For more on this, see Jonathan Dancy, "Has Anyone Ever Been a Non-Intuitionist?" in *Underivative Duty: British Moral Philosophers from Sidgwick to Ewing*, ed. Thomas Hurka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[29] W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good*, ed. Philip Stratton-Lake (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930 [2002]), 33. See also, W. D. Ross, *The Foundations of Ethics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939), Ch. 8.

[30] Ross, *The Foundations of Ethics*, 170.

[31] For an alternative view, see Brad Hooker, *Ideal Code, Real World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

these particular moral facts come to our cognition non-inferentially in the sense that some particular moral beliefs are credible independently of their inferential relations to general moral principles.

Although Audi calls his intuitionism "Rossian style intuitionism," his version of intuitionism does not say explicitly much about particular moral facts as he defines self-evidence in terms of generality. However, I want to highlight one element in Audi's epistemological framework which one might think of as something similar to particular self-evidence, albeit he does not say this directly. It seems that Audi has something similar to particular intuitions about self-evident propositions in mind when he talks about "conclusion of reflection."[32] Since intuition can be yielded by reflection, Audi thinks, we are able to distinguish between two categories of conclusion, i.e. "conclusion of inference" and "conclusion of reflection." An intuitive self-evident proposition can be the conclusion of an inference. Likewise, it can be the conclusion of reflection.

Audi gives two examples to make clear what exactly this distinction is. Suppose someone reads a letter of recommendation that refers to itself as "strong." It is possible to infer that the recommender means "strong" in another way, i.e. actually means weak, as the recommender never directly praises the applicant. The reader forms the judgement that the recommendation letter is not really a strong one by picking some points that show the recommender does not directly praise the applicant. Since this judgement is based on an inference from evidence, Audi calls this a "conclusion of inference."

On the other hand, as an example for "conclusion of reflection," one might see in the letter a subtle commitment and indirect praise. It is possible that one simply *feels* elements of "strength." In this case, Audi believes, since the judgement is made by global intuitive sense and reflection, unlike the conclusion of inference, conclusion of reflection is supposed to be non-inferential. In fact, conclusion of reflection is a result of reflecting upon the *overall nature of some phenomenon*, as a *whole*.

However, it might be objected that although Audi did not directly connect the idea of conclusion of reflection to the particular intuition, it seems that "conclusion of reflection" cannot be a good example of non-inferential (self-

---

[32] It seems that Audi is also somehow talking about self-evident particular moral propositions when he talks about the moral properties of fittingness and unfittingness. See Audi, "Intuition, Inference, and Rational Disagreement in Ethics," 482; Robert Audi, "Introduction" and "Conclusion," in *The New Intuitionism*, ed. Graper Hernandez, 5-7, 181-184.

evident) propositions about *particular* facts or *pro tanto* duties. This is because a conclusion of reflection is drawn by considering *all aspects* of its phenomenon and necessitates considering the phenomenon as a *whole*. Yet a belief about a *pro tanto* duty necessitates considering just one of an act's aspects. We need not consider all of the action's features in order to gain knowledge of *particular* instances of *pro tanto* duties. So, Audi's conclusion of reflection cannot explain our non-inferential beliefs about particular concrete *pro tanto* duties.[33]

This objection is not persuasive though. One can reflect on all aspects of a particular situation as a whole, including different self-evident facts about the situation. Also, although one could reflect on all aspects of something, there is nothing about the notion of reflection that means one must reflect on all elements. So, reflection on some part of the situation could be sufficient.

Nonetheless, it is not clear how Audi can match the distinction between conclusion of reflection and conclusion of inference to his Rossian-style intuitionism. On the one hand, it seems that the idea of conclusion of reflection is closer to Ross's *pro tanto* duties than all-things-considered duties. We come to beliefs about our *pro tanto* duties by reflection, not by inference. However, Audi thinks that our beliefs about *pro tanto* duties *can* be inferential. For example, he distinguishes between "justification from below" and "justification from above." The justification from below, in his view, aims to derive intuitively-justified moral principles, such as Rossian *pro tanto* duties, from a more fundamental principle, such as the Categorical Imperative.[34]

What sounds puzzling in Audi when he introduces the conclusion of reflection is that Audi does not give us a clear explanation of what reflection amounts to when he says that we can remain non-inferentially justified in reflecting on a self-evident proposition. Suppose someone reflects on a particular self-evident proposition. It seems that one needs to take account of various properties in that particular situation to believe in the proposition. However, in Audi's framework, it is supposed that taking different properties does not require

---

[33] Tropman raises this objection in her "Renewing Moral Intuitionism."

[34] Audi, "Ethical Reflectionism," *The Monist* 76 (1993): 305-306; Audi, "Intuitionism, Pluralism, and the Foundation of Ethics," 119; Robert Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical Character* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 285; Robert Audi, "A Kantian Intuitionism," *Mind* 110, 439 (2001): 601-635; Robert Audi, "Intuition, Reflection and Justification," in *Rationality and the Good: Critical Essays on the Ethics and Epistemology of Robert Audi*, eds. Mark Timmons, John Greco, and Alfred Mele (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 204.

someone to form a belief inferentially. How is it possible that, in reflection on something such as a situation, we are supposed to take in various properties of the thing and then, without drawing any inferences, reach a self-evident truth about the thing?

The objection, in fact, is that it just does not seem plausible that reflection does not involve drawing inferences. To understand Rossian principles adequately or to reflect on self-evident propositions, we sometimes need to consider and form judgements that involve drawing inferences from hypothetical scenarios. This leads us to think that inferences drawn play a role as premises for the overall conclusion. For example, consider the self-evident proposition such as "when an equal amount is taken from equals, an equal amount results." When one reflects on this proposition, one might need to draw some inferences to adequately understand it.

Audi tries to provide an answer to sceptics such as Sinnott-Armstrong who raise this issue.[35] Audi believes that forming a belief by attaining an adequate understanding (or reflection) does not necessarily involve inferences. In his view,

> the perception of a property can ground a judgment without doing so by yielding beliefs that supply premises for that judgment. Consider, for instance, facial recognition regarding someone you have not seen for many years. If the judgment that the person is, say, an old friend from high school, arises from thoughtfully contemplating facial properties, but is not based on beliefs of supporting propositions, we may call it a conclusion of reflection even if the person could formulate 'corresponding premises.' The judgment may, then, be both non-inferential and intuitive.[36]

However, Audi's example of facial recognition is not illuminating, in large part because facial recognition is very unlike recognizing the truth of a self-evident proposition. Even in contemplating facial properties, it is not clear whether there is dependency on a proposition in a way that *is in fact not* inferential. So, it is not obvious that Audi's move can avoid the objection about inference.

Nonetheless, it is not true that reflections (or adequate understanding), at all times, necessarily involve inferential justification.[37] Although there are some

---

[35] Walter Sinnott-Armstrong, "Reflections on Reflection in Audi's Moral Intuitionism," in *Rationality and the Good*, eds. Timmons, Greco, and Mele, 19-30. For Sinnott-Armstrong's criticism, see: Hossein Dabbagh, "Sinnott- Armstrong Meets Modest Epistemological Intuitionism," *Philosophical Forum* 48, 2 (2017):175-199.

[36] Audi, "Intuition, Reflection and Justification," 204.

[37] I occasionally use "reflection" and "adequate understanding" interchangeably here. Although it

difficult cases in which reflections explicitly work as an inference, I believe, there are still some cases where reflection does not work as an inference. In my view, to attain in reflection (or have an adequate understanding) about a proposition, one needs: 1) to have at least the capacity to tease out the meaning of the constituents; 2) to be able to use the terms correctly and apply them reliably; 3) to draw some inferences *from* the proposition in question. In fact, these three conditions together make our understanding adequate or reflection sufficient. But none of these conditions makes us form an explicit argument or inferential reasoning. Hence, although for having a sufficient reflection, one needs to be *able* to draw some inferences, this does not entail that one *must* actually go through drawing inferences when one considers a proposition. Furthermore, even if one draws some inferences in order to reflect on a proposition's meaning, this need not involve forming an explicit argument or inferential reasoning. This account of reflection makes our beliefs non-inferential. Drawing inferences to form an explicit argument or reasoning makes us inferentially justified. But merely having the capacity to draw inferences does not cross the line into inferential justification.

There are clear cases where we have non-inferential belief based on a reflection about a proposition. For example, by reflection on the meanings of the constituent words in the proposition "all squares are rectangles," we are non-inferentially justified in believing the proposition. Reflection on the meanings of the words in the proposition is not an argument. On the other hand, for the proposition "helium is twice as heavy as hydrogen" we need some proofs, inferential reasoning or argument to show that it is true. There are some clear cases of reflection *without* explicit argument. There are some clear cases of reflection *with* explicit argument. I do not deny that, in some cases, it is unclear whether we need explicit argument. For example, in the proposition "God probably necessarily exists," it is not clear whether we need an explicit argument or just the ability to understand the meanings of the constituent words in order to be justified based on reflection.

This account of reflection and adequate understanding allows us to have a direct content when we consider a self-evident proposition. So, it seems more likely that we are non-inferentially justified when we form our beliefs on the basis of adequate understanding or reflecting on self-evident propositions. Thus, if one

---

is possible that one reflects on something without having adequate understanding, I assume here that to reflect on something is to understand it adequately and vice versa.

believes a self-evident proposition on the basis of reflection or adequate understanding, one can non-inferentially know it.

2.1. An Alternative Account to Audian Self-evidence

Intuition and self-evidence are two important aspects of intuitionist moral epistemology, though most moral intuitionists talked about each of them separately. For example, as we have seen, Audi treated intuitions as something like belief and defines a self-evident proposition in terms of understanding and non-inferential justification. Although intuition is a type of mental state and self-evidence is a property of propositions, we need to discover how they are related. Let us start with self-evidence.

Almost all epistemological intuitionists maintain that there are some moral propositions that are self-evident. For example, Locke says that a self-evident proposition is one that "carries its own light and evidence with it, and needs no other proof: he that understands the terms, assents to it for its own sake."[38] Or Richard Price believes that a self-evident proposition is immediate, and needs no further proof.[39]

However, contemporary moral intuitionists such as Audi and Shafer-Landau never include the element of obviousness in their account, and yet they define a self-evident proposition in terms of understanding. This definition of self-evidence is currently the standard understanding of self-evidence among moral intuitionists. For example, Shafer-Landau writes,

> Beliefs are self-evident if they have as their content self-evident propositions. A proposition p is self-evident=df. p is such that adequately understanding and attentively considering just p is sufficient to justify believing that p. It is possible that agents who adequately understand and attentively consider just p may yet fail to believe it; for instance, other beliefs of theirs may stand in the way. If I have a standing practice of believing whatever my guru tells me, then his say-so in a given case may be sufficient to prevent me from believing a self-evident proposition that I understand and have attentively considered. Still, if I do get all the way to believing a self-evident proposition, my belief is justified.[40]

---

[38] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), 139.

[39] Richard Price, *A Review of the Principle Questions in Morals*, in *The British Moralists 1650-1800, II*, ed. D. D. Raphael (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969 [1758]), 187.

[40] Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence*, 247. See also Audi, *Moral Knowledge and Ethical*

In Shafer-Landau's view, one's adequate understanding of self-evident propositions is sufficient to justify believing them. On that view, if one adequately understands a moral self-evident proposition, such as "it is *pro tanto* wrong to rape anyone," one's mere understanding can justify one to believe the proposition. However, I believe, it is not plausible that merely an adequate understanding can be evidence to justify our belief. Let me explain.

We can doubt whether adequate understanding of a self-evident moral proposition is evidence and can justify our belief in the proposition.[41] This is because evidence for p must be something that can give us reason to believe that p and provide justification for us. For example, the introspective experience of p or to remember that p is the sort of evidence that can provide such reasons to believe p. But our understanding of a moral proposition is not evidence and cannot provide justification for us. Although an adequate understanding of a self-evident moral proposition is needed for us to believe in something, it does not look as though that adequate understanding is evidence to provide the justification for that belief.

But this argument depends on what we mean by evidence. One might object that understanding a self-evident proposition counts as evidence for its truth, in which case my argument is wrong. Or one might object that understanding a self-evident proposition does not count as evidence for its truth, since self-evident propositions can be known true without evidence, in which case, once more, my argument is wrong.

However, such objections are not convincing if we consider my account of evidence: Evidence (e) for (p), in my view, is a mental state or proposition that raises the (epistemic) probability of p being true. It is true that evidence is indeed the existence of a mental state—e.g. that I am in pain, or that such-and-such seemed to me to be true. But of course, not all evidence consists in mental states. So, I am not denying that evidence can be a fact—e.g. that there is blood on the carpet. Nevertheless, I am not using "evidence" to mean merely "whatever justifies belief" because then it follows trivially that if understanding justifies then it is

---

Character, 216. Audi, *The Good in the Right,* 48-49.

[41] Philip Stratton-Lake, "Intuition, Self-Evidence, and Understanding," in *Oxford Studies in Metaethics: Vol. 11*, ed. Russ Shafer-Landau (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Kirchin also maintains that intuitionists need to develop a positive account of what understanding of self-evident propositions amount to. See Simon Kirchin, "Self-evidence, Theory, and Anti-theory," in *Intuition, Theory, and Anti-theory in Ethics,* ed. Sophie-Grace Chappell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

evidence.[42] On my account of evidence, mere understanding of a self-evident proposition is not evidence, because mere understanding of a proposition cannot raise the probability of that proposition's being true. So, on my account of evidence, mere understanding of a proposition cannot be evidence of its truth and thus cannot justify our belief in the proposition.[43]

If evidence is whatever raises the (epistemic) probability of p, self-evident propositions are facts (true propositions) that are inherently evidence. For example, the propositions "all cows are female" and "a finite whole is greater than, or equal to, any of its parts" are facts that do not need any other propositions to justify their truth. They are evidence in themselves. In other words, self-evident propositions are credible on their own independently of any other propositions. Indeed, self-evident propositions are self-justified in the sense that they are justified on the basis of their conceptual meaning.

But if self-evident propositions are facts, can we say that they are all analytic propositions? All analytic propositions such as "all triangles have three sides" are self-evident. Analytic propositions are propositions whose truth is knowable by knowing the meanings of the constituent words and their relation. In fact, in an analytic proposition, the predicate concept is contained in its subject concept.[44]

But not all self-evident propositions are analytic. Suppose that it is self-evident that there is a *pro tanto* duty not to harm others, or at least innocent others. In other words, the fact that an act would harm an innocent person imposes on any agent a defeasible requirement not to do the act. Is the very meaning of "*pro tanto* duty" such that there *must* be a *pro tanto* duty not to harm the innocent? No. Is the very meaning of "harm the innocent" such that there *must* be a *pro tanto* duty not to harm the innocent? No. Is the very meaning of, for example, "justice" such that every agent *must* have a *pro tanto* duty to promote it? No. Is the very meaning of "*pro tanto* duty" such that there must be a *pro tanto* duty to promote justice? No, and the same applies for each of Ross's other *pro tanto* duties. Although self-evident moral propositions must be *a priori* truths, and must be necessary truths, they manifestly are not analytic truths. However, depending

---

[42] Loosely speaking, by justification I mean the reason or argument that someone (properly) holds a belief. To (properly) hold beliefs is having good reasons to think that they are true. A justified belief is one that we are epistemologically or intellectually right in holding.

[43] For more on evidence, see: Simon Schaffer, "Self-Evidence," *Critical Inquiry* 18, 2 (1992): 327-362.

[44] This also can be true of analytic conditionals, e.g. "If Holmes killed Sikes, then Sikes is dead."

on how we understand "moral," there are some moral self-evident propositions that can be analytic as well. For example, insofar as the concept of murder is the concept of wrongful killing, the proposition "murder is wrong" is analytic.[45]

In addition to that, all self-evident propositions such as "all bachelors are unmarried" are *a priori*. *A priori* propositions are propositions that one can reasonably believe without empirical evidence. *A priori* propositions are justified independently of sensory experience. We can believe an *a priori* proposition on the basis of pure thought and by simple reflection on its content.

But are all *a priori* propositions self-evident? Self-evident propositions are the foundation for the *a priori*. That is, although most *a priori* propositions are self-evident, there are some *a priori* propositions that are not self-evident. For example, consider a proposition like "all bachelors are unmarried, or Obama's eyes are blue." The proposition is *a priori* but it is not self-evident in itself. The proposition "all bachelors are unmarried" is self-evident and this can be put in a disjunction with any other proposition. The result, however, will be true *a priori* because a disjunction is true as long as one of the disjuncts is true. The disjunctive propositions with one true disjunct need not be self-evident, since one needs to know logic in order to know that they are true, and indeed needs to do the inference: this is a disjunction with at least one true disjunct, and disjunctions with at least one true disjunct must be true. As another example, although it is *a priori* that "0.9 recurring equals to 1," it might be debated whether it is self-evident.[46] Also, for some moral philosophers it is *a priori* that "happiness is an intrinsic good," but it is controversial whether it is self-evident. So, it is not true that all *a priori* truths, no matter how complex, would come out as self-evident.[47]

Thus far, I have elaborated on whether self-evident propositions are analytic and *a priori*. I have also criticised the standard Audian understanding of self-evident propositions in terms of my account of evidence. It is not plausible, I believe, that an adequate understanding of a moral self-evident proposition is evidence to justify belief in the proposition. If the adequate understanding of a

---

[45] David Copp, *Morality in a Natural World: Selected Essays in Metaethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 40; Elizabeth Tropman, "Self-Evidence and A Priori Moral Knowledge," *Disputatio* 4, 33 (2012): 459-467.

[46] Elijah Chudnoff, *Intuition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 68-69. He thinks it can become intuitive after reflection.

[47] For the relationship between intuition and *a priori*, see Carrie S. I. Jenkins, "Intuition, 'Intuition,' Concepts and the A Priori," in *Intuitions,* eds. Anthony Robert Booth and Darrell P Rowbottom (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

moral self-evident proposition does not provide justification for believing it, the Audian self-evidence account is not the whole story about self-evident moral propositions. Although having adequate understanding is a necessary condition for the self-evidence account, mere adequate understanding is not a sufficient condition for that.

I believe that *intuition* is the part that can provide justification. However, this idea depends on how intuition is understood. My theory of intuition, explained below, can help us to distinguish intuition from certain similar mental states, such as guesses, gut reactions, hunches and common-sense beliefs. I will argue that intuitions are not belief-like states and we should not understand intuitions in terms of doxastic accounts. Rather, the seeming account of intuition is better. So, I propose a self-evidence theory based upon an account of intuitions as seeming states rather than mere beliefs. This theory is an alternative to the Audian self-evidence account.

3. The Seeming Account of Self-evidence

George Bealer, as a prominent intuition theorist, thinks that intuition is a *sui generis* mental state that cannot be reduced to other mental states.[48] He states two claims: one negative and one positive. On the negative side, he argues that one can have an intuition with certain content while one does not believe that content. Also, one can believe that p whereas one does not have the intuition that p. Bealer also differentiates between intuition and guess, hunch, judgement, and inclination-to-believe.[49] On the positive side, however, he introduces a new terminology instead of intuition, i.e. "intellectual seeming."

Following Bealer's non-doxastic account of intuition, I also understand intuitions, either philosophical or moral, as *seemings*, against the doxastic account, which understands intuitions as *beliefs*.[50] According to the non-doxastic account,

---

[48] George Bealer, "Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy," in *Rethinking Intuition: The Psychology of Intuition and Its Role in Philosophical Inquiry*, eds. Michael DePaul and William Ramsey (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998).

[49] Bealer, "Intuition and the Autonomy of Philosophy," 208-210.

[50] I elsewhere defended the seeming account of *moral* intuition, although Bealer defended only the seeming account of *philosophical* intuition. See Hossein Dabbagh, "Intuiting Intuition: The Seeming Account of Moral Intuition," *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 18, 1 (2018):117-132. See also Philip Stratton-Lake, "Intuitionism in Ethics," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2016). URL = https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/intuitionism-ethics/.

to have an intuition that p is to have the intellectual seeming that p. The reason that I advocate the seeming account is that it looks more fundamental than the doxastic account, e.g. disposition or inclination-to-believe account, in explaining different phenomena. Although we can remain open-minded about whether there are some cases that the inclination or disposition account explains best, the seeming account can do a better job. The reason is that we can explain why we are inclined (disposed) to believe various things by saying that they *seem* true to us. In other words, even in cases where we are inclined (or have disposition) to believe something, we are actually inclined (or have the disposition) to believe it because it *seems* true to us. In other words, that p seems true to me is a decent reason for my believing p. In contrast, that I am disposed or inclined to believe p is not a decent reason for me to believe p.

The doxastic account of intuition does not allow for cases where an intuition that p (non-inferentially) justifies a belief that p. On the doxastic account, the intuition that p is either the belief that p or an inclination or disposition-to-believe that p. Neither of these justifies the belief that p. The belief that p cannot justify the belief that p. The inclination or disposition-to-believe that p does not by itself justify the belief that p. It might be the case that I know that it is not true that "I am inclined to believe that p" but this does not prevent its seeming to me to be true. Furthermore, the inclination or disposition-to-believe account is not informative about why we should believe that p. Even if one argues that "I am inclined to think that p and things that I am inclined to think are very often true. So, in the absence of reason to think not-p, I am justified in thinking p," we are entitled to ask why one is inclined to think that p.

However, the non-doxastic or seeming account of intuition can do this. For example, a belief can be based on an intellectual seeming with the same content. So, if we regard intuition as defeasible evidence for its content, having an intuition that p can justify us in believing that p. Even if the disposition or inclination accounts of intuition can work in some cases, seemings can do this job better.

Having said that, then, we can have a new account of self-evident propositions consistent with the seeming account of intuition. I now revise the Audian account of self-evidence. In this new account, since intuitions (construed as seemings) have the upper hand, the self-evidence account is based on intuition but not vice versa. I call this account

> *The Seeming Account of Self-evidence*: A self-evident proposition (P) is a truth such that

(a) Attaining an adequate understanding of P gives one an intuition (construed as seeming) about P.

(b) The intuition (construed as seeming) about P, on the basis of an adequate understanding of P, is what provides a justification for believing P.

(c) If one forms a belief about P, on the basis of an intuition (construed as seeming) about P, then one knows P.

But how is it possible that forming a belief on the basis of both an adequate understanding and intuition can be remained non-inferential? This certainly depends on how we formulate our accounts of adequate understanding and intuition. As I explained before, my preferred account of intuition is a non-doxastic one and the non-doxastic account of intuition does not make our beliefs inferential. I also explained how adequate understanding can lead us to be non-inferentially justified if we construe them in terms of extracting the meaning of the constituents, be able to use the terms correctly and ability to draw inferences. For example, if I am considering a self-evident proposition, e.g. "All Xs are Ys," I need to adequately understand it, of course. However, understanding it requires at least knowing the meaning of "all," "Xs," "are" and "Ys." To know the meaning of a concept involves knowing how to use it to make inferences. So, to test whether I adequately understand the elements of the self-evident proposition, I might need to see if I can use each of the terms to draw inferences. The propositions in which I try to use the terms will probably be other than the self-evident proposition whose meaning I am trying to adequately understand. This exercise of testing my adequate understanding of the concepts in the self-evident proposition I am trying to adequately understand is a kind of thinking. But such thinking is not a matter of inferring "All Xs are Ys" from other propositions. So, while it is true that I might have to test my ability to draw inferences using the concepts in the target self-evident proposition, it is not true that these inferences are being offered in support of, or as arguments to, the target self-evident proposition.

So, even if we form a belief based on an intuition that is presented (given) by attaining an adequate understanding (or reflection), there is no need to involve inferences in order to be inferentially justified. Therefore, we can believe a self-evident proposition on the basis of intuition and adequate understanding while being non-inferentially justified. If we have adequate understanding of conceptual meaning, i.e. mere semantic understanding, this gives us an intuition (construed as seeming) and we take this to be grounds for believing the self-evident propositions.

Thus, we have the justification of self-evident propositions on the basis of the seeming, which comes from the proposition's conceptual semantic meaning.

However, we should bear in mind that the seeming account of self-evidence does not entail that all intuitive propositions are self-evident as this is obviously wrong. For example, when I say, "I hate this weather" or "it is my duty to help my mother when she is in need" or "abortion is wrong," they are intuitive for me but for sure not self-evident. Without this qualification we cannot have a tenable account of self-evidence. Not all intuitive propositions are self-evident; only the propositions whose seeming true is based on adequate understanding or reflection *can be* self-evident. Nevertheless, there are some basic explanatory intuitive moral propositions that normative ethicists consider as self-evident, but which vary from one normative moral theory to another. Hence, determining which intuitive propositions are self-evident depends on our moral normative theory. But how?

Many moral intuitionists assumed that belief about *pro tanto* duties were both epistemologically and metaphysically/explanatorily foundational. However, there are some moral philosophers such as Tim Scanlon, Robert Audi, Brad Hooker and Derek Parfit who think that moral intuitionists do not have a knockdown argument that all *pro tanto* duties have these statuses. They think that *pro tanto* duties might or might not be epistemologically or metaphysically/explanatorily foundational. These philosophers think that *pro tanto* duties are not metaphysically/explanatorily foundational because they derive their moral justification from the Categorical Imperative, or a Contractualist first principle, or a Rule-Consequentialist first principle. For such philosophers, the first principles are all the most basic propositions.[51]

The seeming account of self-evidence, unlike Audi's, is not truth-entailing. Rather, it is justification-entailing. This is because the seeming account of self-evident propositions is based on seemings and intuitions in terms of the seeming

---

[51] Note, I am not claiming that what is most *basic* in terms of normative justification must also be *self-evident*, which is an epistemological matter. Must the first principle be self-evident? Well, it must be attractive in its own right, but various alternative candidate first principles are attractive in their own right and yet are not consistent with one another. If self-evident propositions have to be consistent with one another, then not all these attractive alternative candidate first principles are self-evident; indeed, it remains an open question whether any of these are. We should bear in mind that being basic or foundational can be an epistemic matter or a matter of normative metaphysics. Contractualism and Rule-Consequentialism, for example, cannot be plausibly claimed to be epistemologically basic but they are claimed to be foundational in terms of the normative justification of rules and actions.

account cannot be justified but instead can be explained. Having an intuition justifies our belief in the proposition's content but having an intuition cannot be justified. However, one can explain why a certain proposition seems to be true but cannot justify its seeming so.

According to the seeming account of self-evidence, beliefs in self-evident propositions that are based on intuition can be justified. We do not need anything other than intuitions of such propositions, presented by sufficient understanding, to justify our belief in them. However, when we say that self-evident propositions can be justified by moral intuition, this does not entail that some other ways of justification, e.g. argument, are ruled out.

The seeming account of self-evident propositions thus provides salvation for my favoured intuition theory. The seeming account of self-evident propositions is grounded in intuitions as seemings, which I think is the right account of intuitions, in contrast to Audi's account. Nevertheless, we can adopt some elements of Audi's account to explain why sufficient understanding is necessary for having self-evident propositions. Although it is the intellectual seeming that justifies belief in self-evident propositions, the seeming must be based upon sufficient understanding. Having sufficient understanding means that we should at least be able to extract the conceptual constituents and have an ability to make inferences *from* the proposition in question.

Seeming must be based upon sufficient understanding because some things may seem true to us just because we do not have an adequate understanding of them. For example, suppose someone tells a kid: "if all As are Bs, and no Cs are Bs, then no Cs are A." Anyone who adequately understands the proposition can be presented by a seeming that the proposition is true. But how can a kid be presented by a seeming when the kid does not understand it adequately?

As another example, suppose that I tell someone, in Persian, that "rape is absolutely wrong." If one does not understand any Persian words, how can one be presented by a seeming that the proposition is true? Seemings are presented to us based upon our adequate understanding, although this does not make our beliefs based on seeming inferential. If by adequate understanding we mean something that is not engaged with argument, then seemings and beliefs based on them can be non-inferential.

The seeming account of self-evident propositions can provide us a new explanation of what Ross might have in mind about intuition and self-evident proposition by putting words into his mouth. Ross did not use the word

"intuition." He often used the word "conviction" instead of intuition. When Ross writes that self-evident propositions are "propositions that cannot be proved, but that just as certainly need no proof," he might want to say that the intuitions about self-evident *pro tanto* principles are basic and non-inferentially justified. While having intuitions can justify belief in self-evident propositions, the having of the intuitions—having the seemings—cannot be justified. Saying that self-evident propositions can, but need not, be justified by means of argument is one thing. But to say that intuition about those self-evident propositions cannot be justified is another thing. Intuitions only give us the explanation of justifiably believing in self-evident propositions. We can have intuitions about self-evident *pro tanto* principles when we gain enough mental maturity. Ross, in the same vein, believes it is not the task of moral philosophy to *justify* beliefs about *pro tanto* duties. Rather, the task of moral philosophy is to *explain* how knowledge and justification are possible in ethics.[52]

4. Conclusion

What I have discussed here is some concerns about the account of self-evident propositions endorsed by contemporary moral intuitionists (e.g. Audi and Shafer-Landau). However, I have provided an alternative account of self-evident propositions, which I call the seeming account of self-evident propositions. Although classic and some contemporary moral intuitionists believe that the notion of self-evidence is more important than that of intuition, I think the notion of intuition is more basic if intuitions are construed as intellectual seemings.[53]

---

[52] Ross, *The Right and the Good*, 29-30. As a possible similarity, Chappell, for example, seems to read W. D. Ross's view as quasi-perceptual, although Chappell does not mention the seeming account. See Sophie-Grace Chappell, "Introduction," in *Intuition, Theory, and Anti-Theory in Ethics,* ed. Chappell.

AGAINST BOGHOSSIAN'S CASE FOR INCOMPATIBILISM

Simon DIERIG

ABSTRACT: Two major objections have been raised to Boghossian's discrimination argument for the incompatibility of externalism and self-knowledge. Proponents of the first objection claim that thoughts about "twin water" are not relevant alternatives to thoughts about water. Advocates of the second objection argue that the ability to rule out relevant alternatives is not required for knowledge. Even though it has been shown that these two objections to Boghossian's argument are misguided, it will be argued in this essay that Boghossian's discrimination argument is nevertheless untenable. Whereas the two unsuccessful objections mentioned above each focus on one of the discrimination argument's premises in isolation, the target of my criticism of Boghossian's argument is the conjunction of its third premise and the standard incompatibilist defense of its second premise.

KEYWORDS: Paul Boghossian, discrimination argument, incompatibilism, externalism, self-knowledge

I

Boghossian's discrimination argument for the incompatibility of semantic externalism and a priori self-knowledge can be stated as follows:[1] To know a priori

---

[1] See Paul A. Boghossian, "Content and Self-Knowledge," *Philosophical Topics* 17, 1 (1989): 12–14; and Ted A. Warfield, "Privileged Self-Knowledge and Externalism Are Compatible," *Analysis* 52 (1992): 234–235. The term "discrimination argument" is due to Jessica Brown, *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004), 26. For further arguments for incompatibilism, see Akeel Bilgrami, "Can Externalism Be Reconciled with Self-Knowledge?" *Philosophical Topics* 20, 1 (1993): 240; Boghossian, "Content," 22–23; Paul A. Boghossian, "Externalism and Inference," in *Rationality in Epistemology*, ed. Enrique Villanueva (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1992), 18–22; Paul A. Boghossian, "What the Externalist Can Know A Priori," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 97 (1997): 165–166; Jessica Brown, "The Incompatibility of Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access," *Analysis* 55 (1995): 152–155; Jessica Brown, "Reliabilism, Knowledge, and Mental Content," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 100 (2000): 118, 121, and 128; Brown, *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge*, 121 and 123; Anthony Brueckner, "Scepticism about Knowledge of Content," *Mind* 99 (1990): 448; Anthony Brueckner,

that p is the case, one has to be able to rule out a priori all relevant alternatives to p. But Oscar, our protagonist, cannot rule out a priori that he thinks that twater is wet. For if he were thinking that twater is wet, things would seem to him exactly as they seem to him in reality. (This is the standard incompatibilist justification for the second premise.[2]) Moreover, the proposition that Oscar thinks that twater is wet is a relevant alternative to the fact that he thinks that water is wet. Therefore, Oscar does not know a priori that he thinks that water is wet.[3]

Two major objections have been leveled at this argument. According to the first objection, the proposition that Oscar thinks that twater is wet is not a *relevant* alternative to the fact that he thinks that water is wet.[4] The third premise of Boghossian's argument is therefore mistaken. Proponents of the second chief objection to the discrimination argument hold that the first premise of this argument is wrong: The ability to rule out relevant alternatives is, according to

---

"Knowledge of Content and Knowledge of the World," *The Philosophical Review* 103 (1994): 327–328; Keith Butler, "Externalism, Internalism, and Knowledge of Content," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 57 (1997): 787–788; and Michael McKinsey, "Anti-Individualism and Privileged Access," *Analysis* 51 (1991): 15.

[2] See, for example, Brueckner, "Scepticism," 448.

[3] Here and in what follows I assume familiarity with Putnam's and Burge's twin earth thought experiments and the relevant-alternatives approach to knowledge developed by Dretske and Goldman. The classical sources for twin earth are Hilary Putnam, "The Meaning of 'Meaning'," in *Mind, Language and Reality. Philosophical Papers, Volume 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975); Tyler Burge, "Individualism and the Mental," in *Studies in Metaphysics*, eds. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979); Tyler Burge, "Other Bodies," in *Thought and Object. Essays on Intentionality,* ed. Andrew Woodfield (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982); and Tyler Burge, "Intellectual Norms and Foundations of Mind," *The Journal of Philosophy* 83 (1986): 697-720. For the relevant-alternatives account, see Fred Dretske, "Epistemic Operators," *The Journal of Philosophy* 67 (1970): 1007-1023; and Alvin I. Goldman, "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* 73 (1976): 771-791.

[4] See Warfield, "Privileged Self-Knowledge," 234–235. For further discussion of this objection, see Peter Ludlow, "Externalism, Self-Knowledge, and the Prevalence of Slow Switching," *Analysis* 55 (1995): 46–49; Brown, *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge*, 138–142; Sanford Goldberg, "Brown on Self-Knowledge and Discriminability," *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* 87 (2006): 310–311; Mikkel Gerken, "Conceptual Equivocation and Epistemic Relevance," *Dialectica* 63 (2009): 124–131; and Simon Dierig, "The Discrimination Argument Revisited," *Erkenntnis* 72 (2010): 75–78.

them, not necessary for knowledge. To support this thesis, they draw on Burge's account of self-knowledge.[5]

Although it has been argued persuasively that the two objections just outlined are not compelling, it will be shown in this essay that Boghossian's discrimination argument is nevertheless untenable.[6] Whereas the two unsuccessful objections sketched above focus on either the first or the third premise of Boghossian's argument, that is, on one of its premises in isolation, my criticism of the discrimination argument is targeted on the conjunction of its third premise and the standard incompatibilist defense of its second premise. I will attempt to make a case for the claim that there is a conflict between the third premise—which says that the twater thought is a relevant alternative to the water thought—and the counterfactual, meant to support the second premise, that if Oscar were thinking that twater is wet, things would seem to him exactly as they seem to him in reality. Before I can present my argument for this claim, some more stage-setting is necessary. In particular, it must be explained in more detail what the notion of a *relevant* alternative amounts to and how Boghossian defends his claim that the twater thought is a *relevant* alternative to the water thought.

In his essay "Discrimination and Perceptual Knowledge," Goldman contrives the following, now famous, thought experiment:[7] While driving in the country, Henry comes to believe that a building he drives past is a barn. Henry has normal eyesight, the building is in plain view and it is in fact a barn. Given this description

---

[5] See Tyler Burge, "Individualism and Self-Knowledge," *The Journal of Philosophy* 85 (1988): 649-663; and Tyler Burge, "Our Entitlement to Self-Knowledge," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 96 (1996): 91-116. The second objection to the discrimination argument has been called "the standard strategy" of criticizing Boghossian's argument because a number of philosophers think that it is an appropriate rejoinder to this argument (see Butler, "Externalism," 780–783 and 790). Proponents of the standard strategy are, for example, Burge, Stalnaker, Falvey and Owens, and Goldberg (see Burge, "Individualism and Self-Knowledge;" Robert Stalnaker, "Narrow Content," in *Propositional Attitudes. The Role of Content in Logic, Language, and Mind,* eds. C. Anthony Anderson and Joseph Owens (Stanford: Center for the Study of Language and Information, 1990); Kevin Falvey and Joseph Owens, "Externalism, Self-Knowledge, and Skepticism," *The Philosophical Review* 103 (1994): 107-137; Sanford Goldberg, "The Dialectical Context of Boghossian's Memory Argument," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 35 (2005): 135-148; and Goldberg, "Brown on Self-Knowledge").

[6] For incompatibilist responses to the first objection, see footnote 4. For a critique of the second objection, see Simon Dierig, "The Discrimination Argument and the Standard Strategy," *Grazer Philosophische Studien* 90 (2014): 213–230.

[7] See Goldman, "Discrimination," 772–773.

of the situation, it is perfectly natural to say that Henry knows that the object he passes by is a barn. But now consider a slightly different scenario which perfectly resembles the situation just depicted with the sole exception that the countryside Henry is driving through is full of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns which cannot be distinguished under normal conditions from real barns. With regard to this new scenario, we would no longer describe Henry as knowing that the building he goes past is a barn even though it actually is a genuine barn.

According to Goldman, a relevant-alternatives epistemologist will explain why we ascribe knowledge in the first but not in the second situation as follows:[8] In the first scenario, Henry cannot rule out the possibility that the object he drives past is a papier-mâché facsimile of a barn. But this does not prevent us from ascribing knowledge to him because, first, the proposition that the building he is looking at is a papier-mâché barn is not a *relevant* alternative to the fact that the object in question is a genuine barn and, second, it is not every conceivable alternative, but only *relevant* alternatives, that must be excluded in order for a knowledge ascription to be true.

The second situation differs importantly from the first in that the proposition that the object Henry goes past is a papier-mâché facsimile of a barn is now a relevant alternative to the fact that the building before him is a barn. What makes this proposition a *relevant* alternative is the presence of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns in Henry's surroundings. Yet, if the proposition that the object Henry passes by is a papier-mâché barn is a relevant alternative, one has to conclude from his inability to rule out this proposition and the principle that knowledge requires the ability to rule out relevant alternatives that, in the second situation, he does not know that the building he is looking at is a barn.

To apply the relevant-alternatives approach to the twin earth scenario and to support the third premise of his argument, Boghossian imagines that our protagonist Oscar travels back and forth between earth and twin earth and stays on twin earth long enough to acquire the twin earthian concept *twater*.[9] On earth Oscar thinks that water is wet, whereas on twin earth he thinks that twater is wet. Just as the *actual presence* of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns in the area Henry is driving through makes the proposition that the object he is looking at is a papier-mâché barn a *relevant* alternative, so the fact that Oscar *actually* thinks on twin

---

earth that twater is wet makes the proposition that he thinks that twater is wet a *relevant* alternative to the fact that he thinks on earth that water is wet.

II

Having explained the notion of a relevant alternative and, in particular, the relation between relevance and "actuality," I can now raise my objection to the discrimination argument. It consists of four steps. First, if the proposition that Oscar thinks that twater is wet, rather than that water is wet, is a *relevant* alternative, it must be "actual," that is, Oscar must have thought, at some time in his not-too-remote past, that twater is wet, but not that water is wet. From the consequent of this conditional it follows that our protagonist has recently been on a planet on which there is no H_2O, but only XYZ. For want of better terminology, I shall from now on refer to this planet as "twin earth." To the *counterfactual* counterpart of actual earth which *only* differs from earth in that all H_2O is replaced with XYZ I shall from now on refer as "counterfactual twin earth." So armed, the claim which corresponds to the first step of my objection can be stated in the following way: If the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant, then it is actual, that is, he has recently been on twin earth, thinking that twater is wet.

Second, if twin earth does not exist in reality, the closest counterfactual situation in which our protagonist does not think the water but rather the twater thought is one in which he lives on counterfactual twin earth, i.e., on a counterfactual counterpart of actual earth which only differs from earth in that all H_2O is replaced with XYZ. But if twin earth exists in reality, it can be argued that the closest counterfactual situation in which Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is a situation in which he lives on twin earth, rather than on counterfactual twin earth. The argument runs like this: If twin earth exists in reality, the closest counterfactual situation in which Oscar lives on twin earth is closer to the actual world than the closest counterfactual situation in which huge amounts of a certain substance, viz. H_2O, are replaced on earth with a different substance, viz. XYZ, and Oscar lives on earth. But the set of counterfactual situations in which our protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought is identical to the set of counterfactual situations of the two kinds just mentioned. Thus, if twin earth exists in reality, the closest counterfactual situation in which

Oscar has the twater instead of the water thought is one in which he lives on twin earth, rather than on the envisaged counterpart of earth.

Third, on the assumption that twin earth exists in the actual world, both earth and twin earth exist in reality. But, for all we know, there are no two planets in the actual world which are phenomenal duplicates of each other. Hence, provided that twin earth exists in reality, twin earth is (unlike counterfactual twin earth) not a phenomenal duplicate of earth. From this it follows that (a) if twin earth is real, the following counterfactual is true: If Oscar were on twin earth, he would not have the same "pure phenomenological feels"[10] as he actually has. But if he would not have the qualitative mental states he actually has if he were on twin earth, then it is a fortiori true that he would not have the qualitative mental states he actually has if he were not only on a different planet than in reality (i.e., on twin earth rather than on earth) but, moreover, had different thoughts than in reality (i.e., the twater instead of the water thought). The following conditional is therefore true as well: (b) If the counterfactual which makes up the consequent of the conditional (a) is true, the subsequent counterfactual is also true: If Oscar were on twin earth, thinking the twater instead of the water thought, he would not have the qualitative mental states he actually has. The conditionals (a) and (b) together imply (c) that given that twin earth exists in the actual world, the following counterfactual is true: If our protagonist were on twin earth, thinking the twater instead of the water thought, he would not have the qualitative mental states he actually has.

Fourth, from what was said in the second step of my objection it can be inferred that if twin earth exists in reality, Oscar would be on twin earth if he had the twater instead of the water thought. From this conditional and the conditional argued for in step 3 one can conclude, using only propositional logic and the inference rule

$$\chi \,\square\!\!\rightarrow\! \varphi, \ \chi \ \& \ \varphi \,\square\!\!\rightarrow\! \psi \ \Rightarrow \ \chi \,\square\!\!\rightarrow\! \psi,^{11}$$

that given that twin earth exists in the actual world, Oscar would not have the qualitative mental states he actually has if he had the twater instead of the water thought. Finally, from this claim and the contention argued for in the first step of my objection it follows that if the proposition that our protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant, it is wrong that he would have the

---

[10] Burge, "Individualism and Self-Knowledge," 653.

[11] See David Lewis, *Counterfactuals* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1973), 32–35.

qualitative mental states he actually has if he had the twater instead of the water thought. Thus, either this counterfactual is mistaken, or thinking the twater instead of the water thought is not a relevant alternative to thinking the water thought. That is, one of two has to go: either the standard incompatibilist justification for the second premise of the discrimination argument or its third premise.

<div align="center">III</div>

The objection to the discrimination argument raised in the previous section will now be elaborated and further clarified by responding to a number of incompatibilist rejoinders. *First rejoinder:* One premise of the objection presented above is that the set of counterfactual situations in which Oscar thinks that twater is wet, rather than that water is wet, comprises only situations in which he lives on twin earth and situations in which huge amounts of a certain substance, viz. H_2O, have been replaced on earth with a different substance, viz. XYZ, and he lives on earth. But there is a third category of counterfactual situations in which our protagonist has the twater instead of the water thought, namely situations in which he is on his journey from twin earth to earth.

Let us grant for the sake of the argument that if twin earth exists in reality, the closest "journey situation" is closer to the actual world than all other counterfactual situations of the three categories in question. It follows that on the assumption that twin earth is actual, the closest counterfactual situation in which Oscar has the twater instead of the water thought is one in which he is on his journey from twin earth to earth. But on this journey our protagonist would not have the same "pure phenomenological feels" as he has in reality because he would be exposed to different sensory input. Therefore, given that twin earth exists in reality, Oscar would have different qualitative mental states if he had the twater instead of the water thought.

Second rejoinder: An advocate of the objection leveled in the preceding section must assume that XYZ is not water. For if XYZ were water, Oscar would not only have the twater but also the water belief on twin earth (and of course also on counterfactual twin earth). Yet it might be argued that XYZ *is* water because it is a colourless, tasteless etc. liquid.

I reply that if the English word "water" is synonymous with the expression "colourless, tasteless etc. liquid," the same will be true for the Twin English word "water." From this it follows that the English as well as the Twin English

expression "water" have the same meaning. Since the English neologism "twater" is stipulated to have the same meaning as the Twin English word "water," it can be concluded that the English expressions "water" and "twater" are synonymous. But synonymous expressions can be substituted *salva veritate* in belief contexts. Thus, it is impossible that Oscar believes that twater is wet without at the same time believing that water is wet. It follows that the counterfactual "If Oscar had the twater instead of the water thought, he would have the qualitative mental states he actually has" lacks a truth value and cannot therefore be employed to justify the second premise of the discrimination argument.

One might object that the principle that synonymous expressions can be substituted *salva veritate* in belief contexts must be dismissed because Mates has shown that it is faulty regarding higher-order belief contexts and, more importantly, Burge has argued that it is even wrong regarding simple, first-order belief contexts.[12] According to Burge, a person who misunderstands arthritis to be simply a rheumatoid ailment can believe that she has arthritis in her thigh without believing that she has an inflammation of joints in her thigh. In response to this objection, it suffices to point out that, first, the belief contexts in our example are, unlike the belief contexts in Mates' examples, not higher-order contexts and that, second, our example does not involve incomplete understanding of one of the pertinent expressions, as does Burge's arthritis case.

Third rejoinder: The first step of the objection to Boghossian's discrimination argument is flawed. It does not follow from the claim that Oscar has thought, at some time in his not-too-remote past, the twater instead of the water thought that he has recently been on twin earth before travelling to earth. Saying the sentence "Water is wet" inwardly to oneself while having causal contact to twater on twin earth is not the only way of thinking the twater instead of the water thought. Another way is to say the sentence "*Twater* is wet" inwardly to oneself, regardless of whether one has causal contact to twater.

The neologism "twater" is only known to philosophers who are acquainted with twin earth thought experiments of the Putnam–Burge variety. The third rejoinder therefore works only for those few cases in which our protagonist is such a philosopher. But this means that my objection to the discrimination argument is

---

[12] See Benson Mates, "Synonymity," in *Semantics and the Philosophy of Language*, ed. Leonard Linsky (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1952), 125; Tyler Burge, "Belief and Synonymy," *The Journal of Philosophy* 75 (1978): 119-138; and Burge, "Individualism and the Mental."

successful in the vast majority of cases in which no knowledge of the Putnam–Burge story about twin earth is available.

Fourth rejoinder: Boghossian argues that if the proposition that his protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought is actual, then it is relevant. What is claimed to be true in the first step of the objection raised above is, however, the *converse* conditional that if the proposition just mentioned is relevant, it has to be actual. Whereas the former conditional, endorsed by Boghossian, is fairly unproblematic (because it can be supported by analogy to the barn example), the latter conditional is much more dubious. For if the proposition in question is relevant, one can explain this by drawing on the fact that Oscar *believes* this proposition to be true. It is therefore wrong to suppose that if the proposition in question is relevant, this can only be explained with recourse to the assumption that it is actual. Thus, we lack any reason for claiming that the proposition in question has to be actual if it is relevant.

One way to impugn this rejoinder is to deny Lewis' "rule of belief," according to which a proposition is relevant if the protagonist believes that it is true.[13] But even if Lewis' rule is correct, it can be shown as follows that the fourth rejoinder fails. Remember that compatibilism is the view that both externalism and the doctrine that we have a priori self-knowledge are true. In cases in which the protagonist does not believe that she has a particular thought this view is obviously wrong since in these cases she does of course not possess a priori knowledge of the thought in question. Compatibilism and its negation, incompatibilism, should therefore be construed as claims which concern only situations in which the protagonist believes that she has the thought in question. With regard to our protagonist Oscar this means that he must be envisaged as believing that he thinks that water is wet. However, from the assumption that he has this belief it can be inferred that he does not believe that he does not think that water is wet. From this it follows, in turn, that he does not believe the proposition "Oscar does not think that water is wet but rather that twater is wet." If this proposition is relevant, this cannot therefore be explained by falling back on the assumption that our protagonist believes it to be true. In brief, the fourth incompatibilist rejoinder founders.

---

13 See David Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," in *Papers in Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 428–429.

293

IV

Fifth rejoinder: Admittedly, if the proposition in question is relevant, this cannot be the case because our protagonist believes it to be true. But there are plenty of other criteria of relevance apart from Goldman's principle of actuality and Lewis' rule of belief. As long as it has not been shown that one cannot explain by invoking one of them why the proposition in question is relevant, if it is relevant, one cannot legitimately reason from the claim that this proposition is relevant to the contention that it is actual.

To counter this challenge, I will examine in this section those principles of relevance advanced by the chief proponents of the relevant-alternatives account of knowledge which have not yet been considered. It will be argued that these principles are (with one exception) either untenable because they invite scepticism or contextualism, or cannot be used to explain why the proposition in question is relevant—if it is relevant. It follows that in case the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant, this must be explained with recourse to Goldman's principle of actuality, the only remaining principle of relevance, and to the assumption that it is fulfilled in the case of our protagonist (I am simplifying somewhat). The upshot of my argument is that if the proposition in question is relevant, it must be actual. In other words, the claim which corresponds to the first step of my objection to the discrimination argument is true.

Let me begin my inquiry into the not yet discussed rules of relevance with the principle of relevancy put forward by Dretske in his seminal essay "Epistemic Operators." Dretske writes: "A relevant alternative is an alternative that might have been realized in the existing circumstances if the actual state of affairs had not materialized."[14] There are (at least) two ways to understand this statement. On the face of it, Dretske claims that an alternative q to p is relevant iff were p wrong, q *might* be the case. If this claim is true, sceptical hypotheses like Descartes' deceiving-god or Putnam's brain-in-a-vat hypothesis are relevant alternatives. To see this, suppose that p is the true proposition that I am sitting on a chair in Jerusalem and q is the proposition that I am a brain in a vat. It follows from Dretske's relevance criterion, as interpreted above, that the latter proposition is relevant iff the following is true: If I were not sitting on a chair in Jerusalem, I *might* be a brain in a vat. Intuitively, this counterfactual is true. Thus, the brain-

---

[14] Dretske, "Epistemic Operators," 1021.

in-a-vat hypothesis is a relevant alternative. But this is, of course, capitulation to scepticism.

The way Dretske applies his criterion of relevance to examples, however, suggests the following second reading of it: An alternative q to p is relevant iff were p wrong, q *would* be the case.[15] Interpreted in this way, Dretske's principle does not invite scepticism. For the counterfactual "If I were not sitting on a chair in Jerusalem, I *would* be a brain in a vat" is clearly wrong. But can one draw on Dretske's principle to explain why the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant—if it is relevant? This question must be answered in the negative. For the closest counterfactual situation in which our protagonist does not think that water is wet is not a situation in which he is on twin earth or on counterfactual twin earth and therefore thinks the twater instead of the water thought, but is rather a situation in which he lives on earth and says a different sentence inwardly to himself. Accordingly, the counterfactual "If Oscar did not think that water is wet, he would think the twater instead of the water thought" is wrong.

In sum, the first version of Dretske's principle of relevancy is mistaken since it leads to scepticism. The second version of Dretske's principle does not invite scepticism but, since the counterfactual in question is wrong, cannot be used to explain why the proposition "Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought" is relevant, if it is relevant.

One may level the objection that the "might" in Dretske's principle of relevance has been misunderstood. Following Lewis, one may claim that the counterfactual "If p were wrong, q *might* be the case" has to be analyzed as "*It is false that* if p were wrong, q *would not* be the case."[16] Given this analysis of the might-counterfactual (in terms of the would-counterfactual), the conditional "If I were not sitting on a chair in Jerusalem, I might be a brain in a vat" is not true, as alleged above, but false. For the counterfactual "If I were not sitting on a chair in Jerusalem, I would not be a brain in a vat" is true. But in case the conditional "If I were not sitting on a chair in Jerusalem, I might be a brain in a vat" is wrong, the first variant of Dretske's principle does not imply, together with true additional premises, that the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis is relevant. Hence, the first version of Dretske's criterion, correctly understood, does not lead to scepticism.

---

[15] See Dretske, "Epistemic Operators," 1021, fn. 6; see also Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 175.

[16] See Lewis, *Counterfactuals*, 2.

But can one fall back on this criterion to explain why the proposition that Oscar has the twater instead of the water thought is relevant—if it is relevant? Intuitively, it is clear that Oscar would not have the twater instead of the water thought if he did not think that water is wet. Given Lewis' analysis, it follows that it is false that if our protagonist did not think that water is wet, he might think the twater instead of the water thought. Thus, in case Dretske's counterfactual principle is understood in Lewis' style, one cannot use it to explain why the proposition "Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought" is relevant, if it is relevant.

In a later essay, Dretske advances a modal criterion for relevance, according to which an alternative p is relevant iff it is a genuine possibility that p is the case.[17] Dretske does not explain in more detail what he has in mind when he talks of "genuine possibilities." All he says is that possibility in his sense is "objective" and does not amount to logical possibility. From this it follows that it can be understood either as metaphysical or as nomological possibility. If it is understood as metaphysical possibility, it can be inferred from Dretske's principle, together with the true claim that the proposition "I am deceived by an evil demon or a mad scientist" is metaphysically possible, that this proposition is a relevant alternative. That is, if the notion of possibility incorporated in Dretske's principle is the notion of metaphysical possibility, this principle invites scepticism and is therefore untenable.

If, on the other hand, possibility in Dretske's sense is nomological possibility, his principle cannot be invoked to explain why the proposition "Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought" is relevant—if it is relevant. This can be shown as follows: Thinking the twater instead of the water thought requires causal contact to XYZ, that is, to a substance which has the same phenomenological properties as H_2O, but a completely different chemical composition. But, as far as we can tell, it contradicts the laws of nature that such a substance exists. Thus, it is nomologically impossible that our protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought.[18]

---

[17] See Fred Dretske, "The Pragmatic Dimension of Knowledge," *Philosophical Studies* 40 (1981): 376–378.

[18] In addition to the modal criterion of relevance just discussed, Dretske examines, in the paper mentioned above, four other rules of relevance (see Dretske, "The Pragmatic Dimension," 373–376). None of them can be employed to explain why the proposition "Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought" is relevant, if it is relevant. Due to limitations of space, I cannot

A counterfactual principle of relevance different from the one proposed by Dretske has been suggested by Luper. He holds that "an alternative to p, A, is *relevant* (relative to S and S's situation) if and only if: RA: In S's circumstances, A might hold (i.e., it is false that: given S's circumstances A would not hold)."[19] This principle may or may not be true. But even if true, one cannot explain on its basis why the proposition (or alternative) that Oscar has the twater instead of the water thought is relevant—if it is relevant. To see this, it has to be borne in mind that Oscar's circumstances encompass his interactions with his H_2O-containing environment. From this it follows that given our protagonist's circumstances he would not have the twater instead of the water thought. In other words, the right-hand side of Luper's principle is wrong if A is the proposition "Oscar has the twater instead of the water thought." One cannot therefore explain with the aid of Luper's principle why this proposition is relevant, if it is relevant.

In addition to his principle of actuality, Goldman espouses three other rules of relevance.[20] The first of them says that if it is likely or probable that a particular alternative obtains (rather than the actual state of affairs), it amounts to a relevant alternative. Can one explain by drawing on this rule why the proposition "Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought" is relevant—if it is relevant? The notion of probability presupposed here is not the notion of objective probability—i.e., relative frequency—but rather the notion of subjective probability—i.e., degree of belief. For our protagonist's thinking the twater instead of the water thought at a particular time is a particular event (or proposition), and particular events cannot be objectively probable, but only subjectively probable. Only repeatable event or proposition types can be objectively probable.

The notion of subjective probability, or degree of belief, can in our context be understood in two ways, depending on whether the pertinent degree of belief is that of our thought experiment's protagonist or that of us philosophers who think about the thought experiment. In the following, it will be argued that the proposition in question is not subjectively probable, no matter which of the two interpretations of subjective probability is chosen.

---

elaborate on this here.

[19] Steven Luper, "Dretske on Knowledge Closure," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 84 (2006): 380; see also Steven Luper(-Foy), "The Epistemic Predicament: Knowledge, Nozickian Tracking, and Scepticism," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 62 (1984): 46–48.

[20] See Goldman, "Discrimination," 776.

Suppose, first, that the relevant degree of belief is our protagonist's degree of belief. In my reply to the fourth rejoinder, I argued that Oscar must be envisaged as believing that he thinks that water is wet. But if he has this belief, he does not believe that he does not think that water is wet. From this it can be inferred that Oscar does not believe that the proposition "Oscar does not think that water is wet, but rather that twater is wet" is true. His degree of belief in this proposition is therefore not (sufficiently) high. Given the first interpretation of subjective probability, the proposition in question is accordingly not subjectively probable.

Suppose, then, that the second interpretation of subjective probability is true: The pertinent degree of belief is the degree of belief of us philosophers who think about the thought experiment. From the fact that we know for sure that Oscar thinks the water thought it can be concluded that we also know for sure that the proposition "Oscar has the twater instead of the water thought" is wrong. Our degree of belief in this proposition is therefore zero. Not only on the first, but also on the second interpretation of subjective probability this proposition is thus not subjectively probable. But this means that one cannot use Goldman's rule of probability to explain why the proposition in question is relevant, if it is relevant.

According to Goldman's second principle of relevance, a proposition is relevant if the situation in which it obtains is similar to the actual situation. There are two problems with this principle. The first problem is that there is not only one possible situation in which a given proposition obtains. Therefore, the question arises which possible situation or set of possible situations is meant. One natural answer would be that the possible situations to be specified are those which are closest to the actual world. The second principle would then read as follows: A proposition is relevant if the closest possible worlds in which it obtains are similar to the actual world.

There is, however, a second difficulty with Goldman's principle which cannot be resolved that easily. It pertains to the concept of *similarity* between counterfactual situations or possible worlds. We have a clear idea of when a situation or possible world resembles another *in a certain respect*. We have a less clear, but still fairly clear idea of when a possible world is *more similar* to the actual world than another possible world. But we are almost always at a loss when it comes to deciding whether a particular world is *similar simpliciter* to another possible world or to reality. To illustrate this difficulty, consider, once again, counterfactual twin earth. This situation is blatantly more similar to reality than, for example, the deceiving-god or brain-in-a-vat scenario. Moreover, it resembles

reality in a number of respects, such as the phenomenal properties of the stuff called "water" by Oscar's compatriots, but differs from reality in a number of other respects, such as the chemical composition of the stuff called "water" in our protagonist's language community. All these "similarity claims" seem fairly unproblematic. But if forced to tell whether counterfactual twin earth is similar *tout court* to the actual world, we are at a loss. We can compare counterfactual twin earth with other situations regarding their similarity to reality; and we can say in which respects it resembles, or differs from, actual earth. But when it comes to the all-or-nothing question whether counterfactual twin earth is similar to reality, we cannot come up with an answer.

It might be objected that similarity is mostly understood as coincidence in some (but not necessarily all) properties and that counterfactual twin earth is therefore clearly similar to reality. To counter this objection, it suffices to point out that, according to the proposed explanation of similarity, even brain-in-a-vat scenarios are similar to the actual world. Given Goldman's principle of similarity, it follows that the proposition that I am a brain in a vat is a relevant alternative. Thus, if the proposed explanation of similarity is correct, Goldman's principle of similarity invites scepticism and must therefore be rejected.

Goldman's third principle of relevance says that a proposition which is taken seriously by the ascriber of knowledge is relevant. This principle presupposes contextualism regarding knowledge, that is, the view that the truth conditions of knowledge attributions depend on the linguistic and psychological context of the knowledge ascriber. Powerful objections have been raised to this doctrine.[21] Whoever finds them convincing cannot endorse Goldman's third principle of relevance.

A more elaborate version of the probabilistic criterion of relevance discussed above has been defended by Cohen. It can be formulated as follows: A particular alternative or proposition p is relevant if the probability of p conditional on the subject's evidence and certain features of the circumstances is sufficiently high.[22] For the reasons already explained, the notion of probability which occurs in this principle must be understood epistemically. Cohen's principle of relevance can

---

[21] See, for example, John Hawthorne, *Knowledge and Lotteries* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2004); and Jason Stanley, *Knowledge and Practical Interests* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[22] See Stewart Cohen, "How to Be a Fallibilist," in *Epistemology*, ed. James E. Tomberlin (Atascadero: Ridgeview, 1988), 95 and 102.

therefore be restated in the following way: A proposition p is relevant if the subject's evidence and certain features of the circumstances confirm p to a sufficiently high degree.

In the second variant of the barn example, the protagonist's evidence does not confirm the proposition that the object he is driving by is a fake barn. For he has no clue that he is driving through a countryside full of papier-mâché facsimiles of barns. If Cohen's criterion is nonetheless fulfilled regarding the proposition in question, this must be because certain features of Henry's circumstances confirm this proposition. But they can do this only if they are constituted by a number of objects which are fake barns. In brief, if Cohen's principle is fulfilled regarding the proposition in question, the property of being a fake barn must be "actual."

In the same vein, it can be argued that if Cohen's criterion is fulfilled regarding the proposition "Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought," this proposition is actual: Oscar's evidence does not confirm this proposition since he does not know anything about twin earth, twater etc. If Cohen's principle is nonetheless fulfilled regarding the proposition in question, this must be because certain features of our protagonist's circumstances confirm this proposition. But they can do this only if they are constituted by Oscar's having thought the twater instead of the water thought many times in his recent past. Thus, if Cohen's principle is fulfilled regarding the proposition in question, this proposition is actual.

In addition to his "external" probabilistic principle of relevance, Cohen puts forward the following "internal" principle of relevancy: "an alternative (to q) h is relevant, if S lacks sufficient evidence (reason) to deny h, i.e., to believe not-h."[23] Because this principle invites scepticism, Cohen modifies it as follows: An alternative h is relevant if, first, S lacks sufficient evidence to believe not-h and, second, it is not the case that not-h is intrinsically rational, where a proposition is intrinsically rational iff it can be rational to believe this proposition without possessing evidence for it.[24]

Is Cohen's modified principle doing any better than his original principle when it comes to the issue of scepticism? At first glance, it might seem so. According to Cohen, it is rational to believe that we are not brains in a vat even though we have no evidence for this belief.[25] The hypothesis that we are not brains

---

[23] Cohen, "How to Be a Fallibilist," 103, see also 102.
[24] See Cohen, "How to Be a Fallibilist," 111-113.
[25] See Cohen, "How to Be a Fallibilist," 112.

in a vat is therefore intrinsically rational. It follows that the second conjunct of the amended principle's antecedent is wrong (if the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis is substituted for "h"). Hence, one cannot draw on Cohen's modified principle to argue that the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis is relevant.

The crucial premise underlying this line of argument is the claim that we do not have evidence for the belief that we are not brains in a vat or the victims of a deceiving god. But this claim is debatable. Descartes' proof of a benevolent god is meant to show that it is impossible that god deceives us; and Putnam invokes externalism to argue that it is impossible that we are brains in a vat. But even if we are reluctant to rely on Cartesian theology or on an externalist semantics, the claim that we do not possess evidence which counts against sceptical hypotheses of the brain-in-a-vat variety is questionable. Consider the following reasoning: I am sitting on a chair in Jerusalem. If I am sitting on a chair in Jerusalem, I am not a brain in a vat. Therefore, I am not a brain in a vat. This reasoning may not show that I *know* that I am not a brain in a vat. It may not constitute a *proof* of the contention that the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis is wrong. But it clearly provides me with *a reason*, albeit not a conclusive one, for believing that I am not a brain in a vat. The two premises of the above reasoning constitute *evidence*, even though not conclusive evidence, for the contention that the brain-in-a-vat hypothesis is false. Cohen's argument for the claim that the hypothesis that we are not brains in a vat is intrinsically rational is therefore unconvincing. Since no other argument for this claim is in the offing and the burden of proof is on those who endorse it, one can legitimately conclude that it is mistaken. In short, not only the original but also the modified version of Cohen's internal principle leads to scepticism.[26]

---

[26] The rules of relevance advanced by Lewis include necessary as well as sufficient conditions for relevance (see Lewis, "Elusive Knowledge," 426–435). The former are not pertinent in our context. The latter comprise the "rule of actuality," the "rule of belief," the "rule of resemblance" and the "rule of attention." It has already been shown that the rule of belief cannot be used to explain why the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant, if it is relevant (see my reply to the fourth rejoinder). As to the rules of actuality and of resemblance, they only make sense in Lewis' ontological framework, in which alternatives are not construed as propositions, but rather as possibilities. Finally, the rule of attention presupposes contextualism and is therefore problematic. The principle of relevance proposed by Stine is a necessary condition for relevance and is therefore not pertinent here (see G. C. Stine, "Skepticism, Relevant Alternatives, and Deductive Closure," *Philosophical Studies* 29 (1976): 252–253).

Simon Dierig

To sum up, the principles of relevance put forward by advocates of the relevant-alternatives approach to knowledge—with the exception of Goldman's principle of actuality and Cohen's principle of probability—are either untenable because they invite scepticism or contextualism, or cannot be used to explain why the proposition that our protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant—if it is relevant. It follows that if this proposition is relevant, this must be explained either with recourse to Goldman's principle of actuality and the assumption that it is fulfilled regarding the proposition in question, or with recourse to Cohen's principle of probability and the contention that *it* is fulfilled with regard to this proposition. But if Cohen's principle is fulfilled regarding the proposition in question, the same is true for Goldman's principle (as has been shown above). Thus, if the proposition that our protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought is relevant, it is actual. In other words, the claim which corresponds to the first step of my objection to the discrimination argument is true.

V

Sixth rejoinder: It must be admitted that the discrimination argument, as it has been reconstructed at the beginning of this essay, is untenable. But Boghossian's argument can be saved if one reformulates it by using the idiom of mental events and their contents. Consider the following *content-based* variant of the discrimination argument (e is meant to be the mental event which takes place "in" our protagonist when he occurrently thinks that water is wet):

(P1) To know a priori that p is the case, one must be able to rule out a priori all relevant alternatives to p.

(P2) Oscar cannot rule out a priori that e has the content "Twater is wet."

(P3) The proposition that e has the content "Twater is wet" is a relevant alternative to the fact that e has the content "Water is wet."

(C1) So Oscar does not know a priori that e has the content "Water is wet."

(P4) Oscar knows a priori *that e has the content "Water is wet" if he thinks that water is wet.*

(P5) Closure: If, first, one knows a priori that p and, second, one knows a priori *that if p, then q*, then one knows a priori that q.

(C2) So Oscar does not know a priori that he thinks that water is wet.

A proponent of this version of the discrimination argument is confronted with the following dilemma. Either it is possible that e has both the content "Water is wet" and the content "Twater is wet," then the premise (P3) is mistaken; or it is impossible that e has both contents just mentioned, then the standard incompatibilist defense of the premise (P2) is not true.

The second horn of this dilemma can be substantiated as follows: Mental events have their contents necessarily. It is impossible that they exist without having the content they actually have. The proposition "e has the content 'Twater is wet' " therefore implies the proposition "e has the content 'Water is wet' as well as the content 'Twater is wet'." However, by assumption it is impossible that e has these two contents simultaneously. Thus, it is impossible that e has the content "Twater is wet." But this means that the antecedent of the counterfactual "If e had the content 'Twater is wet,' everything would seem to Oscar as it seems to him in reality" is impossible. It follows that the truth value of this counterfactual is indeterminate and that it cannot therefore be used to support the premise (P2). In sum, the discrimination argument cannot be saved by employing content terminology.

Seventh rejoinder: The discrimination argument, as it has been understood so far, makes use of the notion of *ruling out* a priori certain alternatives, which are construed as propositions of a certain kind. Yet the basic intuition behind Boghossian's argument is the observation that one cannot *distinguish* a priori the water thought from the twater thought. The discrimination argument should therefore be construed as making use of the notion of an ability to *distinguish* a priori between thoughts, rather than of an ability to *rule out* a priori certain propositions. In more detail, Boghossian's argument should be reconstructed as follows: To know a priori that one thinks the thought t, one has to be able to distinguish t a priori from all thoughts t' such that the proposition that one thinks t' rather than t is a relevant alternative to the fact that one thinks t. But our protagonist Oscar cannot distinguish a priori his thought that water is wet from the thought which he would have instead of the water thought if he were on counterfactual twin earth, thinking that twater is wet. For if he were on counterfactual twin earth, thinking that twater is wet, the thought which he would think instead of the water thought, call it "t*," would have the same "pure phenomenological feels" as his real-world thought that water is wet. Moreover, the proposition that Oscar thinks t* rather than the water thought is a relevant

alternative to the fact that he thinks the water thought. Therefore, our protagonist does not know a priori that he thinks that water is wet.

The questionable premise of this line of argument is the third one. The proposition that Oscar thinks t* rather than the water thought is only relevant if it is actual, that is, if he has thought t* rather than the water thought in the recent past.[27] But the opponent of the discrimination argument can deny that Oscar has thought t* in the recent past. To dispute this, he need not deny that our protagonist has recently thought that twater is wet. On the contrary, he may grant that Oscar has thought that twater is wet in the not-too-remote past. Yet the compatibilist can insist that this thought is not identical to t*, that is, to the thought which Oscar would have instead of the water thought if he were on counterfactual twin earth, thinking that twater is wet. Of course not every thought with the content that twater is wet is identical to t*. It is the incompatibilist who needs to show that one of our protagonist's past thoughts with the content that twater is wet is identical to t*. As long as the incompatibilist does not succeed in doing this, the compatibilist is justified in claiming that the proposition that Oscar thinks t* rather than the water thought is not actual and therefore not relevant.

Eighth rejoinder: It has to be conceded that one cannot devise a convincing version of the discrimination argument by using the notion of an ability to distinguish one thought from another. But why not contrive a variant of Boghossian's argument which is based on the notion of an ability to distinguish *situations*, rather than *thoughts*? Consider the following line of reasoning:[28] To know a priori that one thinks that p, one has to be able to distinguish a priori the actual situation from all relevant counterfactual situations in which one does not think that p. But our protagonist Oscar cannot distinguish a priori the actual situation from the counterfactual situation in which he lives on counterfactual twin earth. For the "pure phenomenological feels" he has in the actual situation and those he has in this counterfactual situation are the same. Moreover, the counterfactual situation in question is a relevant counterfactual situation in which our protagonist does not think the water but rather the twater thought. Therefore, Oscar does not know a priori that he thinks that water is wet.

What is problematic about this argument is the claim that the counterfactual situation in which our protagonist lives on counterfactual twin earth is relevant. Why should one think that this counterfactual situation is relevant? One answer

---

[27] This claim can be established along the lines put forward in section IV.

[28] See Brown, *Anti-Individualism and Knowledge*, 37-45.

would be: because it is similar to reality. But does counterfactual twin earth resemble the actual world? As it has been pointed out in the preceding section, we can compare counterfactual twin earth with other counterfactual situations regarding their similarity to reality; and we can say in which respects it resembles, or differs from, actual earth. But when it comes to the question whether counterfactual twin earth is similar *tout court* to reality, we are at a loss. One cannot therefore argue that counterfactual twin earth is relevant because it is similar to the actual world.

A second answer to the above question would be that counterfactual twin earth is relevant because it is metaphysically possible. But this answer will not do either. Metaphysical possibility does not imply relevance because otherwise the brain-in-a-vat scenario, being metaphysically possible, would be relevant as well, which would be capitulation to scepticism. As to nomological possibility, it may imply relevance, but this does not help the proponent of the discrimination argument for counterfactual twin earth is not nomologically possible.

A third answer to the question raised above would be that if the proposition that our protagonist thinks the twater instead of the water thought is actual, counterfactual situations in which this proposition is true are relevant. But does one really want to claim that *all* counterfactual situations of the kind just specified are relevant if the proposition in question is actual? This question has to be answered in the negative for an affirmative answer would invite scepticism. Therefore, the question arises which counterfactual situations of the kind specified are relevant if the proposition in question is actual. The only nonarbitrary answer seems to be: those counterfactual situations of the kind specified *which are closest to reality*. One therefore arrives at the following rule of relevance: If the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is actual, the *closest* counterfactual situations in which this proposition is true are relevant. Can one fall back on this version of the principle of actuality to make a case for the claim that counterfactual twin earth is relevant?

My argument for a negative answer to this question consists of two steps. In the first step, it is shown that if the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is actual, counterfactual twin earth is not among the closest counterfactual situations in which this proposition is true. My argument for this claim rests upon three premises: First, if the proposition in question is actual, it is relevant. Second, as has been argued in section II, if the proposition in question is relevant, the closest counterfactual situations in which it is true are situations in

which our protagonist does not have the same "pure phenomenological feels" as in reality. Third, the qualitative mental states Oscar has on counterfactual twin earth and those he has in reality are the same. From these three premises it follows that if the proposition in question is actual, counterfactual twin earth is not among the closest counterfactual situations in which this proposition is true.

That brings me to the second step of my argument. The above version of the principle of actuality can only be employed to show that counterfactual twin earth is relevant if, first, the proposition that Oscar thinks the twater instead of the water thought is actual and, second, counterfactual twin earth is among the closest counterfactual situations in which this proposition is true. But it has been demonstrated in the first step of my argument that at least one of these two claims is wrong. Thus, one cannot invoke the principle of actuality to argue that counterfactual twin earth is relevant.

VI

Let me conclude by summarizing briefly what I have attempted to show in this essay. In section II, it has been argued that Boghossian's discrimination argument for the incompatibility of externalism and self-knowledge is untenable because there is a conflict between its third premise and the standard incompatibilist justification for its second premise. In sections III and IV, I have defended this objection to Boghossian's argument against various incompatibilist rejoinders. While doing this, I have examined in some detail the principles of relevance advanced by the chief proponents of the relevant-alternatives account of knowledge. Finally, in section V, three attempts to improve on the discrimination argument by reformulating it have been repudiated as unsatisfactory.

E = K
AND NON-EPISTEMIC PERCEPTION

Frank HOFMANN

ABSTRACT: Quite plausibly, epistemic justification and rationality is tied to possession of evidence. According to Williamson, one's evidence is what one knows. This is not compatible with non-epistemic perception, however, since non-epistemic perception does not require belief in what one perceives and, thus, does not require knowledge of the evidence – and, standardly, knowledge does require belief. If one non-epistemically perceives a piece of evidence, this can be sufficient for possessing it as evidence. Williamson's arguments for the necessity of belief will be discussed and rebutted. Interestingly, the view that non-epistemic perception is sufficient for possession of evidence can allow for conceptual or non-conceptual content of perception and it provides the framework for a neo-foundationalist account of epistemic justification.

KEYWORDS: epistemology, knowledge, perception, evidence

1. Introduction

What is possession of evidence? What is the evidence of a subject? – An answer to this question is urgently needed if we want to address several important questions. If epistemic justification or rationality (and excuses) depend on whether and how one bases one's beliefs on one's evidence, or how one responds to one's evidence, we need to know what evidence one has. And epistemic virtues might be defined in terms of how well or appropriate one deals with one's evidence. Ultimately, then, an account of what constitutes possession of evidence would be desirable in order to answer these questions in a systematic and theoretically adequate way.

Suppose, following Timothy Williamson, that one's evidence consists in what one knows, in short: E = K. Now focus on the case of perceptual evidence and perceptual knowledge. Then the question arises how *non-epistemic perception* fits to the equation E = K. Suppose that there is something like (conscious) perception with (conscious) representational content, fully evaluable with respect to veridicality, but without entailing (corresponding) belief. Call this kind of

perception 'non-epistemic perception,' following Fred Dretske.[1] Many have argued that such non-epistemic perception exists (including Dretske, Evans, Tye, Crane, and Peacocke, most importantly). To take up one of the many examples (one from Christopher Peacocke), suppose you are looking at a new abstract sculpture in an art museum.[2] Then you see the object to have a quite specific shape and size. You may not be in a position to capture the shape in a conceptual way by means of concepts of specific shapes (since you lack the necessary concepts for this specific shape), nor will you be able to recognize the same specific shape later on again. So plausibly, your visual state has a quite specific representational content and veridicality condition but is not (and is not accompanied by) a belief with this specific representational content and veridicality condition. This is a typical case of non-epistemic perception, and many other cases, including auditory experiences, are of the same sort.[3] But non-epistemic perception does not sit well with the equation E = K, to say the least. If there is any non-epistemic perception, it is the perfect candidate for playing an evidential role, too, albeit without itself bringing the evidence into one's belief system and, *a fortiori*, without bringing the evidence into the scope of one's knowledge. (Let us assume that knowledge entails corresponding belief, which is accepted by Williamson.)[4] One's evidence can considerably extend beyond what one knows. This is so simply because one's perception can bring one into possession of evidence without entailing corresponding belief. In other words, to non-epistemically perceive a (coarse-grained or fine-grained) fact is already good enough for possessing it as evidence. (Note that one can hold this view without having to accept false evidence, since one can hold that the evidential role of perceptual experience is restricted to the case of *genuine, veridical* perception. And here I will restrict myself to genuine, veridical perception.)

---

[1] Fred Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 30.

[2] Christopher Peacocke, "Does Perception Have a Non-conceptual Content?" *Journal of Philosophy* 98, 5 (2001): 239-264.

[3] In other cases, the content of the perception plausibly is conceptual (and so the subject possesses and exercizes suitable conceptual capacities), but there is no corresponding belief with the same content because the subject follows a sufficiently strong defeater. The classical Müller-Lyer illusion (in which the subject knows of the illusion) is probably an example of this sort.

[4] Williamson argues for the entailment in Timothy Williamson, *Knowledge And Its Limits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), ch. 1.5, and holds that belief is a kind of 'botched knowledge,' a failed attempt at knowledge (in Williamson, *Knowledge And Its Limits*, 47) and, thus, knowledge is successful belief.

This, then, is the problem for the Williamson's view that E = K. The orthodox view that knowledge requires belief is accepted by Williamson (and I will accept it here, too). So either he has to reject the existence of non-epistemic perception or, if he accepts its existence, he has to deny its evidential role. To deny the existence of non-epistemic perception is a heavy and quite unpalatable option that goes against much of recent philosophy of mind. Here I will not add anything new to this debate, but I take it that there are already quite convincing arguments in support of the existence of non-epistemic perception. (Please note that even a McDowellian accepts that one can see that p without believing that p, i.e., that there is non-epistemic perception in the intended sense. So we can add McDowell to the list of those who have argued for non-epistemic perception.[5] Of course, there is also the large group of philosophers who accept that non-epistemic perception is non-conceptual, *pace* McDowell.) If this is granted, the only remaining option for the Williamsonian view is to deny that non-epistemic perception could play the role of possession of evidence, i.e., to deny its evidential role.

Initially, however, this looks like an unattractive option as well. For why should we deny that non-epistemic perception can provide us with evidence? If perception is our fundamental source of empirical knowledge,[6] and non-epistemic perception is the most basic form of perception – perhaps, as Tyler Burge suggests, the point where mind begins[7] – how could it be so if not by giving us reasons – evidence – for empirical beliefs? *Prima facie,* it seems very plausible to accept that non-epistemic perception can play an evidential role, indeed, a very important evidential role. In addition, by allowing that non-epistemic perception can put one into possession of evidence, a potential regress problem can be circumvented. As Clayton Littlejohn has argued convincingly, if one accepts a 'doxastic requirement' for possession of evidence, one is forced into a vicious infinite regress.[8] Non-

---

[5] Pritchard also rejects the entailment from perception to belief in Duncan Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 26. See, for example, John McDowell, *Having the World in View* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009), 131; see also John McDowell, *Perception as a Capacity for Knowledge* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2011), *passim*.

[6] See, for example, Cassam on the priority of perception as a source of knowledge in Quassim Cassam, "Ways of Knowing," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 107, Part 3 (2007): 339-358.

[7] Tyler Burge, "Perception: Where Mind Begins," *Philosophy* 89, 3 (2014): 385-403.

[8] Clayton Littlejohn, "Evidence and Its Limits", in *Normativity. Epistemic and Practical*, eds. Conor McHugh, Jonathan Way, and Daniel Whiting (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018),

epistemic perception provides an elegant and simple solution that dissolves the regress immediately.

But Williamson has given arguments to the effect that possession of evidence requires belief. These arguments are not good enough to justify this claim, however. This is what I would like to argue for in the following. Accepting the idea that non-epistemic perception plays an evidential role is inconsistent with the equation E = K, and since non-epistemic perception exists *and* has an evidential role, the equation needs to be given up.

Two things should be stated explicitly from the very beginning, in order to avoid possible misunderstandings. Firstly, the evidential role of non-epistemic perception is meant to be a quite specific one. It is not the fact that the subject has a certain perception which is supposed to be the evidence. Rather, it is the *content* of the perception which is supposed to be the relevant piece of evidence. This paper will exclusively be concerned with this way of providing evidence, i.e., *the content way*. Whether the fact that someone undergoes a certain perception can be, or can provide, evidence does not matter for the present argument, and it will be entirely left open. In other words, the perceptual evidence provided by perception is always something that is perceived – an object of perception –, and not the fact that the subject has the perception.[9]

Secondly, the question of non-epistemic perception also touches upon Williamson's thesis that knowledge is the most general factive mental state and, in particular, the thesis that perception is a way of knowing.[10] It is quite clear that if *non*-epistemic perception exists, it is not a way of knowing (in Williamson's sense).[11] At most, *epistemic* perception is a way of knowing. So obviously, Williamson needs to restrict his thesis about knowledge being the most general factive mental state to *epistemic* perception if non-epistemic perception exists (assuming that knowledge requires belief). Now, there may be good *independent* arguments for thinking that knowledge is the most general factive mental state. In an overall judgment about E = K one could take these into account as indirect

---

123-24.

[9] Williamson mentions the distinction between these two ways, without objecting against it. See Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 197-200.

[10] Cf. Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, ch. 1.

[11] Williamson's conception of ways of knowing is to be sharply distinguished from Cassam's. Roughly speaking, a way of knowing according to Williamson is a determinate or specific version of the determinable knowing. According to Cassam, a way of knowing is something that explains how one knows. Cassam, "Ways of Knowing."

reasons for holding on to the equation E = K. For reasons of space, I cannot go into a discussion of these arguments. But at least, as I will argue, the acceptance of non-epistemic perception with an evidential role provides a *pro tanto* reason for rejecting the thesis that knowledge is the most general factive mental state.[12]

As already mentioned, the existence of non-epistemic perception has been argued for in the literature quite convincingly, I believe, and so will be taken as sufficiently supported. In any case, what will be addressed and discussed here is the *further* question whether non-epistemic perception plays an evidential role, granting that it exists.[13]

2. Non-epistemic Perception

Many have argued that there is non-epistemic perception (in human experience).[14] The essence of non-epistemic perception is, roughly speaking, perception without corresponding belief. The details are to some extent a matter of terminology and, perhaps, not easy to spell out precisely. But they will not matter for the argument of this paper. For the present purposes, we can characterize non-epistemic perception more precisely in the following way. Non-epistemic perception exists if there are genuine, veridical perceptions that satisfy the following conditions: (1) They have a (phenomenally conscious) representational content (2) with full, complete veridicality conditions. Thus, they are fully evaluable with respect to veridicality.[15] (3) They do not entail the corresponding belief (with the corresponding conceptual content), i.e., they are non-doxastic.[16]

---

[12] A natural alternative suggests itself: *awareness* is the most general factive mental state, and non-conceptual perceptual awareness is one kind of awareness whereas knowledge is another, conceptual form of awareness.

[13] The position to be developed in this paper is distinct from the alternative view that non-epistemic perception has an epistemic role by putting one in a position to know but without making one possess evidence. Cf., for example, Pritchard, *Epistemological Disjunctivism*, Littlejohn, "Evidence and Its Limits." The putting-one-in-a-position-to-know account is different and deserves a closer investigation which, for reasons of space, I cannot provide here.

[14] The classic is, of course, Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing*. Of the many more philosophers who are proponents of non-epistemic perceptions let me just mention Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), Michael Tye, *Ten Problems of Consciousness* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995), Tim Crane, "The Nonconceptual Content of Experience", in *The Contents of Experience*, ed. Tim Crane (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 136-157, and Christopher Peacocke, *A Study of Concepts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[15] One can reserve the notion of truth for conceptual contents, if one likes. As the generic notion

It is quite important to note the following. The characterization just given leaves it open whether the relevant contents are *conceptual* or *non-conceptual*.[17] All that is needed is the non-entailment of corresponding beliefs. Non-epistemic perception is not a way of believing. *A fortiori*, if knowledge entails corresponding belief, it is not a way of knowing. But we can leave it open whether the content of non-epistemic perception is conceptual or not. (And we will consider both versions of non-epistemic perception in due course.)

We can distinguish between genuine (veridical) perception on the one hand and other, worse cases (illusion, hallucination) on the other hand. All three cases can be phenomenal or non-phenomenal. So in principle, there could be six kinds of cases. (Whether there really is any non-phenomenal illusion and non-phenomenal hallucination can be left open for the present purposes.) The term 'perceptual experience', then, will refer to the phenomenal cases independently of which of the three sub-groups the experience belongs to (genuine perception, illusion, or hallucination). Genuine perception can be phenomenal or non-phenomenal. Here, I will be concerned mostly with genuine perception and its evidential role, not with the evidential role of the other, worse cases (illusion, hallucination).[18]

---

to cover both non-epistemic perception and states with conceptual content one can then use the notion of veridicality. This is the (only) reason why I have put the characterization in terms of 'veridicality.'

[16] The term 'non-epistemic' is therefore not entirely happy. (Dretske introduces it in Dretske, *Seeing and Knowing*, 30.) 'Non-doxastic' would do a better job. But since the term has been around and is to some extent established, I will keep it here. It does of course not decide what is at stake, namely, whether non-epistemic perception can play an evidential role.

[17] Correspondingly, it is easy or not so easy to state the contents. If the content is conceptual, it's easy. If it is non-conceptual, we have to say something like this. Suppose the content of a genuine non-epistemic perception is the state of affairs that the particular a has the property F. The 'corresponding belief,' then, would be any belief with a conceptual content that determines this state of affairs as its truth condition. But alternative conceptions are possible, such as in terms of possible worlds, for example.

[18] Factivity is a quite natural, 'organic' feature of perception. So any complaint to the effect that a "rather unnatural hybrid" (of perceptual experience and truth) has been formed would be misplaced. – Williamson raises, and is correct in raising, a similar complaint against a modification of Goldman's proposal according to which *true* propositions that the subject is non-inferentially propositionally justified in believing are the subject's evidence. See Timothy Williamson, "Replies to Critics," in *Williamson on Knowledge*, eds. Patrick Greenough and Duncan Pritchard (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 279-384.

Perceptual experiences are, as any experiences, *phenomenal* (phenomenally conscious). They have a phenomenology, a 'what it is like' to undergo them. Non-epistemic perception could be phenomenally conscious or not. Typically – for humans, at least – there is a lot of phenomenally conscious perception. The characterization of non-epistemic perception given above implies that it is phenomenally conscious (when the qualification 'phenomenally conscious' mentioned in brackets is endorsed). But one could retract from this implication, and define a kind of non-epistemic perception that need not be phenomenally conscious. We can see later whether non-phenomenal non-epistemic perception could serve our (epistemic) purposes equally well as phenomenal non-epistemic perception. For the moment, I will proceed on the assumption that non-epistemic perception is phenomenal (phenomenally conscious).

I will call the objects of non-epistemic perception 'facts.' This is meant to be quite liberal, in a broad sense. One could also speak of 'fact-like worldly items,' thus including both obtaining states of affairs or 'coarse-grained facts' and true propositions or 'fine-grained facts.' Typically, the relevant facts are facts about a concrete, middle-sized object's shape, color, texture, motion, other spatial properties, and the like.[19] They have the form of an instantiation of a property by a particular object, representable as 'a is F,' where 'a' stand for such a concrete particular and 'F' stand for one of these properties. These properties can be called 'perceptual properties,' and the corresponding facts can be called 'perceptual facts.' Thus, we can say that the relevant facts are connexes, or complexes, of concrete particulars and perceptual properties. Alternatively, we could call the objects of non-epistemic perceptions 'true propositions.' For the present purposes, it does not matter whether we choose the fact talk or the true propositions talk. Everything would depend on what conception of propositions and facts one prefers (a Russellian or a Fregean or …). And for the present purposes we do not have to decide which conception of facts and propositions is the right one. We can freely move back and forth between these two ways of talking. – Nothing really new or exciting at this point. (We will come back to the question of whether a Russellian or Fregean or… conception of propositions is more appropriate in section 6.)

---

[19] How far the perceptual properties and facts extend can be left open for present purposes. They may be rather restricted and fixed, or rather 'rich' and expandable. For a discussion of these alternatives see, for example, Susanna Siegel, *The Contents of Visual Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), who argues for the 'rich content view.'

3. Possession of Evidence

The phenomenon of non-epistemic perception brings up an interesting epistemological option. For one could hold that non-epistemically perceiving a fact makes it the case that this fact belongs to one's body of evidence. In other words, non-epistemic perception is (one kind of) possession of evidence. Intuitively, this is a very plausible view. Of course, knowing a fact may also be a way of possessing it as evidence. But in order to have the fact that p in one's body of evidence, it simply suffices to perceive it.[20] That is a way of being in possession of evidence, a truly perceptual way. One really has perceptual evidence if one enjoys non-epistemic perception.[21] (Remember our assumption that perception is always supposed to provide evidence by way of its content.)

An important observation about non-epistemic perception has already been mentioned in the introductory section: *Non-epistemic perception as possession of evidence is incompatible with Williamson's equation E = K.* The reason is simple and straightforward. If we can non-epistemically perceive a fact without having any belief to the effect that this fact exists, we can possess it as evidence without knowing it. Because non-epistemic perception does not entail (corresponding) belief, but knowledge does entail (corresponding) belief, non-epistemic perception does not entail knowledge of what one perceives. Therefore, it allows for possession of evidence without knowing the evidence. And the equation E = K is clearly meant to exclude this possibility.

Therefore, it is crucial to examine arguments to the effect that possession of evidence *requires belief.*[22] I will take a look at the arguments that Williamson has

---

[20] What's in common? – Perhaps, something like *awareness*, conceived of as a state of being properly related to a fact-like wordly item. (Awareness might be taken to be prime, in Williamson's sense.)

[21] In addition, non-epistemic perception is a way of *non-accidentally*, or *non-luckily*, being in possession of evidence. Non-lucky possession of evidence might be needed in order to get justification. In this respect, therefore, non-epistemic perception fares equally well as knowledge, arguably. But none of the following considerations will hinge on this. – In general, the view that non-epistemic perception allows for possession of evidence fits well with a view of justification as consisting in a relation to a (objective) reason.

[22] What is relevant is not merely some disposition to form the belief in question, but the actually having of it. (Dispositions to form beliefs are not sufficient for knowledge, knowledge requires actually having a belief.) And since the content of the non-epistemic perception clearly is present to the subject's mind (at least in case it is phenomenal perception), it can plausibly only be an occurrent belief.

put forward in support of the equation E = K and investigate if they provide any reason for thinking otherwise. This is the topic of the next section. (Let me add as a side remark that I find it intuitively very plausible that non-epistemic perception suffices for possession of evidence. Indeed, what else could be a better way of possessing a fact as evidence than genuine perceptual awareness of it?[23]) I will provide intuitively plausible cases of possession of evidence by non-epistemic perception within the discussion of Williamson's considerations. The rejection of Williamson's arguments and the cases go hand in hand.

4. Williamson's Arguments in Favor of Doxasticism about Possession of Evidence

Many of the arguments that Williamson has put forward in favor of the equation E=K can be accepted in the present context. Some of them concern the propositionality of evidence and the sufficiency of knowledge for possession of evidence. These arguments present no problem or objection against the proposed view. Only those arguments that concern the necessity of belief and knowledge are relevant. So what are the reasons for thinking that possession of evidence requires knowledge? I can discern two such reasons in Williamson's discussion which I will present and assess in what follows. The first reason concerns *factivity*, the second *the use of evidence as evidence*. As it will turn out soon, only the second argument concerning the use of evidence will touch upon the crucial issue directly: whether it is possible to possess evidence in the form of non-epistemic perception and, thus, without corresponding belief. I will try to show that Williamson's arguments are not successful, and I will provide cases that intuitively are cases of possession of evidence without belief.

Williamson's first reason concerns the issue of *factivity*, or the truth requirement. Possessing a proposition as evidence should be such that the proposition has to be true. Otherwise one could be in possession of a piece of

---

[23] There are so many authors in the literature who propose or suggest that perception provides evidence that I will refrain from providing a list of references. The idea is just too obvious. Interestingly, remember the title of one of Mark Johnston's papers: "Better than Mere Knowledge? …" (Mark Johnston, "Better than Mere Knowledge? The Function of Sensory Awareness", in *Perceptual Experience,* eds. Tamar Szabo Gendler and John Hawthorne (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 260-290. However, one need not go as far as to take perceptual awareness to be *better* than knowledge; they might simply be equally good. Genuine (phenomenal) non-epistemic perception is perceptual awareness; knowledge is doxastic awareness. One could let count both forms of awareness as possession of evidence.

evidence such that a truth would be excluded by one's evidence. And that seems wrong. Or as Williamson puts it:

> That propositional evidence is knowledge entails that propositional evidence is true. That is intuitively plausible; if one's evidence included falsehoods, it would rule out some truths, by being inconsistent with them. One's evidence may make some truths improbable, but it should not exclude any outright. Although we may treat false propositions as evidence, it does not follow that they are evidence. No true proposition is inconsistent with my evidence, although I may think that it is. If e is evidence for h, then e is true.[24]

So a proposition has to be true in order to be evidence. – But this argument can clearly be accepted by the proponent of non-epistemic perception, since non-epistemic perception is factive, too. This is true on both accounts of non-epistemic perception, the conceptual as well as the non-conceptual version. Non-epistemic perception has to be veridical in order to provide evidence. Remember that we have taken the term 'perception' as referring to genuine perception, and not to perceptual experience. So there is no danger of introducing false evidence.[25]

The additional reason for thinking that evidence has to be true (mentioned by Williamson in passing) – namely, that it makes good sense of adjusting one's beliefs to the evidence, since it means adjusting them to the truth – is preserved, too.[26]

A second reason concerns the entailment of belief and the *use of evidence as evidence*. This requires a more extensive discussion. To begin with, here is what Williamson says:

> The case of perception may seem to suggest that propositional evidence is not always believed. In conformity with the previous section, a piece of perceptual evidence is, for example, a proposition e that things are *that* way. According to E

---

[24] Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 202.

[25] One might wonder whether *non-veridical* perceptual *experience* could provide evidence as well (by its content, not its existence). Perhaps there is a possible view according to which even perceptual illusions can provide evidence. But this would be a view quite different from the one that I am proposing here. And I am far from convinced that it would be a plausible view, since it is not easy to see why a merely represented but not obtaining state of affairs could be evidence. A version of this view is proposed by Alvin Goldman. See Alvin Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," in *Williamson on Knowledge*, eds. Greenough and Pritchard, 73-91. Williamson has responded in Williamson, "Replies to Critics," in *Williamson on Knowledge*, eds. Greenough and Pritchard, 308-311, quite convincingly, in my view.

[26] See Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 202.

= K, my evidence includes e because I know that things are that way. But, a critic may suggest, that does not go back far enough; my evidence includes e because it is perceptually apparent to me that things are that way, whether or not I believe that they are that way. Even if I do believe e, my evidence included e before I came to believe it; according to the critic, I came to believe it because it was perceptually apparent. If 'It is perceptually apparent that A' entails 'A', then the critic's view allows that evidential propositions are always true; what it denies is that they are always believed, and therefore that they are always known.[27]

First of all, it is not entirely clear what Williamson means by 'perceptual appearance,' especially if perceptual appearances are supposed to entail the truth. Is the perceptual appearance that A (if taken as entailing the truth of A) the same as perceiving that A? It might seem so. And in the opening sentence Williamson himself speaks of 'the case of perception.' But we can be careful and allow for the possibility that even truth-entailing perceptual appearance need not be genuine perception, since we can say that veridical hallucination might be a kind of – veridical – perceptual appearance without perception.[28] No matter what exactly is addressed in Williamson's argument, however, I will take it to be concerned with genuine (non-epistemic) perception, since the present proposal is simply that genuine (non-epistemic) perception provides evidence. And we would like to find out whether anything that Williamson says speaks against this proposal.

Williamson is careful to distinguish two alternatives. Undergoing a perceptual appearance the subject might be prevented from belief by 'conceptual incapacity' or not by 'conceptual incapacity' (and, presumably, by some other reason or factor).

If my evidence includes a proposition e, then I grasp e, by section 9.5. Thus, if I fail to believe e, my problem is not conceptual incapacity.[29]

For the alternative of 'conceptual incapacity,' thus, Williamson refers back to his earlier section 9.5 where he discusses the use of evidence as evidence.

Now, the idea of 'conceptual incapacity' corresponds nicely to the view that the relevant content of perceptual experience is non-conceptual and, therefore, can be beyond the subject's conceptual capacities. For, if the perceptual appearance had a conceptual content, the subject would of course have to possess and exercise the

---

[27] Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 202.

[28] For veridical hallucination and its relation to perception, see David Lewis, "Veridical Hallucination and Prosthetic Vision," *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* 58 (1980): 239-249.

[29] Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 202.

relevant concepts, and then one could hardly see how she could be conceptually incapable of forming the corresponding belief. All that the subject is not doing is assenting to the content, and that is not a conceptual incapacity. The other alternative is that the subject does not suffer from conceptual incapacity. This is clearly so if the perceptual appearance has conceptual content. So in the following, I will proceed on the assumption that the two alternatives 'conceptual incapacity/no conceptual incapacity' correspond to the two alternatives 'non-conceptual/conceptual content of non-epistemic perception.' In any case, these two alternatives have to be considered in order to decide whether the idea that non-epistemic perception provides evidence has to face any serious problem.

Williamson's objection against the first option ('conceptual incapacity') is that *it violates the condition of grasp*: any evidence possessed must be grasped by the subject. The reason for making grasp a necessary condition consists in the role of evidence as that which is *used as evidence*:

> Since S can use S's evidence as evidence, only propositions which S grasps are S's evidence.[30]

Clearly, Williamson identifies the relevant kind of grasp with belief and, thus, with conceptual grasp (at least, on the standard assumption that beliefs are conceptual representations). But why should we think that a subject can use her evidence as evidence only if she believes and conceptually grasps it?

One might have worries about whether possession of evidence really requires being able to use one's evidence as evidence. But let us grant this. It does sound plausible anyway. And, as we will see, it can be accepted by the proposed view. So let us ask whether using one's evidence as evidence requires belief. This is then the final question on which the issue of doxasticism about possession of evidence hinges.

It seems that there are cases in which one uses one's evidence in a way that does not require believing the evidence. Most importantly, one can navigate in rooms and on sideways, for example, on the basis of perception. Plausibly, one's non-epistemic perception (of there being a table-shaped object in front of oneself, for example) often provides the evidence for which movement to make next (to circumvent the object, for example). The only belief that is formed is the *instrumental belief* that circumventing the object is a suitable means to get to the other side. One need not form the further belief that there is a table-shaped object

---

[30] Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 200.

in front of one; non-epistemically seeing that there is a table-shaped object in front of one is good enough. Cases of this kind are especially compelling if the shape of the object is unfamiliar and conceptual classification of the entire object (in contrast to its contour elements) is hard. Non-epistemically seeing its shape is still easily possible and is good enough for justifying the instrumental belief. The cases can thus be very elegantly and plausible dealt with on the proposed account, and thus favor it. (In addition, if the content of the non-epistemic perception is *non-conceptual*, no conceptual classification of the object is required. Yet one can still arrive at the justified instrumental belief that circumventing the object is the suitable means for realizing one's prior intention. What one perceives is good enough evidence for the instrumental belief and it need not be the object of a belief.) In a sense, then, non-epistemic perception of evidence can guide action in a way that makes believing the evidence unnecessary.[31]

For another kind of case, consider an expert for football who might just see when it is the right moment for a player to pass the ball on to some other player. The expert's (non-epistemic) perception immediately provides the evidence for the judgment that *now* is the right moment for passing the ball. The expert need not infer this judgment from beliefs about the particular constellation of players on the field. She can base her judgment directly on her non-epistemic perception of it.

Considering such cases, an important worry arises. It seems that Williamson's reasoning – for his claim that using evidence requires conceptual grasp of the evidence – relies on an implicit restriction. What Williamson seems to have in mind is the use of evidence *in certain kinds of reasoning or inference*, such as, for example, inference to the best explanation, explicitly probabilistic reasonings, or the ruling out of hypotheses.[32] Understood in this way, we are restricting ourselves to reasoning (or inference), and very plausibly (just by its nature or quasi-definition) reasoning requires beliefs as premises.[33] So using one's

---

[31] Furthermore, non-epistemic perception might also constitute possession of *practical reasons*. What one sees non-epistemically could also be a practical reason for acting in a certain, e.g., when one sees someone stumbling and immediately forms the intention to grab and hold the person in order to prevent her from falling. The person's movement (non-epistemically perceived) are good practical reasons for one to do this. Believing that the person is stumbling is not necessary.

[32] These three kinds of reasoning are carved out by Williamson as the main 'theoretical functions' of evidence (see Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits,* 194).

[33] For example, Williamson writes that "in choosing between hypotheses in those ways [i.e., by inference to the best explanation, probabilistic confirmation, or ruling out] we can use only

evidence in a certain kind of reasoning requires believing the evidence, but only almost trivially so, since reasoning (or inference) is, by its nature (or quasi-definition), a transition from beliefs to a conclusion (some other belief). So we get the following two possibilities. Either the use condition is restricted to use in reasoning, and then it does require belief, but simply because of the nature (or quasi-definition) of reasoning; or the use condition is not so restricted, and then it seems possible and plausible that one can use one's evidence as evidence even if it is not the object of any of one's beliefs. On either possibility there is no threat to the proponent of non-conceptual content in non-epistemic perception, since she can claim that the evidence that one possesses 'merely' perceptually can be used as evidence in forming judgments and beliefs (and in acting). Indeed, at this point she could say that a major use of evidence possessed in the form of non-epistemic perception lies exactly in making judgments and forming beliefs *directly* on the basis of perception.[34] Direct perceptual belief formation is a paradigm case of using perceptual evidence, and it does not require conceptual grasp of the facts that one perceives.[35] (Therefore, we do not have to look at special or even esoteric cases, such as an expert for football mentioned above. Very ordinary cases of perceptual beliefs can be considered here as well.)

Let us investigate if we could defend Williamson's view by appeal to background knowledge.[36] Consider the case where an ordinary subject, Kim, is confronted with a typical tiger and clearly sees the tiger. Kim comes to judge (and know) that there is a tiger in front of her. What is her evidence? One could think that she bases her judgment on her background knowledge that tigers have black-

---

propositions which we grasp. In those respects, any evidence other than propositions which we grasp would be impotent." (see Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 197) And he writes, in his response to Goldman: "Without any sort of access constraint at all, evidence cannot play its distinctive role." (Williamson, "Replies to Critics," 311) – But there is use and use: use in the form of reasoning, and use which does not involve reasoning but is different and more direct.

[34] Reasoning – be it explicit/conscious or implicit/unconscious – always starts from (background) beliefs. According to the proposed view, direct perceptual knowledge does not involve reasoning, but takes non-epistemic perception (presenting perceptual evidence) as its input.

[35] It does not even require a demonstrative-indexical conceptual grasp of the facts that one perceives. We can accept that, as Williamson argues, we can conceptually grasp shapes that we perceive non-conceptually, for example, in a demonstrative-indexical way, at least normally. Even if so, we typically use our perceptual evidence immediately, without forming a demonstrative belief in the first place, and we need not form any such belief.

[36] Thanks to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this possibility.

and-yellow stripes and a cat-shape. (In order to simplify the description, let us suppose that this is the only relevant background knowledge. A more realistic, more complicated propositional content would not change the situation in principle.) But surely, this will not suffice. In addition, Kim needs some further evidence, something like the evidence that *this* is a black-and-yellow striped and cat-shaped object (where the "this" refers to the perceived object in a demonstrative way). Call this the 'situational evidence' (since it concerns a fact that belongs to the particular situation the subject is in and not any general, context-independent facts). Then, plausibly, Kim might believe and know the situational evidence. And the situational evidence *together with her background knowledge* could lead her to judge that there is a tiger in front of her.

Now, of course, Kim *might* arrive at her judgment in this way. She *might* make this judgment based on her belief about the situational evidence and her background knowledge. This is clearly possible. But it is by no means plausible to think that she *has to* arrive at the judgment in this inferential way. There is an alternative, more direct way in which the situational evidence could be used. Kim could simply (non-epistemically) perceive the situational evidence and judge directly on the basis of her perception. The application of her concept of a tiger can be triggered directly by her non-epistemic perception of the situational evidence, without any background belief about black-and-yellow stripes mediating and entering in an inferential chain. The situational evidence is possessed by perception, and it is used immediately in perceptional recognition in which the concept of a tiger is applied. (Incidentally, then, background knowledge of general facts like 'all tigers are black-and-yellow striped and cat-shaped' is not needed. When it comes to the most basic level of immediate perceptual recognition, no background knowledge of general criteria is required. We simply perceptually recognize objects as being of certain kinds. What replaces the (background) knowledge is the skill or ability to accurately apply the concept on the basis of situational evidence presented in perception.) Similarly, in the case of the football players, the expert's judgment that *now* is the right moment for passing the ball is directly based on his non-epistemic perception of the two players' positions, speeds, and directions (the situational evidence). The expert need not believe or know that the players have these positions, speeds, and directions.

Another possibility for Williamson might be to drop appeal to background knowledge and to insist on immediate knowledge of the situational evidence. The subject always has to believe and immediately know that this is a so-and-so object

(that this is a black-and-yellow and cat-shaped object, for example). But there is no advantage to positing such situational knowledge over and above non-epistemic perception. Non-epistemic perception of the situational evidence can do the same evidential job. And it is already there anyway. (To deny that we often or typically non-epistemically perceive the situational evidence would be very implausible. Surely we ordinarily perceive the colors, shapes, positions etc. of objects in our environment. Williamson should not deny this.) So the proposed view is more parsimonious and more plausible. And Williamson has not provided any reason for preferring his doxastic view.

In the end, it seems that Williamson's reasoning is quite question begging against the proponent of non-epistemic perception with non-conceptual content. By rationally forming beliefs on the basis of perceiving facts we can use the evidence provided by perception *directly*. To say that evidence can only be used if it is the object of belief amounts to an outright rejection of this important possibility of evidence digestion. Indeed, this possibility might be the highway to (empirical, *prima facie*) foundational justification.

So far, we have only considered the first of the two alternatives 'conceptual incapacity/no conceptual incapacity' (corresponding to the two alternatives 'non-conceptual/conceptual content of non-epistemic perception'). Let us now take a look at the second alternative.

Suppose that the non-epistemic perception of the subject has the *conceptual* content that p (and no non-conceptual content, or any such non-conceptual content is taken to be irrelevant). And suppose that the subject is in a position to know that p. She only would have to endorse the proposition that p on the basis of her perception, as it were, in order to arrive at the knowledge that p. Then Williamson describes this case as a case of *potential* possession of evidence. And he comments that this would "not differ radically" from the opposing view.[37] What according to the proposed view is 'possession of evidence,' is 'potential possession of evidence' according to Williamson.[38]

---

[37] Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 202.

[38] The same move is made by Williamson in response to an objection by Kvanvig in John Kvanvig, "Assertion, Knowledge, and Lotteries", in *Williamson on Knowledge*, 140-160. See Williamson, "Replies to Critics," 347.

There is, however, a significant difference between the two views.[39] Williamson describes it by bringing up a case, and he argues for the superiority of his view:

> [S]uppose that I am in a position to know any one of the propositions p1, …, pn without being in a position to know all of them; there is a limit to how many things I can attend to at once. Suppose that in fact I know p1 and do not know p2, …, pn. According to E = K, my evidence includes only p1; according to the critic, it includes p1, …, pn. Let q be a proposition which is highly probable given p1, …, pn together, but highly improbable given any proper subset of them; the rest of my evidence is irrelevant to q. According to E = K, q is highly improbable on my evidence. According to the critic, q is highly probable on my evidence. E = K gives the more plausible verdict, because the high probability of q depends on an evidence set to which as a whole I have no access.[40]

Let us first mention two worries in order to set them aside. One worry here might be that it is not entirely clear what it means to have access to an evidence set "*as a whole.*" But let us put this worry to one side, and rest content with an intuitive understanding. A second worry to be left aside concerns the coherence, or incoherence, of the scenario that Williamson presents. One may wonder whether it is really conceivable that a subject is in a position to know any proper subset of n propositions without being in a position to know all of them. Williamson's mentioning of *limits of attention* might seem especially problematic here. Belief, in the sense relevant here, need not be manifest or conscious, I take it, and so it is not governed by attentional limits which may (plausibly) restrict one's manifest or conscious beliefs (thoughts or judgments, if you like).[41] But let us put this worry to

---

[39] Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," complains that we should keep a distinction between actual and potential possession of evidence and, thus, that there remains a significant difference between the two views under consideration. A person who is merely in potential possession of evidence is not justified to believe what the evidence supports, whereas a person who is in actual possession of it is so justified. So the two views will yield different verdicts on the status of (propositional) justification. Therefore, there is a significant difference and not just a verbal or terminological variation. But as I understand Williamson, he is not denying that there is a significant difference between the two views. He just points out that there is no "*radical*" difference. And he goes on and describes the difference, and he argues for the superiority of his view. This further argument is addressed in what follows.

[40] Williamson, *Knowledge and Its Limits*, 203.

[41] This has been argued convincingly by Quassim Cassam, for example. See Quassim Cassam, "Judging, Believing and Thinking," *Philosophical Issues* 20, 1 (2010): 80-95.

one side, too.[42] Then, there is still a problem with Williamson's argument here. For the reason which he gives for the superiority of his view is not a good one.

One might be surprised to see Williamson bringing up an *access* requirement at this point (in the last sentence of the quote).[43] What does possession of evidence have to do with access to evidence? We have already seen that evidence can be used even if not believed (when considering the case of non-conceptual content). In which sense then do we have to have 'access' to our evidence set in order for it to 'really count'? If there is a serious access requirement, this should be spelled out quite explicitly, and it should be clarified if it goes beyond the use-as-evidence requirement discussed above.[44]

Now, the very same problem as the one mentioned above, concerning evidence and reasoning, seems to recur. Given the case as described we may grant that *my reasoning* is informed only by p1, and so the only evidence *within the scope of my reasoning* is p1. So on the basis of *reasoning* I can only come to rationally conclude that non-q (since q is made highly improbable by p1). As the case is constructed, there is no reasoning available to me which could lead me to rationally infer that q. But does this mean that I am not in possession of evidence which supports q? The access that Williamson appeals to seems to be an *access to reasoning* which, simply by its nature, requires belief. Williamson seems to (implicitly) argue that access requires availability to (certain forms of) reasoning, and since plausibly reasoning starts with beliefs, beliefs with the evidence as their contents is required. But availability to reasoning is not the only form of accessibility of evidence. Its availability to direct (noninferential) concept application in perceptual recognition can also be properly classified as accessibility.

---

[42] What's lurking in the background here is the rather delicate question whether possession of evidence is essentially tied to consciousness. Can all knowledge count as possession of evidence, even pieces of knowledge that are deeply buried and cannot be relatively easily brought to consciousness? Replacing knowledge by *awareness* is what these cases suggests, and what sounds like an attractive option on independent grounds. But of course, this is a further point that requires much more investigation.

[43] Such a surprise has been expressed by Goldman. See Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," 89-90.

[44] It is to be noted that Williamson's access requirement is not a higher-order requirement and concerns access to the evidence itself, not to the proposition that a certain proposition belongs to one's evidence (i.e., a higher-order proposition). This has been pointed out by Williamson in his reply to Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence." See Williamson, "Replies to Critics," 311.

There is no reason to put up a requirement to the effect that all the evidence one possesses must be used in reasoning. Again, we can think of one's 'access' to, or use of, one's evidence as being *direct* and *unmediated* by belief. Exploiting the evidence that one possesses in the form of (non-epistemic) perception does not require that one transform it into objects of belief. If one *directly* forms the belief that q on the basis of non-epistemically perceiving p1, …, pn, this constitutes a direct, non-reasoning route to the belief that q. Such a route is good enough in order to make one's evidence 'accessible.' Indeed, and again, it seems that non-reasoning routes of belief formation are quite far-spread and important, and nothing exotic or exceptional.

In order to illustrate the immediate use of, or access to, one's evidence provided by perception, we can consider certain quite ordinary cases. An immediate use of, or access to, one's evidence is also possible in cases exhibiting a similar structure to Williamson's case, i.e., of multiple facts which are not (simultaneously) believed. For example, a well-trained chess player may be able to justifiedly believe that the king is checkmated just by looking and (non-epistemically) perceiving the relevant positions of the various figures on the chess board. She may not be able to form all of the corresponding beliefs about the relevant positions (perhaps, simply because of lack of time). But these facts about the relevant positions are perceived, nevertheless, and the person uses what she perceives as evidence when forming the belief that the king is checkmated. Intuitively, she might thereby come to justifiedly believe that the king is checkmated. In such a case we could speak of justified belief acquired *directly* on the basis of perceptual evidence, and not by means of some reasoning which takes certain beliefs as inputs.[45] Rather, the input is the non-epistemic perception, and it is directly used in belief formation.[46] Furthermore, such immediate ways of using

---

[45] Again, the alternative that the subject relies on *background knowledge* of certain general facts is not promising since situational evidence is needed in addition. What background knowledge is supposed to accomplish is rather attained through skillful application of concepts in response to evidence given in perception.

[46] Of course, a certain amount of conceptual skill will be needed for the step from (non-epistemic) perception to justified belief. But this is not what is controversial in the present context. Williamson accepts such an element of conceptual skill or competence. See Timothy Williamson, *The Philosophy of Philosophy* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 168; Timothy Williamson, "How Deep Is the Distinction between A Posteriori and A Priori Knowledge?" in *The A Priori in Philosophy*, eds. Albert Casullo and Joshua C. Thurow (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 291-312.

perceptual evidence are nothing esoteric or uncommon. Quite the contrary, it seems that there are many situations in which we can use what we perceive as evidence for belief formation, and what we perceive is a whole constellation or configuration of (perceptual) facts which we need not grasp individually in the form of beliefs. Again, direct belief formation on the basis of perception seems to be the rule rather than the exception. By a quick glance we can take in many facts at once, and there is no need for forming the corresponding beliefs (and to apply some form of reasoning) in order to be justified to believe a certain proposition about the situation 'as a whole.'

To give a second and, perhaps, more ordinary example exhibiting a similar structure, suppose that Alina sees a zebra in clear view. She undergoes genuine perception of the Zebra. Her genuine perception specifies a color pattern and a shape (property instantiations, if you like). Let's call them the 'Zebra color pattern' and the 'Zebra shape pattern.' These two can be conceived of as two complex states of affairs involving the same object (or instantiations of sensible profiles, as Johnston would put it) that are pieces of evidence for the proposition that there is a Zebra. Typically, Alina can simultaneously digest both pieces of evidence, the Zebra color pattern and the Zebra shape pattern. (At least, this is clearly so if her perception is phenomenally conscious. If it is not phenomenally conscious, it is perhaps not so clear.) We may stipulate that each piece of evidence does not make it very likely that q (that there is a Zebra), but both pieces of evidence together make it very likely.[47] Intuitively, when Alina forms the *non-inferential* perceptual belief that there is a Zebra in the normal, ordinary, or typical way (normal, ordinary, or typical for human beings which have some familiarity with Zebras and their looks and which have sufficient perceptual recognitional abilities associated with the concept of a Zebra), she comes to know that there is a Zebra. Or at least, that q will be highly likely on Alina's evidence. But according to Williamson's view, it would not be highly likely on Alina's evidence unless she digested the two pieces of evidence individually by forming the two corresponding

---

[47] If we split up the Zebra color pattern and the Zebra shape pattern into more detailed states of affairs, which is surely possible given that perception often has a very detailed content, we will get a high number of pieces of evidence and the case might approach Williamson's schematic example very much, structurally, to the point of becoming a real life example. Of course, the example differs from Williamson in that each piece of evidence does not make it improbable that q; rather it makes it a bit probable but not much. This difference, however, should not matter, since all we need is a case in which one can use evidence without the evidence being the object of belief.

beliefs (and acquiring the two corresponding pieces of knowledge) – which she might not be able to do – and then reasoned her way to the knowledge that there is a Zebra. This is a counterintuitive result, I submit. Intuitively, the proposition that q is highly likely on the evidence that Alina possesses. Non-inferential perceptual knowledge is possible on the basis of *simultaneous* genuine perception of *several* pieces of evidence without conceptually digesting each particular bit of evidence separately and simultaneously.

We can therefore accept Williamson's demand of 'access,' at least in a certain and interesting sense. (In this sense it does not go beyond the use-as-evidence requirement.) Put simply, the *direct* use of multiple pieces of simultaneous evidence provided by non-epistemic perception in non-inferential belief formation is an access, and *is all the access we need*. Unless Williamson provides reason for a further, stronger access requirement, his considerations do not tell against the alternative view.[48]

I conclude that Williamson has not presented any convincing argument for the necessity of belief that excludes the idea of non-epistemic perception as providing evidence – no matter whether its content is conceptual or non-conceptual. In addition, we have seen along the way that there are convincing examples of non-doxastic possession of evidence in non-epistemic perception.

Generally speaking, Williamson's view can be seen as a classical, *doxastic* version of the responding-to-evidence view of justification: epistemic justification is essentially related to *responding properly to one's evidence*, and this requires a *doxastic* grasp of the evidence. The alternative, *non-doxastic*, and more liberal view that I am proposing is that justification is indeed essentially related to *responding to evidence* but allows for responding to evidence via *non*-doxastic states of awareness. (To deny the justification-evidence relation would be more radical and is not preferable, I believe.) Note that I am not proposing to go as far as to accept a mere evidence *tracking* conception, discussed by Karen Jones, for

---

[48] In contrast to this reply to Williamson's argument, Goldman's reply consists in rejecting the access requirement. In effect, Goldman straightforwardly denies that a subject must have access to his or her evidence 'as a whole:' "It could still be one's evidence even if one does not have access to all of it." (Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," 90) In contrast, I want to accept a kind of access (use) requirement and to show, at the same time, that non-epistemic perception can satisfy it. – A further difference, already mentioned above, between the proposed view and Goldman's proposal is that Goldman does not accept the veridicality, or factivity, of evidence. See Goldman, "Williamson on Knowledge and Evidence," 88-89. According to Goldman, even non-veridical perceptual experiences can provide evidence.

example.[49] However, I am open to the possibility of (non-doxastic, non-conceptual) responding to evidence via emotional awareness.

5. Brueckner's Worry

It is instructive to compare the present problem with a worry about Williamson's epistemology that Anthony Brueckner has voiced recently.[50] As I understand it, Brueckner's worry concerns the *acquisition question*: How do we acquire perceptual knowledge and/or justification? And how do we acquire evidence? Brueckner's basic intuition seems to be that *perception* must provide the answer to these questions, at least as long as empirical justification, empirical knowledge, and empirical evidence are at stake. But Williamson cannot say that, Brueckner claims. All that Williamson can say is that we get into possession of perceptual evidence (and acquire perceptual justification) by acquiring knowledge. This is so simply because, according to Williamson, E = K, and thus getting into possession of evidence is nothing else but acquiring knowledge. The acquisition question, therefore, gets a more or less trivial, uninformative answer: we acquire (basic empirical) evidence by acquiring (basic empirical) knowledge. But then, the answer to the question of how we acquire knowledge cannot be that we acquire knowledge by acquiring (suitable) evidence or justification. For we cannot have it both ways at the same time. Either we can acquire evidence without already having to know it, and then we can give an informative account of how we acquire knowledge (namely, by first acquiring evidence and then using it in the right way). Or the equation E = K holds, and then we cannot give any informative account of the acquisition of perceptual knowledge, since perception is doing both at the same time: it brings us into possession of evidence and it lets us acquire perceptual knowledge. – This is what Williamson has to say about the acquisition question, according to Brueckner.

I will not try to assess the merits of Brueckner's argument here.[51] I have only mentioned it here in order to point out that it is significantly different from the

---

[49] Karen Jones, "Emotion, Weakness of Will, and the Normative Conception of Agency," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* (2003): 181-200.

[50] Anthony Brueckner, "E = K and Perceptual Knowledge," in *Williamson on Knowledge*, 5-11. Williamson has responded to Brueckner in Williamson, "Replies to Critics," 282-284.

[51] Basically, Brueckner's worry is about knowledge-first, it seems to me. Brueckner intuitively rejects knowledge-first epistemology because of its not allowing us to explain perceptual knowledge in a certain way.

challenge that I have tried to present. *The challenge of non-epistemic perception is not concerned with the acquisition question*. Perhaps, Williamson has a problem with answering the acquisition question. But if so, it is a different problem. The challenge I wanted to present does not have to do with the process of acquiring perceptual evidence, justification or knowledge, or with explaining how we acquire perceptual evidence, justification, or knowledge, at least not directly. It is concerned with the question of *what constitutes possession of evidence* and, more particularly, with whether possession of evidence requires belief.

Having said that, the following interesting point can be added. If the alternative view that I have proposed is correct, it might open up a way of answering the acquisition question in an interesting, informative way, too. Roughly speaking, the answer would be the following one. By non-epistemically perceiving the fact that p one acquires the (true) proposition p as evidence (without knowing it). Since, plausibly and arguably, evidence is constitutively connected to justification, this amounts to acquiring perceptual (propositional) *prima facie* justification for the belief that p. Forming the belief that p by properly basing it on one's non-epistemic perception then can lead to the acquisition of the (*prima facie*) justified belief that p (doxastic justification). And if the evidence is strong enough, this might amount to knowledge. One knows since one believes for a sufficiently strong piece of perceptual evidence. Or so the proposal goes.[52]

The details have to be filled in, to be sure. But there does seem to be a way of answering the acquisition question in an interesting, informative way if the alternative view proposed here is correct. This might be a further advantage of the proposed view. But even if so, it is not the advantage that I have been trying to advertise.

6. A Problem about Facts as Evidence?

Let us conclude by a second look at the issue of what conception of facts and propositions we can or should rely on.

One might wonder whether the following consideration does not amount to a serious objection, in defense of Williamson's view. We have said that *facts* are the entities which are (non-epistemically) perceived. But evidence, it seems, is always *propositional* – as Williamson has argued. And by 'propositional' we here mean not just anything which is a connex, or complex, of a concrete object and a

---

[52] Just to be frank about it: the proposed view is also not in line with knowledge-first.

perceptual property, but really something *conceptual* – something sufficiently similar to Fregean thoughts, incorporating modes of presentation in one way or another. Russellian propositions, consisting of connexes of concrete objects and perceptual properties and lacking any modes of presentation, are not good enough. Furthermore, evidence must be propositional (in this sense), since it is what one can use in one's *doxastic deliberation*. If the proposition that p belongs to one's evidence, one can use it in deciding questions about whether so-and-so is the case or not.[53] But this role cannot be played by Russellian propositions that are the objects of (non-epistemic) perception. So we need true, conceptual propositions.

In essence, the objection amounts to a plea for conceptuality. The representational contents of perceptions have to be conceptual in order to qualify as genuine possession of evidence.

Fortunately, we do not have to decide the issue of conceptuality here. It is important to note that we can grant to the objector that non-epistemic perception has conceptual content and no non-conceptual content. Even if this is the case, non-epistemic perception is still a threat to Williamson's equation E = K. All that we need is the fact that non-epistemic perception is non-doxastic: one can perceive that p without believing that p. Whether the representational content of non-epistemic perception is (entirely) conceptual or not does not matter. As soon as we acknowledge that one can non-epistemically perceive a fact (the fact that p, say), the question arises whether such a perception cannot be sufficient for possessing the true proposition that p as a piece of evidence. And if so, it is clear that E = K is refuted, since knowledge entails corresponding belief.

How about the role of doxastic deliberation? – Here, again, we have to recognize that the use of the evidence in one's possession can take different forms. If in doxastic deliberation one is engaged in a form of *reasoning*, it might very well be that nothing less than conceptual content and belief is required. But if evidence can be used directly and without the mediation of belief, then non-epistemic perception is good enough. (Whether such a use of evidence counts as deciding a question in doxastic deliberation or not seems to be a merely terminological issue. Even if it does not, this would not be an objection.)

But let us take a quick look at the other version of the view, i.e., the version according to which non-epistemic perception has *non*-conceptual content. Would this undermine the idea that we can non-epistemically perceive and, thus, possess

---

[53] For doxastic deliberation, see Nishi Shah and J. David Velleman, "Doxastic Deliberation," *The Philosophical Review* 114, 4 (2005): 497-534, for example.

evidence? – I submit that the answer is No. To justify this answer would require a longer argument than I can offer here. Suffice it to indicate the argument by saying the following. Doxastic justification is essentially tied to rationality since one needs to rationally respond to the evidence that perception provides if one is to arrive at a justified belief. But this does not mean or imply that only conceptual content enters into the scope of rationality. To react in a certain way (by forming a certain belief) to a *non*-conceptual content, as represented by one's non-epistemic perception, can also be an important kind of rational belief formation (and it can amount to acquiring a justified belief).[54] Perceptual experience can play a rational role even if it has non-conceptual content.[55] One can be in possession of a reason without grasping it conceptually. In this sense the realm of reasons extends beyond the realm of concepts. – Ultimately, I believe, this is the right view to take. But for the purposes of the present argument against the equation E = K it is not needed. At heart, what is needed for this argument is just the fact that non-epistemic perception is non-doxastic.
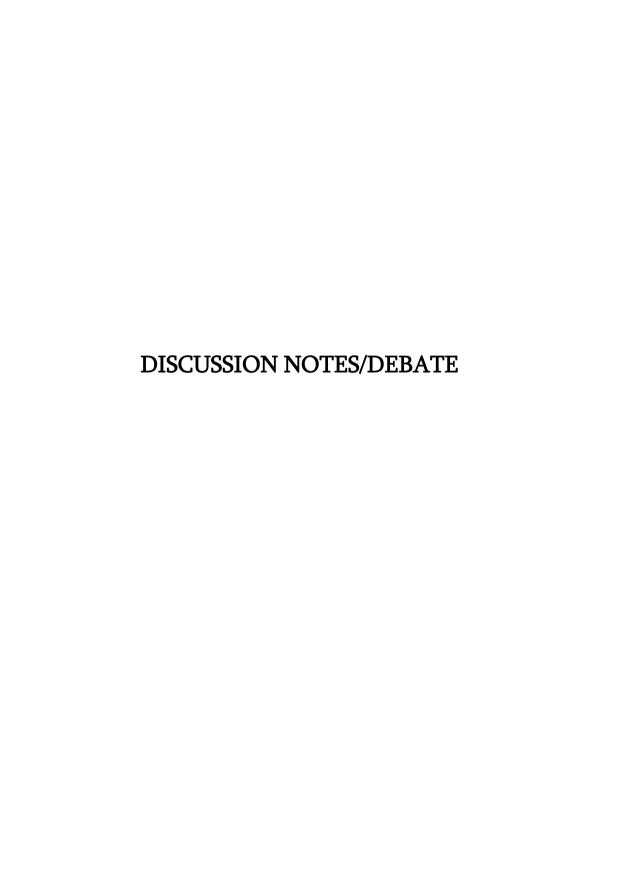
7. Conclusion

This paper is concerned with integrating non-epistemic perception into our picture of how we are related to evidence. According to a doxastic view (of which Williamson is a representative), we always need to grasp the evidence in the form of beliefs. Therefore, non-epistemic perception cannot count as possession of evidence. But many (quite ordinary) cases are plausibly interpreted as cases in which the subject does have perceptual evidence and uses it without grasping it in the form of beliefs. Perceptual recognition of objects (such as tigers, zebras, or constellations of objects or persons) as being of certain kinds is an important form of using evidence given to one in the form of non-epistemic perception. Therefore, the doxastic view of evidence possession should be given up and replaced by a more liberal, non-doxastic view.[56]

---

[54] Williamson has spelled out his view of rationality, justification, and their relation to epistemic norms in Williamson (forthcoming).

[55] One interesting way of understanding this rational role has been spelled out quite ingeniously by Fred Dretske in Fred Dretske, "Perception without Awareness," in *Perceptual Experience*, 147-80.

DISCUSSION NOTES/DEBATE

NO EPISTEMIC TROUBLE FOR ENGINEERING 'WOMAN:' RESPONSE TO SIMION

Robin McKENNA

ABSTRACT: In a recent article in this journal, Mona Simion argues that Sally Haslanger's "engineering" approach to gender concepts such as 'woman' faces an epistemic objection. The primary function of all concepts—gender concepts included—is to represent the world, but Haslanger's engineering account of 'woman' fails to adequately represent the world because, by her own admission, it doesn't include all women in the extension of the concept 'woman.' I argue that this objection fails because the primary function of gender concepts—and social kind concepts in general—is not (merely) to represent the world, but rather to shape it. I finish by considering the consequences for "conceptual engineering" in philosophy more generally. While Haslanger's account may escape Simion's objection, other appeals to conceptual engineering might not fair so well.

KEYWORDS: Sally Haslanger, Mona Simion, gender, social construction, conceptual engineering

Sally Haslanger defends an "engineering" approach to philosophical analysis, with a special focus on race and gender concepts.[1] Her basic thought is that a philosophical analysis of race and gender concepts should focus on what functions these concepts serve: what do they do for us? Her answer, put broadly, is that they serve to *reinforce social hierarchies*. Haslanger offers this account of race and gender concepts in the service of the explicitly political project of dismantling these hierarchies. Her thought is that recognising the role played by race and gender concepts is an important part of this project.

In a recent article in this journal,[2] Mona Simion argues that Haslanger's engineering project faces a serious objection. The primary function of all concepts—gender concepts included—is to represent the world. Just as the

---

[1] See several of the essays in Sally Haslanger, *Resisting Reality: Social Construction and Social Critique* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[2] Mona Simion, "Epistemic Trouble for Engineering 'Woman,'" *Logos & Episteme* 9, 1 (2018): 91–98.

primary function of the concept 'chair' is to pick out chairs, the primary function of the concept 'woman' is to pick out women. Because Haslanger's analysis of the concept 'woman' does not—by her own admission—pick out all and only women, it must be rejected. In this note I argue that Simion's objection fails because some concepts—what we can call *social kind concepts*—have the primary function of *shaping* the world. If—as Haslanger thinks—gender (and race) concepts are social kind concepts, then they serve to shape the world, not (merely) to represent it. I finish by commenting on the consequences for Haslanger's project, and the consequences for "conceptual engineering" in philosophy more generally.

Haslanger on Gender Concepts

I will start with an overview of Haslanger's account of gender concepts. This overview will combine two elements. The first is her social constructivist account of gender categories. The second is her engineering approach to analysing gender concepts. As we will see, understanding how these two elements interact is crucial to understanding where Simion's objection goes wrong.

Haslanger thinks that gender categories are socially constructed. But this claim is ambiguous in several ways. For our purposes, the crucial distinction is between what Haslanger calls *causal* and *constitutive* social construction:

> X is socially constructed causally as an F iff social factors (i.e., X's participation in a social matrix) play a significant role in causing X to have those features by virtue of which it counts as an F.

> X is socially constructed constitutively as an F iff X is of a kind or sort F such that in defining what it is to be F we must make reference to social factors (or, such that in order for X to be F, X must exist within a social matrix that constitutes Fs).[3]

Some writers on social construction[4] focus on the first claim, and hold that gender categories are socially constructed only in the sense that there are broadly social explanations why individuals come to have the traits associated with the gender category they fall under. Haslanger doesn't deny that there may be social explanations why individuals come to have gendered traits. For instance, it may be that there is a (broadly) social explanation why women are, on average, less strong

---

[3] Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 131.

[4] For instance, Ian Hacking, *The Social Construction of What?* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

than men. But she thinks that authors like Hacking are mistaken in holding that gender categories are socially constructed in merely the causal sense:

> I am a White woman. What does this mean? What makes this claim apt? … In effect, the [constitutive] constructionist proposes a different and (at least in some contexts) surprising set of truth conditions for the claim, truth conditions that crucially involve social factors. On this construal, the important social constructionist import in Beauvoir's claim that "one is not born but rather becomes a woman," is not *pace* Hacking … that one is caused to be feminine by social forces; rather, the important insight was that being a woman is not an anatomical matter but a social matter.[5]

Haslanger's claim is that gender categories—e.g. the category 'woman'—can only be defined by reference to networks of social relations. Thus, Haslanger thinks that in defining what it is to belong to a gender category—e.g. to be a woman—we must make reference to social factors.

While this settles the "ontological status" of gender categories—they are (constitutive) social constructs—it doesn't, by itself, supply a definition of them. It is here that Haslanger applies her engineering approach to philosophical analysis. Her task is not to find a definition of 'woman' that is extensionally adequate, but to "engineer" a definition that will best serve our purposes:

> [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?[6]

What are these purposes? Broadly speaking, Haslanger holds that gender concepts serve to reinforce existing social hierarchies, and our purposes are best served by shining a light on the fact that this is their function. This leads to her definition of 'woman:'

> 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.[7]

---

[5] Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 132.

[6] Haslanger, 223–224.

[7] Haslanger, 230.

It is clear that not all women are going to fit this definition. But, given Haslanger's purposes, this is beside the point. As she puts it:

> 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).[8]

So, in Haslanger's view, we want to pick out meaningful political categories, and to do so we need to sacrifice extensional adequacy.

No Epistemic Trouble

I will now turn to Simion's argument against Haslanger's analysis of 'woman.' Haslanger's analysis relies on claims about the function of 'woman,' and of gender concepts more generally. Simion's objection is based on some observations about functional items more generally. I will outline the objection, before turning to where I think it goes wrong.

We can start with Simion's observations about functional items.[9] First, when a functional item fails to serve its primary function (or serves its primary function, but in an abnormal way) we say that the item is *malfunctioning*. Take a knife. The primary function of a knife is to cut things, so when a knife fails to cut—e.g. when it is blunt—we say that it is malfunctioning. Note that this "malfunctioning talk" is *value-laden*. A malfunctioning knife is a bad knife *qua* knife (though it may be good in other respects e.g. as a tool for crushing garlic).

Second, functional items can serve multiple functions. Take, again, a knife. Knives serve other functions besides cutting. Some knives are aesthetically pleasing, so serve the function of being nice to look at. Note that, when a functional item fails to perform its primary function but still serves some of these additional functions, we still say it is malfunctioning. A blunt knife may still be nice to look at, but it is a malfunctioning knife all the same.

Applying this to concepts, Simion holds that concepts are "representational devices." That is, their primary function is to refer to whatever it is they are meant to refer to. So the primary function of the concept 'chair' is to pick out chairs, and the primary function of the concept 'woman' is to pick out women. Of course, it may be that some concepts serve other, non-representational functions. Some concepts may serve social and political functions. But when they fail to serve their

---

[8] Haslanger, 239.
[9] Simion, "Epistemic Trouble," 93–96.

primary function of representing the world (or serve this function, but in an abnormal way), we would say that they are malfunctioning, even if they are still serving these other functions. Malfunctioning concepts are bad concepts *qua* concepts (though they may be good in other respects).

These observations lead to Simion's objection to Haslanger:

> [W]hatever 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.[10]

But, as we have seen, Haslanger's analysis of 'woman' is clearly not extensionally adequate. It does not pick out all and only women. So Haslanger's proposal that we should adopt her analysis as our concept of 'woman' must be rejected. Her proposed concept is not a good concept *qua* concept. Simion concludes that Haslanger's engineering project must fail. Indeed, as an explicitly revisionary project, it was doomed to fail. Any revisionary project is going to sacrifice representational accuracy, and so is going to deliver us a concept that is bad *qua* concept.[11]

So much for the objection. I will now turn to why I think it fails. Simion tells us that concepts have the primary function of representing the world because

---

[10] Simion, 97.

[11] Simion also suggests that, if it is bad *qua* concept, it will not serve the desired political purposes. She says that "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" (Simion, 97). But it isn't obvious that a concept can have political significance only if it reliably picks out what it is meant to pick out. Some politically significant concepts might fail to pick out anything at all because they lack a stable meaning (e.g. 'fake news,' 'post-truth/factual politics'). More generally, I don't think the political significance of a concept need have much to do with what it refers to (consider concepts like 'socialism,' which—at least in the US—seem to have a significance entirely disconnected from what they refer to).

"our concepts are mainly there to help us come [to] know the world around us."[12] While this may be true for *some* concepts, I don't think it is true for *all* concepts. Consider *social kind* concepts like 'husband' and 'wife.'[13] These concepts refer to social roles that are in part created and maintained by our practices involving them. If we decided to apply these terms in different ways, then—perhaps over a long period of time—the social roles themselves might change. (This has, of course, happened with some social kind concepts). So we can say that social kind concepts serve to *shape* the social world. We have these concepts because they play a role in helping us organise the social world. Of course, this is entirely consistent with thinking that social kind concepts *also* serve to represent the world. The point is just that they don't serve to shape the world *in virtue of* serving to represent the world.

On Haslanger's view, gender concepts like 'woman' are social kind concepts.[14] As she puts it:

> [G]ender is not a classification scheme based simply on anatomical or biological differences, but should be understood as a system of social categories that can only be defined by reference to a network of social relations.[15]

The concept 'woman' refers to social structures that are in part (although only in part) created and maintained by our practices involving the concept. If we decided to apply the term 'woman' in different ways then—perhaps over a long period of time—these social structures themselves might change. If Haslanger's analysis of gender concepts plays the political role she wants it to, then it will be part of (though only a part of) a social change by which the systems of oppression relative to which 'woman' is defined will be dismantled. Note that this is not to say that this change *will* occur, or that it *could* occur in a short time-frame. The point is just that it might. Note also that, as with social kind concepts more generally, this is all entirely consistent with thinking that the concept 'woman' also serves to represent the world. The point, again, is just that it doesn't serve to shape the world in virtue of serving to represent the world.

If this is right, then Simion's objection fails. 'Woman'—like social kind concepts more generally—has the primary function of shaping the social world. Haslanger's proposed analysis of 'woman' would malfunction if there were a

---

[12] Simion, 93.

[13] Cf. Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 131.

[14] You might deny this, but then the objection would be very different to Simion's.

[15] Haslanger, *Resisting Reality*, 130.

problem with the *way* in which it shaped (or had the potential to shape) the social world (see below). But it doesn't malfunction simply because it isn't extensionally adequate. I therefore conclude that there is no "epistemic" trouble for Haslanger's engineering account of 'woman.'

Broader Context

I want to finish by drawing out two consequences from my discussion. The first has to do with the debate over Haslanger's account of race and gender concepts. The second has to do with conceptual engineering projects in philosophy more generally.

First, I have argued that Simion's attempt to show that there is *epistemic* trouble for Haslanger's engineering of 'woman' fails. A social kind concept may fall short with respect to representational accuracy, yet still shape (or have the potential to shape) the world in ways that we regard as good or desirable. Any representational failing need not invalidate the (potential for) political success. However, this is not to say that Haslanger's definition of 'woman' would shape the world in ways that we regard as good. Indeed, there are excellent reasons for thinking that it won't. In a recent paper,[16] Katharine Jenkins argues that Haslanger's definition is problematic on the grounds that it marginalises trans women. But Jenkins' point is not that Haslanger's definition is extensionally inadequate. Her point is rather that the *way* in which it is extensionally inadequate perpetuates injustices. Haslanger's definition is therefore to be rejected on feminist grounds. This might suggest something very interesting: perhaps feminist political goals will be best served by analyses of gender concepts that are extensionally adequate. But the crucial point for our purposes is that the value of extensionally adequacy is secured via its consonance with feminist political goals.

Second, while I have argued that Simion fails to show that there is epistemic trouble for Haslanger's engineering of 'woman,' Simion's argument would certainly show that there is epistemic trouble for engineering approaches that don't target social kind concepts. While social kind concepts may have the primary function of shaping the world, it is not plausible that *all* concepts have the primary function of shaping the world. Some concepts merely serve to represent it. This point is important because in the recent literature on "conceptual engineering" some

---

[16] Katharine Jenkins, "Amelioration and Inclusion: Gender Identity and the Concept of Woman," *Ethics* 126, 2 (2015): 394–421.

Robin McKenna

authors have defended engineering approaches to a range of concepts including (but not limited to) truth,[17] knowledge,[18] and normative concepts.[19] Absent reason to think these are social kind concepts, these authors face precisely the sort of trouble Simion thinks Haslanger faces. (For my part, I think knowledge *is* a social kind concept, but that just means I get into trouble elsewhere!). So Simion's objection may well work against several authors. It just won't work against Haslanger.

[17] Kevin Scharp, *Replacing Truth* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[18] Davide Fassio and Robin McKenna, "Revisionary Epistemology," *Inquiry* 58, 7–8 (2015): 755–779.

[19] David Plunkett and Timothy Sundell, "Disagreement and the Semantics of Normative and Evaluative Terms," *Philosophers' Imprint* 13 (2013): 1–37.

SOSA'S SAFETY NEEDS SUPPLEMENTING, NOT SAVING: A REPLY TO COMESAÑA AND MCBRIDE

John N. WILLIAMS

ABSTRACT: Juan Comesaña argues that *Halloween Party* shows that Sosa's (2002) disjunctive safety condition on knowledge is too strong. Mark McBride agrees, and proposes a modification to that condition in order to evade *Halloween Party*. I show that that *Halloween Party* is not a counterexample to Sosa's disjunctive safety condition. However the condition, as well as McBride's modification to it, is insufficient for true belief (or acceptance) to be knowledge. Sosa's condition needs supplementing in some way that would yield a full analysis of knowledge.

For Robert Nozick, your true belief counts as knowledge just in case it is sensitive to falsehood and adherent to truth, meaning roughly that you would not have the belief were it false and that it would still be true were you to hold it under slightly changed circumstances.[1] Dissatisfied with this, Ernest Sosa proposed replacing Nozick's adherence to truth condition with its logically independent contrapositive, roughly that were you to hold the belief under slightly different circumstances then it would still be true. He called this 'safely true' belief. After proposing two non-disjunctive formulations of the safety condition,[2] he proposed a

---

[1] Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 179.

[2] Ernest Sosa, "How to Defeat Opposition to Moore," *Noûs* 333, Supplement (1999): 141-153, "How Must Knowledge Be Modally Related to What Is Known?" *Philosophical Topics* 26, 1/2 (1999): 373-384, "Tracking, Competence, and Knowledge," in *The Oxford Handbook to Epistemology*, ed. Paul Moser (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 264-86.

disjunctive condition,[3] before moving away from an analysis of knowledge as true safe belief (or 'acceptance') to one in terms of "apt and adroit" belief.[4]

In "Unsafe Knowledge," Juan Comesaña presents *Halloween Party*, and argues that this example shows that Sosa's (2002) disjunctive safety condition on knowledge is too strong, predicting ignorance where there is knowledge.[5] In "Saving Sosa's Safety," Mark McBride agrees, and proposes a modification to that condition in order to evade *Halloween Party*.[6] I show that that contrary to Comesaña and McBride, *Halloween Party* is not a counterexample to Sosa's disjunctive safety condition. There is no need to save Sosa's condition from *Halloween Party*. However the condition, as well as McBride's modification to it, is insufficient for true belief (or acceptance) to be knowledge. Sosa's condition needs supplementing in some way that if it is to yield a full analysis of knowledge.

1. Sosa's Disjunctive Safety Condition

Sosa's (2002) *disjunctive* safety condition on knowledge is as follows.

> *Disjunctive Safety*
>
> S knows that p on the basis of an indication I(p) only if either (a) I(p) indicates the truth outright and S accepts that indication as such outright, or (b) for some condition C, I(p) indicates the truth dependently on C, and S accepts that indication as such not outright but *guided* by C (so that S accepts the indication as such *on the basis* of C).[7]

Some terminology needs explication, as follows.

> An indication *I* that *p* indicates the truth that *p* outright just in case *I* entails that *p*.

> An indication *I* that *p* indicates the truth that *p* dependently on *C* just in case *I* does not entail that *p* but *C* obtains and the conjunction of *C* with *I* entails that *p*.

> *S* accepts an indication *I* that *p* as such outright just in case *S* accepts that *p* solely

[3] Sosa, "Tracking."

[4] Ernest Sosa, A *Virtue Epistemology: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge Volume I.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), *Reflective Knowledge: Apt Belief and Reflective Knowledge Volume II.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

[5] Juan Comesaña, "Unsafe Knowledge," *Synthese* 146, 3 (2005): 395-404.

[6] Mark McBride, "Saving Sosa's Safety," *Logos & Episteme* III, 4 (2012): 637-652.

[7] Sosa, "Tracking," 275-276.

on the basis of *I*.

S accepts an indication *I* that *p* as such not outright but guided by *C* just in case *S* accepts that *p* on the basis of the conjunction of *C* with *I*.

At this point we should note the mention of "*some* condition" in disjunct (b). Next, consider Comesaña's *Halloween Party*, as follows.

> There is a Halloween party at Andy's house, and I am invited. Andy's house is very difficult to find, so he hires Judy to stand at a crossroads and direct people towards the house (Judy's job is to tell people that the party is at the house down the left road). Unbeknownst to me Andy doesn't want Michael to go to the party, so he also tells Judy that if she sees Michael she should tell him the same thing she tells everybody else (that the party is at the house down the left road), but she should immediately phone Andy so that the party can be moved to Adam's house, which is down the right road. I seriously consider disguising myself as Michael, but at the last moment I don't. When I get to the crossroads, I ask Judy where the party is, and she tells me that it is down the left road.[8]

Comesaña argues that this shows Sosa's disjunctive safety condition to be too strong, predicting ignorance where there is knowledge. The indicator *I* is Judy's testimony to me that the party is down the left road. Is disjunct (a) satisfied? No. Judy's testimony to me does not indicate outright the truth that the party is down the left road, because her testimony to me that it is down the left road does not *entail* that it is down the left road. Had I disguised myself as Michael, then her testimony to me would have remained the same, but the party would not be down the left road, but down the right road. Is disjunct (b) satisfied? To decide that, we have to decide what counts as condition *C*. Comesaña takes this as the condition *that I do not disguise myself as Michael*. He points out the following.

> I am unaware of the relevance of the respective condition to the truth of Judy's testimony: I would have believed that p whether or not I looked like Michael to Judy.[9]

Echoing this correct observation, McBride makes the following remark.

> As the case is set up, I'll accept Judy's testimony whether or not I appear to her Michael'ly. So I don't accept the indication 'guided by,' or 'on the basis of,' C.[10]

Comesaña immediately concludes as follows.

---

[8] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 396.
[9] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 398.
[10] McBride, "Saving," 640.

> Therefore, HALLOWEEN PARTY is a counterexample to the safety condition even taking into account dependent indication.[11]

In other words (b) is not satisfied, and so my acceptance that the party is down the left road is unsafe.

This does not follow. The question still remains of whether there is "some condition," even if not *C*, that satisfies disjunct (b). Since I do not know that Andy does not want Michael to go to the party, presumably I also know nothing about his instructions to Judy about Michael. What then is the basis on which I accept her testimony to me? It appears to be nothing more than condition *C′* —*that she is telling me the truth*. After all, her testimony to me could hardly *guide* me into accepting that the party down the road on the left—and with it, to the party itself—if she were not telling me the truth. That condition obtains. She is indeed telling me the truth. I accept Judy's testimony to me not as outright but guided by the condition that she is telling me the truth, and her testimony to me, plus the fact that she is telling me the truth, entails that the party is down the left road. On this very plausible reading of the example, disjunct (b) is satisfied, and we have knowledge incorporating safe acceptance. Sosa's disjunctive safety condition survives *Halloween Party*!

Comesaña considers my conclusion that "my belief that the party is at the house down the left road is safe after all,"[12] replying as follows.

> … my belief does not satisfy Sosa's definition of safety: it *could* easily have happened that I had the *same belief* on the *same basis* and yet the belief was false.[13]

But here it seems that Comesaña has a different safety condition in mind, one that Sosa also proposes, that fixes both the content and the basis of the belief from actuality across close possible worlds, as follows.

> *Content-and-basis-fixed Safety*
>
> If *S* knows that *p* on basis *B*, then *S* could not easily form the false belief that *p* on basis *B*.[14]

---

[11] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 398. McBride agrees, writing that "… so Sosa's updated (2002) safety principle – as Comesaña notes – cuts no ice against HALLOWEEN PARTY. By its lights we still have unsafe knowledge" ("Saving," 640).

[12] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 399.

[13] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 399, my italics.

[14] As Comesaña observes ("Unsafe," 403, note 4) this is incorporated by Sosa's (2002) requirement

In other words, if S knows that p on basis B, then S's belief that p, formed on basis B in close possible worlds, is true. *Halloween Party* indeed shows that this condition is too strong. In close possible worlds in which I disguise myself as Michael, and in which I form the belief that the party is down the left road on the basis of Judy's testimony to me that it is down the left road, the party is not down the left road, but down the right road. My belief that the party is down the left road is unsafe. But surely I know that the party is down the left road.

I have looked at what would be the case *after* I receive Judy's testimony, for only then can I be guided by condition C' —*that she is telling me the truth*. In contrast, Comesaña insists that we must look at what would be the case *shortly before* I receive Judy's testimony and just after I decide to not disguise myself as Michael. He writes as follows.

> … it seems to me simply false that, in HALLOWEEN PARTY, after I decide not to dress up as Michael it is no longer a close possibility that I have a false belief. When considering whether the proposition that p obtains safely at t in the actual world, we consider whether it obtains in possible worlds that differ from the actual world just slightly *right before t*. And, in HALLOWEEN PARTY, I seriously consider dressing myself up as Michael just before driving to the intersection where Judy is standing.[15]

But what needs to be considered is not whether the "proposition that p" obtains safely in the actual world, but whether the *belief* that p—in this case my belief that the party down the road on the left—is actually safe. This might seem like a minor quibble, but it helps to explain why Comesaña continues as follows.

> Moreover, we can change the case so that the time when I decide not to dress up as Michael is even closer to the time when I believe that the party is at the house down the left road. We can suppose, if we want, that I *was* dressed up as Michael, and that I decided to take the disguise off at the last minute, just before arriving at the intersection where Judy is. We can also make more radical changes to the case, by imagining that I am dressed up as Michael, but that I'm going to the party with Alex, and that we decide at the last moment that he will ask Judy for directions, not me. In any of those cases, there are possible worlds that differ from the actual world just in what happens *right before I believe that the party* is at the

---

that S's belief must be based on a reliable indication, one that would not have been present without it being so that p.

[15] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 399. He does not tell us which time 't' is supposed to denote. It appears to be the time at which I decide not to disguise myself as Michael.

house down the left road, and that are such that *my belief is false*.[16]

But until I actually receive Judy's testimony, I form *no actual belief* about the location of the party. Until then, although the *proposition* that the party is down the road on the left might turn out to be false (if I receive Judy's testimony while disguised as Michael) I have no *belief* that the party is down the road on the left that could easily or not easily be false. In deciding whether my actual belief that the party is down the road on the left could easily be false, we must look at close possible worlds in which I *have* that belief, and these are close possible worlds in which I have *already received* Judy's testimony. Given that I have received it while not disguised as Michael, Judy's testimony is truthful, with the result that my actual belief that the party is down the road on the left is one that pre-theoretically, "could not easily be false." Given that I have acquired the evidence of her testimony while not disguised as Michael, it is not a stroke of luck that the party is down the road on the left. It seems then, that my belief that the party is down the road on the left is safe according to Sosa's disjunctive safety condition.

But Sosa's disjunctive safety condition incorrectly allows you to know that it is 4:30 pm in *Stopped Clock*, as follows.

> You habitually nap between 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm. Your method of ascertaining the time you wake is to observe, between 4:00 pm and 5:00 pm, the position of the hands of your clock, one you know has always worked perfectly reliably. Awaking at 4:30 pm, you see that its hands point to 4:30 pm. Accordingly, you form the belief that it is 4:30 pm. And it is indeed 4:30 pm because exactly twenty-four hours ago a stray fleck of dust chanced to enter the clock's mechanism, stopping it.

Disjunct (a) is not satisfied. The indication *I*—that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm—does not indicate the truth outright that it is 4:30 pm, because the fact that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm does not entail that it is 4:30 pm. At all other times during the hour that you nap the hands still point to 4:30 pm without it being 4:30 pm. Is disjunct (b) satisfied? There is a condition *C* that obtains—*that the hands of your clock point to the correct time*. This does not indicate the truth outright that it is 4:30 pm, because the fact that the hands of your clock point to the correct time does not entail that it is 4:30 pm. But the conjunction of *C* with *I* (that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm) does indeed

---

[16] Comesaña, "Unsafe," 399, my italics.

entail that it is 4:30 pm. And surely you are guided by *C*. You accept the hands of your clock pointing to 4:30 pm as a veridical indication of the time on the basis of *C*. Thus is there is some condition, namely *C*, such that the hands of your clock pointing to 4:30 pm indicates the truth dependently on this condition, and you accept that indication as such not outright but *guided* by it (so that you accept the indication as such *on the basis* of it). So disjunct (b) is satisfied. Your acceptance that it is 4:30 pm is safe according to Sosa's formulation. Yet although it is indeed 4:30 pm, surely you do not know that it is 4:30 pm. Your acceptance that it is 4:30 pm is luckily true. You were lucky to look at your clock exactly twenty-four hours after it stopped working, at the only instant during the hour when you nap at which its hands could have pointed to the correct time. Thus Sosa's disjunctive safety condition must be supplemented in some way to produce a full analysis of knowledge.

2. McBride's Modification to Sosa's Disjunctive Safety Condition

Following Comesaña in thinking mistakenly that *Halloween Party* shows Sosa's disjunctive safety condition to be too strong, McBride proposes a modification of it, as follows.

> *McBride's Modification of Sosa's Disjunctive Safety*
>
> S knows that p on the basis of an indication I(p) only if EITHER (a) I(p) indicates the truth outright and S accepts that indication as such outright, OR (b) either (i) for some condition C, I(p) indicates the truth dependently on C, and S accepts that indication as such not outright but guided by C (so that S accepts the indication as such on the basis of C), or (ii) for some non-trivial condition C_SAFE, I(p) indicates the truth dependently on C_SAFE, and S accepts that indication not-as-such outright.[17]

This is more complicated. Here is an explication of the extra terminology.

> A condition *C* is *C_SAFE* just in case *C* obtains, and if *C* were the case in the way described in the thought-experiment under consideration, then *C* would hold in all close possible worlds.[18]

> A condition *C* is trivial with respect to *p* just in case *C* is *p* or *C* entails that *p*.[19]

---

[17] McBride, "Saving," 642-643.
[18] McBride, "Saving," 642.
[19] McBride, "Saving," 643.

> *S* accepts an indication *I* that *p* not-as-such outright just in case *S* accepts that *p* on the basis of *I* but not solely on the basis of *I*.[20]

McBride's modification is supposed to make my acceptance that the party is down the left road safe. Disjunct (a) is not satisfied. Judy's testimony to me that the party is down the road on the left does not indicate the truth that the party is down the road on the left outright. Her bare testimony to me *itself* does not entail its truth. Is (b)(i) satisfied? Yes, for the same reason that disjunct (b) is satisfied in Sosa's disjunctive safety condition. There is a condition *C′—that Judy is telling me the truth*. That condition obtains. She is indeed telling the truth. I accept Judy's testimony to me not as outright but guided by the condition that she is telling the truth, and her testimony to me, plus the fact that she is telling the truth, entails that the party is down the left road. Thus we need not inspect (b)(ii) since disjunct (b) is already satisfied. My acceptance that the party is down the road on the left is safe. So far so good for McBride's modification.

But McBride's modification is also shown to be insufficient by *Stopped Clock.* Disjunct (a) is not satisfied. The indication *I* that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm does not indicate the truth outright that it is 4:30 pm, because the fact that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm does not entail that it is 4:30 pm. Is (b)(i) satisfied? Yes. You accept the indication *I* that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm as indicating the truth that it is 4:30 pm, dependently on *C—that the hands of your clock point to the correct time*. You are guided by this condition. That condition indeed obtains. And the conjunction of *C* with *I*— that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm—indeed entails that it is 4:30 pm. McBride's modification renders your acceptance that it is 4:30 pm safe. Yet surely you do not know on the basis that the hands of your clock point to 4:30 pm that it is 4:30 pm. McBride's modification of Sosa's disjunctive safety condition must also be supplemented in some way to produce a full analysis of knowledge.

3. Concluding Remarks

In sum, McBride does not need to supplement Sosa's disjunctive safety condition in order to evade Comesaña's *Halloween Party*, because *Halloween Party* does not show that this condition is too strong. However it, as well as McBride's modification, is too weak. Thus McBride's modification appears to give Sosa no advantage. But it is better for a condition to be too weak than too strong. There is

---

[20] McBride, "Saving," 643, note 24.

hope yet that Sosa's disjunctive (2002) safety condition may be supplemented with some further condition in some way to yield a full analysis of knowledge. What that condition might be is a separate question.

NOTES ON THE CONTRIBUTORS

Aaran Burns is currently studying for his PhD in Philosophy at Keele University. His philosophical interests are primarily in the relation between contemporary epistemology and scepticism, moral and political philosophy, and the philosophy of religion. His other publications include: "A Phenomenal Conservative Perspective on Religious Experience" (*International Journal for Philosophy of Religion*, 2017) and "Introduction: Methods in Normative Political Theory/Philosophy˜ (with Ruhi Demiray, *Public Reason*, 2017). Contact: a.s.burns@keele.ac.uk.

Hossein Dabbagh is an Assistant Professor in the Philosophy program at Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and Adjunct Lecture at Institute for Cognitive Science Studies. He is also working as a consultant for Muslim Biomedical Ethics Project at Institute of Ismaili Studies. Prior to this, he was a visiting researcher at the department of Theological Ethics and Christian Social Ethics at Universität Luzern and research assistant at Oxford Centre for Socio-Legal Studies. He studied moral philosophy during his Doctorate journey at University of Reading and University of Oxford. In his PhD thesis "Mind, Epistemology and Neuroethics: A Defence of Epistemological Intuitionism," he defended an intuitionist epistemology from criticism drawn from empirical moral psychology. His most recent publications are: "Sinnott-Armstrong Meets Modest Epistemological Intuitionism" (*The Philosophical Forum*, 2017), "Intuiting Intuition: The Seeming Account of Moral Intuition" (*Croatian Journal of Philosophy*, 2018), "Feeling Good: Integrating the Psychology and Epistemology of Moral Intuition and Emotion" (*Journal of Cognition and Neuroethics*, forthcoming). Contact: hosein.dabbagh@gmail.com.

Simon Dierig is a Lecturer of Philosophy and a "Privatdozent" at Heidelberg University. He received his PhD from the LMU Munich and his "Habilitation" from the University of Heidelberg. He works mainly in epistemology, the philosophy of mind, action theory and the history of philosophy. He has published on Descartes' philosophy of mind, Berkeley's metaphysics, Moore's paradox and self-knowledge, the compatibility of semantic externalism and a priori self-knowledge, the individuation of actions and the role of the principle of charity in

interpretation. He currently works on anti-skeptical strategies in contemporary epistemology. His recent papers include "Moores Beweis, Wahrnehmung und Skeptizismus" (*Grazer Philosophische Studien* 94, 2017) and "Externalismus und Selbstkenntnis: Die McKinsey-Paradoxie" (forthcoming in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*). Contact: simon_dierig@yahoo.de.

Frank Hofmann is Professor of systematic philosophy at the University of Luxembourg since 2011. He did his PhD and habilitation at the University of Tuebingen, Germany. His areas of specialization include epistemology, the theory of rationality and reasons, philosophy of mind, metaphysics, philosophy of science, and philosophy of language. Ethics, meta-ethics, and action theory belong to his areas of competence. Contact: frank.hofmann@uni.lu.

Robin McKenna is a Lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Liverpool. His research interests lie mainly in epistemology (including social and feminist epistemology), but he is also interested in philosophy of language, philosophy of science and ethics. He has published several papers on these and other topics in journals including *American Philosophical Quarterly*, *Australasian Journal of Philosophy* (2x), *Episteme* (2x), *Ethics*, *Pacific Philosophical Quarterly* and *Synthese* (4x). He is currently working on a book on social dimensions of knowledge and papers on topics including the epistemology of climate change denial, feminist epistemology and social constructivism in epistemology. Contact: rbnmckenna@gmail.com.

John N. Williams is Professor in Philosophy in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at Nazarbayev University. His research interests include paradoxes, epistemology and applied ethics. His most recent articles include: "There's Nothing to Beat a Backward Clock" (*Logos & Episteme*, 2016), "The Backward Clock, Truth-Tracking, and Safety" (with Neil Sinhababu, *Journal of Philosophy*, 2015), "Not Knowing You Know: A New Objection to the Defeasibility Theory of Knowledge" (*Analysis*, 2015), "Moore's Paradox in Speech: A Critical Survey" (*Philosophy Compass*, 2015), and "Moore's Paradox in Thought: A Critical Survey" (*Philosophy Compass*, 2015). Contact: john.williams@nu.kz.

LOGOS & EPISTEME: AIMS & SCOPE

Logos & Episteme is a quarterly open-access international journal of epistemology that appears at the end of March, June, September, and December. Its fundamental mission is to support philosophical research on human knowledge in all its aspects, forms, types, dimensions or practices.

For this purpose, the journal publishes articles, reviews or discussion notes focused as well on problems concerning the general theory of knowledge, as on problems specific to the philosophy, methodology and ethics of science, philosophical logic, metaphilosophy, moral epistemology, epistemology of art, epistemology of religion, social or political epistemology, epistemology of communication. Studies in the history of science and of the philosophy of knowledge, or studies in the sociology of knowledge, cognitive psychology, and cognitive science are also welcome.

The journal promotes all methods, perspectives and traditions in the philosophical analysis of knowledge, from the normative to the naturalistic and experimental, and from the Anglo-American to the Continental or Eastern.

The journal accepts for publication texts in English, which satisfy the norms of clarity and rigour in exposition and argumentation.

Logos & Episteme is published and financed by the "Gheorghe Zane" Institute for Economic and Social Research of The Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch. The publication is free of any fees or charges.

For further information, please see the Notes to Contributors.

Contact: logosandepisteme@yahoo.com.

NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS

1. Accepted Submissions

The journal accepts for publication articles, discussion notes and book reviews.

Please submit your manuscripts electronically at:

logosandepisteme@yahoo.com.

Authors will receive an e-mail confirming the submission. All subsequent correspondence with the authors will be carried via e-mail. When a paper is co-written, only one author should be identified as the corresponding author.

There are no submission fees or page charges for our journal.

2. Publication Ethics

The journal accepts for publication papers submitted exclusively to *Logos & Episteme* and not published, in whole or substantial part, elsewhere. The submitted papers should be the author's own work. All (and only) persons who have a reasonable claim to authorship must be named as co-authors.

The papers suspected of plagiarism, self-plagiarism, redundant publications, unwarranted ('honorary') authorship, unwarranted citations, omitting relevant citations, citing sources that were not read, participation in citation groups (and/or other forms of scholarly misconduct) or the papers containing racist and sexist (or any other kind of offensive, abusive, defamatory, obscene or fraudulent) opinions will be rejected. The authors will be informed about the reasons of the rejection. The editors of *Logos & Episteme* reserve the right to take any other legitimate sanctions against the authors proven of scholarly misconduct (such as refusing all future submissions belonging to these authors).

3. Paper Size

The articles should normally not exceed 12000 words in length, including footnotes and references. Articles exceeding 12000 words will be accepted only occasionally and upon a reasonable justification from their authors. The discussion

notes must be no longer than 3000 words and the book reviews must not exceed 4000 words, including footnotes and references. The editors reserve the right to ask the authors to shorten their texts when necessary.

4. Manuscript Format

Manuscripts should be formatted in Rich Text Format file (*rtf) or Microsoft Word document (*docx) and must be double-spaced, including quotes and footnotes, in 12 point Times New Roman font. Where manuscripts contain special symbols, characters and diagrams, the authors are advised to also submit their paper in PDF format. Each page must be numbered and footnotes should be numbered consecutively in the main body of the text and appear at footer of page. For all references authors must use the Humanities style, as it is presented in The Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition. Large quotations should be set off clearly, by indenting the left margin of the manuscript or by using a smaller font size. Double quotation marks should be used for direct quotations and single quotation marks should be used for quotations within quotations and for words or phrases used in a special sense.

5. Official Languages

The official languages of the journal are: English, French and German. Authors who submit papers not written in their native language are advised to have the article checked for style and grammar by a native speaker. Articles which are not linguistically acceptable may be rejected.

6. Abstract

All submitted articles must have a short abstract not exceeding 200 words in English and 3 to 6 keywords. The abstract must not contain any undefined abbreviations or unspecified references. Authors are asked to compile their manuscripts in the following order: title; abstract; keywords; main text; appendices (as appropriate); references.

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.

9. Acceptance of the Papers

The editorial committee has the final decision on the acceptance of the papers. Papers accepted will be published, as far as possible, in the order in which they are received and they will appear in the journal in the alphabetical order of their authors.

10. Responsibilities

Authors bear full responsibility for the contents of their own contributions. The opinions expressed in the texts published do not necessarily express the views of the editors. It is the responsibility of the author to obtain written permission for quotations from unpublished material, or for all quotations that exceed the limits provided in the copyright regulations.

11. Checking Proofs

Authors should retain a copy of their paper against which to check proofs. The final proofs will be sent to the corresponding author in PDF format. The author must send an answer within 3 days. Only minor corrections are accepted and should be sent in a separate file as an e-mail attachment.

12. Reviews

Authors who wish to have their books reviewed in the journal should send them at the following address: Institutul de Cercetări Economice şi Sociale „Gh. Zane" Academia Română, Filiala Iaşi, Str. Teodor Codrescu, Nr. 2, 700481, Iaşi, România. The authors of the books are asked to give a valid e-mail address where they will be notified concerning the publishing of a review of their book in our journal. The editors do not guarantee that all the books sent will be reviewed in the journal. The books sent for reviews will not be returned.

13. Property & Royalties

Articles accepted for publication will become the property of *Logos & Episteme* and may not be reprinted or translated without the previous notification to the editors. No manuscripts will be returned to their authors. The journal does not pay royalties.

14. Permissions

Authors have the right to use their papers in whole and in part for non-commercial purposes. They do not need to ask permission to re-publish their papers but they are kindly asked to inform the Editorial Board of their intention and to provide acknowledgement of the original publication in *Logos & Episteme*, including the title of the article, the journal name, volume, issue number, page number and year of publication. All articles are free for anybody to read and download. They can also be distributed, copied and transmitted on the web, but only for non-commercial purposes, and provided that the journal copyright is acknowledged.

15. Electronic Archives

The journal is archived on the Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch web page. The electronic archives of *Logos & Episteme are* also freely available on Philosophy Documentation Center web page.